

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2003 the Navy conducted a Range Condition Assessment (RCA) of Virginia Capes Operating Area (VACAPES OPAREA) is a surface and subsurface operating area off the Virginia and North Carolina coasts. A Technical Team consisting of U.S. Navy civilian and contractor personnel with expertise in training and range operations, munitions, and environmental matters conducted the RCA. The RCA followed the *U.S. Navy Range Sustainability Environmental Program Assessment (RSEPA) Policy Implementation Manual* (U.S. Navy 2004) and included three phases: I – Range Selection; II – Pre-Site Visit Information Collection; and III – Onsite Visit Information Collection and Review. The outcome of these three phases is used to answer the questions posed in Decision Point (DP) 1.

**Phase I – Range Selection.** The Fleets had previously selected VACAPES to be the subject of an RCA because of its value to the overall mission of the U.S. Navy and the known environmental conditions of the range. VACAPES is one of the foremost complexes of the Atlantic fleet in preparing battle groups for deployment, particularly following the closure of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility, Vieques, Puerto Rico on 30 April 2003. There are three operational land ranges that are associated with the VACAPES OPAREA and that fall within the scope of this RSEPA RCA: 1) Navy Dare County Bombing Range (DCBR), North Carolina, 2) Fleet Combat Training Center Atlantic, Dam Neck, Virginia 5-inch Gun Fire Line and 3) Dam Neck’s Composite Squadron Six Detachment (VC-6) Drone Launch Area.

**Phase II—Pre-Site Visit Information Collection.** The purpose of the RCA Phase II was for the Technical Team to gather and review as much pertinent information as possible prior to conducting the onsite visit. A team of Navy civilians conducted the RCA Phase II management-level in-brief on 15 July 2003. Following the in-brief, personnel from Fleet Air Control and Surveillance Facility (FACSFAC) VACAPES, and other Navy personnel involved in the operational and environmental management of the Navy DCBR, the Dam Neck Range firing line, and the Dam Neck Range drone launch area provided the Technical Team with documents that addressed the historical and current operational uses of the range, range maintenance procedures, and environmental management programs as well as natural and cultural resources at the VACAPES land-based operational ranges. The Technical Team placed all documents into a VACAPES Range Data Folder (RDF) for ease of analysis. A summary of the Phase II data collected is contained in the Pre-Site Visit Information Collection Synopsis, attached to this report.

**Phase III—Onsite Visit Information Collection and Review.** During July 2003 the Technical Team visited offices of Naval Air Station Oceana, Navy DCBR, the Dam Neck Range firing line, and the Dam Neck Range drone launch area with the purpose of building on the information contained in the VACAPES RDF. They filled data gaps and conducted interviews with key people in order to have on hand information of sufficient detail to answer the questions in DP1. With the amassed data, the Technical Team then set out to determine the level of environmental compliance for VACAPES, build an operational range site model (ORSM) to evaluate the operational and environmental conditions at the land-based ranges, and determine the possibility of an off-range release of munitions constituents (MCs) potentially posing an imminent and substantial threat to human health or the environment. MCs are defined in the *RSEPA Policy Implementation Manual* and are discussed in more detail in Section 5. The conclusions of the onsite visit, the environmental compliance and the ORSM can be found in Section 6.

**DP1.** Two critical questions are asked in DP1, the answers to which determine whether VACAPES is looked at in more detail in the next portion RSEPA, or if the ranges will be looked at again as part of the routine 5-year review of all ranges: “Are further steps required to maintain compliance?” and “Is further analysis required to assess risk of off-range release?” Based on the information collected as part of this RCA of VACAPES, the Technical Team answers the first DP1 question “no” and the second DP1 question “no.” The DP1 report summarizes the analysis that went into answering these questions.