



Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico
GOBIERNO MUNICIPAL DE VIEQUES
Honorable Dámaso Serrano López
Alcalde

June 19, 2008

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
US House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall:

The island of Vieques is known worldwide for its abundance of natural beauty, including its beaches and coral reefs. Of particular importance and splendor is Mosquito Bay, one of the brightest bioluminescent bays in the planet. At the same time this island, close to the Puerto Rico's east coast, is also well known for its history as a Navy bombing and training range, which was the Federal government's legacy remains as the lands have been locked up in a Federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) refuge, and the federally-mandated clean up is now characterized by the open detonation of thousands of unexploded ordnance that were left behind. The restricted access maintained by the FWS, and the fact that this cleanup is expected to last many years, are sore points for many in the community.

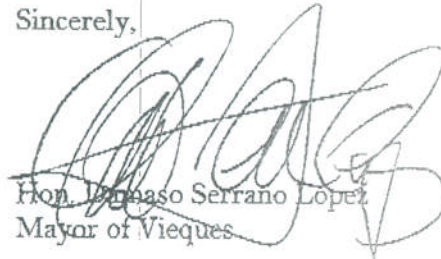
Recently, Resident Commissioner Luis Fortuño introduced H.R. 5864, the Vieques Bioluminescent Bay Conservation Act of 2008. This legislation is intended to designate Mosquito Bay as a National Marine Sanctuary in Puerto Rico, subject to the management of the U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This bay is a source of significant local pride, and was renamed by the people of Vieques as Puerto de la Libertad David Sanes, in honor of a local resident and Navy civilian employee who was killed by an errant Navy bomb. For many years, the bay has been managed and preserved by Commonwealth agencies and the people of Vieques. Under this local stewardship no substantial environmental harm has ever been recorded at Mosquito Bay while, unfortunately, two other bioluminescent bays elsewhere in Puerto Rico have been impacted by human activity.

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Letter from Mayor Dámaso Serrano López
RE: Opposition to H.R. 5864

As the Mayor of the island of Vieques and as a representative of the local people's interest, I am firmly opposed to the federalization of Mosquito Bay. The people of Vieques see this legislation as another threat for us to lose control over our natural resources, for the Federal government to enter with a command and control attitude towards local activity, and for no real gain to be made either for the people of Vieques or the environment of Mosquito Bay. We feel that there is no need to change what is already effective and accepted. For these reasons, I urge you to consider my opinion regarding H.R. 5864, to respect the local people's desire to protect and enjoy their natural resources, and oppose this unnecessary legislation.

Sincerely,



Hon. Dámaso Serrano López
Mayor of Vieques

Cc: The Honorable Don Young, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
All Members House Natural Resources Committee

DSL/mlg