

Vieques Recycling Partnership (VRP) Meeting
Thursday, December 14, 2012 from 6:00-7:30 pm
Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust
Vieques, Puerto Rico

Agenda Items

1. Introductions, Mark Lichtenstein, Environmental Finance Center (EFC)
2. Background on the PRRP & Update on recycling in PR
3. Discussion of current projects, goals and impediments to recycling efforts in Vieques

Minutes

Background on the PRRP & Update on recycling in PR

- The Puerto Rico Recycling Partnership was formed in 2010 by the Puerto Rico government and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The aim is to take an aggressive approach to solid waste issues
- The first goal is to start by recycling the easiest materials or to “pick the low-hanging fruit.” The EFC can offer technical assistance.
 - ORGANICS recycling through composting programs
 - PRRP Sustainable Materials Management (Organics) Internship Program
 - There were 6 interns working in Vieques’ schools teaching about composting during the 2011-2012 school year
 - Idea: Have a centralized composting location
 - Composting has to be done correctly. (For example: composting plant clippings versus food)
 - First, enable the recycling of traditional materials: glass, aluminum cans, plastic, cardboard.
 - GLASS
 - Vieques is already collecting glass and storing it, though this is not being promoted
 - There are 2 glass companies looking to recycle on the main island (*Strategic Materials* and *Tomrana*)
 - The PRRP Glass, Plastic and Metals Team is working to redevelop bottle bill legislation
 - PLASTIC BAGS
 - A bill was passed that limited the quantity of plastic bags sold. The problem is that people leave Vieques to go shopping and come back with bags.
 - Also need:
 - Education,
 - Implementation,
 - Studies (cost, effectiveness..etc),

- Cooperation with the culture
 - Ex: Work with women who weave homemade bags
- Goals/ideas:
 1. To have Vieques and its municipality be a model program. The island's small size is a positive factor as it makes recycling efforts more manageable.
 - a. Resources:
 - i. There are resources available.*
 - ii. Recycling can also generate revenue.
 2. Work with schools
 3. Work hand-in-hand with businesses and give them incentive to recycle
 - a. Have providers donate reusable bags
 - b. Don't give out plastic bottles or plastic bags at festivals and public events
 - c. Require recycling at public events
- Roadblocks:
 - Lack of human resources to do these programs
- Successes:
 - 32,000 tires were removed from the island over the past 4 years!

Background on the Vieques Conservation & Historical Trust

- Their programs are free
- They focus on environmental education especially for Viequesenses

Barbosa School Project (Proyecto Escuela Barbosa)

- This is an abandoned school that the community would like to renovate and reopen. The building is structurally sound (except for the floor). They would like the school to be open for the community to use
- There was an open house in which the idea of reopening this school was proposed to the community
 - The school was cleaned
 - There was music and lots of participation!

Vieques as a unique location

- Indigenous sites
 - Has the most indigenous archaeological sites in all of PR
 - Fragile archaeological site near the Camp Garcia
 - Vieques is communicating with the UPR and the Univ. of West Indies to do studies and/or protect this area. There is a lack of funding
- Bee-Keeping
 - Vieques bees feed on the mangrove flowers and have a special flavor
- Bioluminescent Bay
 - Vieques is concerned with land use development as it may cause light pollution and/or runoff that could affect the bay
 - Ex: There were previous bio bays destroyed in St. Thomas

- A study of the watershed near the bio bay should be conducted
 - A study was conducted in 2008 by Carlos E Ramos-Scharrón (<http://www.irf.org/about/cramos.php>)

Next steps

- The EFC can help create an Action Plan for sustainable materials management on Vieques
- The EFC will share information on plastic bag legislation.
- A discussion should be had with ADS regarding having space for recyclables be a priority on the ferry.

* Contact Mark Lichtenstein (mlichtenstein@syracusecoe.org) or Terry Tammenin (tt@sgadvisors.org) to learn more about funding opportunities.