

## NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

\*\*\*Proposed NPL Site\*\*\*

September 2021

### OCHOA FERTILIZER CO | Guánica, Puerto Rico

#### **Site Location:**

The Ochoa Fertilizer Co (Ochoa) site is located along State Road No. 333/Carretera Caña Gorda (PR-333), Guánica, Puerto Rico. To the east, the site adjoins the Guánica Dry Forest, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve. To the west of the site is Guánica Bay.

#### **Site History:**

Fertilizers have been produced at the site since the 1950s. The Ochoa facility consists of two lots totaling 125 acres that are bisected by PR-333: a western lot of 13 waterfront acres along Guánica Bay and a 112-acre eastern lot. Sulfur was burned, converted into gas, and conveyed through pipelines from the 13-acre lot to the sulfuric acid manufacturing plant on the 112-acre property. Ammonia, anhydrous ammonium, ammonium sulfate, and sulfuric acid were manufactured on the 112-acre lot until approximately 1968. Since that time, Ochoa has been producing fertilizers on the 13-acre waterfront lot. In 1989, Ochoa donated approximately one acre of the eastern lot to Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA); this land is now utilized by PREPA for access to and operation of a substation constructed between 1991 and 1992. The facility equipment associated with the original ammonium and sulfuric acid manufacturing plants were dismantled and discarded in the early 1990s.

#### **Site Contamination/Contaminants:**

Multimedia sampling (soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment) by EPA have found lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), thallium, trichloroethylene (TCE), and vanadium exceeding benchmark levels. Other contaminants have also been detected in on-site soils, including mercury and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

#### **Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:**

Residential properties located between the former facility and the bay may be at risk of exposure to contaminated soil. Due to frequent flooding, these areas are prone to migration of contaminated soil. Residents who live on these parcels are at risk of exposure from the highly contaminated soil. The property maintenance worker is at risk of exposure, and PREPA workers are at risk when they access the substation at the eastern edge of the property. Other exposure risks include Guánica Bay, which is located within 500 feet of the Ochoa property. Guánica Bay is used by residents for harvesting fish as a means of income and for consumption, and as a recreational area for swimming. Guánica Bay is a habitat for the West Indian Manatee, a federal-designated threatened species.

#### **Response Activities (to date):**

In the early 1990s, the property owner conducted a Phase I and II Environmental Assessment, followed in 1999 by an asbestos abatement action which included the removal and off-site disposal of asbestos-containing material (ACM) and contaminated soils. Following these actions, asbestos remains in surficial soils in some areas along the former sulfur pipeline at concentrations exceeding 1%. The company performs continual protective measures to minimize disturbance of and exposure to the contaminated area.

#### **Need for NPL Listing:**

The commonwealth of Puerto Rico referred this site to the EPA because of the risks to human health and the environment from the contamination in the soil and Guánica Bay. Other federal and commonwealth cleanup programs were evaluated but are not viable at this time. The EPA has received a letter of support for placing the site on the NPL from the commonwealth.

*[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]*

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. [ATSDR ToxFAQs](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq/index.asp) can be found on the Internet at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq/index.asp> or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.