

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Economic Development Meeting
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site

Meeting Notes

Thursday, March 23, 2006

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Saratoga Spa State Park,
Saratoga Springs, NY**

Members and Alternates Attending: Chris Ballantyne, Mark Galough, Joe Gardner, Robert Goldstein, Manna Jo Greene, Roland Mann, Neal Orsini, Lois Squire, Judy Schmidt-Dean, Julie Stokes.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (Ecology & Environment), John Callaghan (NYS Canal Corp), William Daigle (NYS DEC), Peggy Farrell (Ecology & Environment), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (Ecology & Environment), Leo Rosales (USEPA).

Others Attending: Judy Bredelon (City of Troy), Chris Chesley (Rensselaer County), Dan Culligan (NYS Canal Corp), Greg Dixon (Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce), Dick Hurst (Planning Department of Waterford), Todd Shimkus (Adirondack Regional Chamber), Marie Foster (Champlain Canal Tour Boats), David Roberts (Schuylerville Area Chamber of Commerce), Marge Mohn (Washington County Tourism), Chris Martin (NPS), Michelle Hayes (NYS Marine Highway), David Brill (Saratoga Health and Medical Services), John Vetter (USEPA), Peter Aust (Chamber of Southern Saratoga County), Bob Goldman (NYS Marine Highway), Tom Kryzak (Air and Earth Consulting), Jerry Dudding (GFD Patents).

Facilitators : Patrick Field, Ona Ferguson.

Key Action Items

- Greg Dixon, Saratoga Chamber, will convene a meeting of Chambers of Commerce and the Canal Corp to think through an outreach campaign with a consistent message and other activities, as appropriate.
- John Callaghan of the NYS Canal Corp will look into the possibility of organizing a boat for Chambers of Commerce and CAG members to go through several of the local locks.
- EPA will consider what outreach activities that fall within their purview and may assist with getting the word out to boaters/rivers users during dredging.
- The CAG's Economic Development Subcommittee will meet again on Thursday April 27, 10:00am – 12:00 noon to report back on progress made.

Welcome and Introductions

This meeting was organized by the CAG Economic Development Subcommittee. At the invitation of people on the Subcommittee, people representing a range of chambers of commerce and canal use attended to discuss the possible impacts on tourism by the dredging project.

Purpose of Meeting

The Economic Development Subcommittee has voiced concerns that the false perception that the river will be entirely closed to recreational boating traffic during the dredging project could adversely affect many businesses along the Hudson, during dredging and for several years subsequent to dredging. They hoped that by bringing together those organizations that do outreach to boaters at least a year before dredging begins the groups could coordinate a message that the river is “open for business.”

EPA Perspective

Leo Rosales described to the group how the navigation standards were developed in 2002 as part of the Quality of Life Performance Standards. These standards were developed with input from the community and require accountability for noise, lighting, air quality, odor and navigation issues. These, in addition to the Engineering Performance Standards for Resuspension, Residuals and Productivity are unprecedented on a Superfund project and took significant resources to create. The navigation standards indicate that the project must be completed without unnecessarily hindering overall non-project related vessel movement, thereby keeping the river open to commercial and recreational boaters.

EPA will be monitoring vessel traffic, wait time at locks, complaints from people on the river. EPA will also be working to notify boaters where to find safe passage and what wait times to expect. EPA expects up to 24 hour a day dredging, using up to eight dredges and up to 14 sediment barges.

Ideas for Smooth River Operations

John Callaghan of the NYS Canal Corp noted that the navigational standards are better thought out in the Final Design Report (FDR), incorporating comments made on the Intermediate Design by Canal Corp and others. For example, the FDR includes a snubbing post and a barge staging facility below Lock 7 to ease barge movement on the river. The Canal Corp expects to coordinate vessel traffic through the Locks with radio contact. Callaghan noted that there are still some concerns regarding the design, including questions about whether GE will want locks 7 and 8 to be staffed and operating 24 hours a day. If the locks will not be operating 24 hours a day, Callaghan noted concerns about the potential major “logjams” each morning. Furthermore, there is

concern that existing infrastructure (namely the Glens Falls Feeder Canal) may not be able to handle the required water volumes that will be needed given the increased traffic through the locks. The Canal Corp. also noted that the speed estimate of the barges in the FDR may be unrealistically high at 6-7mph. The Canal Corp noted that it is mandated with managing a waterway that is open to everyone, and will do their best to make sure that the dredge project happens without interfering in that objective. They plan to keep recreational boats moving through the locks continuously, not waiting for more than one project boat to move through the locks. They will manage the system in a use-friendly way, and are up to the challenge of keeping all boats moving through the canals.

Participants suggested the following ideas for making recreational boat movement safe and easy:

- Share information ahead of time with boaters, so they know what to expect.
- Use DOT style flashing signs at Locks 6 and 8 to help boaters know where to go.
- Distribute handouts at Locks 6 and 8 on procedures for getting into and out of the Fort Edward Yacht Basin.
- Boaters potentially stranded at Locks 8 or 9, which do not have services, may be without adequate shelter, food, and electricity, so canal operators will have to carefully track all boats, something they already do well.

Ideas for Outreach to Boaters

Participants generally agreed that there will be a need to manage the conversation of what is happening on the project including in areas far up and down the river (Whitehall, Waterford, out the Mohawk), and that it makes sense to have a lot of information available to businesses that interact with boaters as well as the boaters themselves. These businesses might include hotels, restaurants, gas stations, etc.

Many stated the importance of ensuring that whatever message is distributed is accurate, acknowledging possible delays so boaters can plan their trips accordingly. If boaters cannot plan their trips accurately, they may lose money on hotel and restaurant reservations.

Participants had the following ideas for reaching boaters in timely and effective ways. They suggested distributing information through:

- The Canal Corp: distribution to boaters this season and 1-800 number, and “Notice to Mariners”
- Lock masters face-to-face contact with boaters
- The US Coast Guard’s newsletter and radio frequency, which reaches Canadian boaters
- A dedicated broadcast channel that shares information on lock openings/closings, back ups, and provides a means for local businesses to advertise
- “Canal Times,” publication which reaches businesses along the river

- Having a PR boat go out to boats waiting for locks to share information about what is happening and put a positive frame on the experience
- VHF two-way radio, channels 9 and 14, something boaters use often for weather and other updates
- Chambers of Commerce throughout the NYS Canal system
- Word of mouth, with key connections in marinas and locks
- Internet site for updates that any business can use and touch-screen kiosks that any visitor can use (model after Chamberworks in Maine)
- Automated cell phone text message updates to those on the river
- Handouts and signs at launch ramps (formal and informal), to reach residents who use the river so they can pass along information to visitors who stop to ask them questions.
- Handouts at fishing tournaments, fishing organizations, when people apply for fishing licenses, at tackle shops, etc. (important not to ignore day river users who are not in transit)
- Information in the local weekly newspapers' bulletin boards
- The Canal Corps, local businesses, and the "system" need to be prepared for "stranded boaters" in the event that unforeseen lock closures and the like prevent people from mooring, eating, and sleeping at their intended destination.

Outreach Campaign Concepts

Many participants had thoughts on any outreach campaign that occurs:

- A consistent logo and byline would ensure that people know that communications and information are legitimate.
- The EPA Hudson River Field Office is willing to help with this outreach by expanding their mailing list and sharing information on slowdowns.
- Funding could come from foundations, as strong collaboration appeals to them.
- The NYS Canal Corp has matching money available right now for a grant application (April 3 deadline).
- Funding might come from I Love NY funds (Capital Saratoga Region).

Discussion, Comments and Concerns

John Callaghan and Dan Culligan shared the Canal Corp. plans with the group. They will make substantial efforts on the ground with real-time communication with boaters as well as through "Boating on the Hudson," press releases, or events as needed. Having Locks 7 and 8 open 24 hours a day could help the Canal Corp keep up with project barges coming through.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 11:45am.