

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Fort Edward Fire Hall, Fort Edward, New York
Thursday June 27
1:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Final Meeting Summary

CAG Members and Alternates Attending: Manna Jo Green, Jeffrey Kellog, Richard Kidwell, Bill Koebbman, Roland Mann, Althea Mullarkey, Merrilyn Pulver-Moulthrop, Julie Stokes.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (Ecology & Environment), John Davis (NYSOAG), John Fazzolari (Ecology & Environment), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Deepali McCloe (Ecology & Environment), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Larisa Romanowski (USEPA), Charles Sullivan (NPS).

Others Attending: Jeremy Brettholtz (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater), William Shaw (NYSDEC), Chris Martin (NPS), Audrey Van Genechten (NYSDOH), Jamie Munks (Post-Star).

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Eric Roberts.

Members Absent: David Adams, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Darlene DeVoe, Rich Elder, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Brian Gilchrist, Robert Goldman, Robert Goldstein, Gil Hawkins, Christine Hoffer, Abigail Jones, Edward Kinowski, Aaron Mair, David Mathis, Thomas Richardson, Sharon Ruggi, Lois Squire.

Next Meeting: The next CAG meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2013 at the Fort Edward Fire Hall.

Action Items

- CAG Administrative Committee to plan the next CAG meeting

Welcome, Introductions, Review April Meeting Summary

The facilitators welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The CAG approved the April meeting notes without any revisions. All CAG handouts and presentation slides are available within one week of CAG meetings on the project website: <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

The facilitators briefed meeting participants about the Shoreline Site Visit to Lock 6, which several CAG members and other interested parties attended on the morning of June 27. During the site visit, Dave King and Gary Klawinski of EPA described the in-river dredging operations the group was observing, the types of vessels in the water, the trips the vessels were making, and the role of each vessel. They also answered questions about the dredging process, movement through the lock, and other project-related activities.

Project Update on 2013 Dredging Season

David King, EPA, updated the CAG on the 2013 dredging season. Key points from his presentation included:

Operations began on April 29 and will continue until the locks close in November with crews working 24 hours per day 6 days per week, unless there are high river flow events. The operation is set to achieve the goal of removing 350,000 cubic yards of material during the 2013 dredging season, despite the longer transfer distance between the dredging areas and the dewatering facility. Sixty acres of river bottom have been dredged this year with only one 3-day suspension of river activities due to high river velocities June 13-16. Vessels are pulled off the river and dredging ceases when velocity of the river is two knots or greater. Capping percentages this season of 4.62% are far below the allowable 11% limit in project design documents. Backfilling is underway near Griffin Island and dredging is in process just south of Lock 6 ("Hot Spot 28", or CUs 67-70). The backfill loading area is being relocated from Moreau to the Saratoga Backfilling Loading Area near Schuylerville.

In response to a CAG member question, Dave noted that when project operations resuspend some sediment in the water column, the resuspended sediment settles on the river bed within a few days. He noted that higher levels of resuspended PCBs seen at the far-field stations are from the combination of dredging and scouring caused by high river flows. As the flow rate decreases, the rate at which sediments are resuspended will also decrease. If a concentration is measured above 500 ppt mitigation measures may be implemented to reduce concentration levels. Additional best management practices have been deployed in hotspot areas where sheens and higher concentrations are anticipated.

No total PCB standard level exceedances had occurred in the water column to date; however, one result of greater than 500 ppt occurred on June 11-12, but a second reading 24 hours later failed to confirm that level. General Electric notifies down river agricultural water users of any confirmed exceedance above 500 ppt. Sporadic exceedances in the air quality standard at the facility and in the river were identified in 3% of the total samples collected. Since hot weather temperatures volatilize the material faster, GE's contractors have implemented best management practices such as covering barges carrying higher concentration sediments with water, reducing the number of dredges in an area, covering higher concentration sediments with lower concentration sediments, and giving barges containing sediment with higher concentration levels prioritization for passage through the locks.

A new air monitoring device was installed at the edge of the dewatering facility. Nearby property owners were notified of the installation. Air sample results from the new device were not yet available. There has not been a need to operate the dewatering facility on Sundays as the unloading and processing of material is maintaining pace with dredging operations.

One hundred thousand cubic yards will be dredged and removed by truck from the Phase 2 land locked dredge areas. This work will take longer to complete than other sediment removal because barges cannot be used to transport the sediment to the dewatering facility. GE is currently developing plans for how they will remove, treat and transport the material from the area. GE will submit the plans to EPA and the public will have a chance to review and comment on the plans before they are finalized.

Cultural resource surveys are expected to be completed for the remainder of the project (CUs 79-100) by the end of the year.

GE and EPA are currently discussing the work plan for the clean up of PCB contaminated sediment in 80 miles of floodplain (40 miles on each side of the river).

CAG members had the following questions and comments after Dave King's update. Responses are from Dave or other EPA colleagues are *italicized*:

- A CAG member recommend that special care be taken at the intersection of State Road 29 and U.S. Route 4 in Schuylerville since people are not accustomed to large trucks at that intersection..

- How is it determined whether a particular load of sediment is TSCA or non-TSCA? *GE takes core samples and if the concentration is less than 50 ppt it is non-TSCA material. Sediment with different levels of PCB contamination are disposed of differently and, in this case, at different facilities.*
- Will homes along the river need fresh water if PCB concentrations are elevated? *All homes along the river that currently use river water (i.e. private water intakes) have been offered fresh drinking water by GE and no municipalities are drawing water from the river.*
- A CAG member indicated that it would be good for project leaders to communicate with the State Park located near CU 100 when sampling the floodplains.

Habitat Reconstruction Update

Gary Klawinski, EPA, provided the habitat reconstruction update. Key points from his presentation included:

Few projects have conducted as extensive habitat reconstruction as this project. However, the habitat reconstruction effort is just beginning. Pontoon boats with divers are now being used to plant vegetation. This method is easier than the planting rig used previously. In response to a CAG member question about why some areas receive zero plantings, Mr. Klawinski noted that modeling is used to determine which areas are most likely to recover on their own, and some more aggressive planting occurs upstream of areas where habitat restoration is desired with the hope that the downstream areas will begin to repopulate through natural processes. In CU-2 for example, no plantings will be planted because the substrate is rock ledge; however, as sediment is trapped in rock cracks or by woody debris, it is anticipated plants will repopulate the area voluntarily. Approximately 108,000 submerged aquatic plants and 7,000 Riverine Fringing Wetland (RFW) plants have been planted to date. Approximately 18,000 submerged aquatic plants have been planted this year of the roughly 70,000 planned for 2013. No riverine fringing wetland plants are planned for planting this year.

After dredging and backfilling occur as needed, habitat reconstruction begins with consultation of NOAA, USFWS and NYSDEC and a review of pre-dredge habitat surveys to identify the types of plants and their densities in specific locations. Workers plant the original plant varieties in densities similar to the pre-dredge condition. If for some reason habitat cannot be recreated in one area, GE will recreate habitat in another area as approved by EPA. Annual surveys are completed to monitor the coverage and density of the planted vegetation and to identify whether or not additional plantings are necessary. The surveys also identify whether or not invasive species are taking root and to assess river function.

Community Information and Outreach Update

Larisa Romanowski, EPA, updated the CAG on project-related community outreach and engagement by GE and EPA. The main points from her presentation included:

EPA and GE coordinate outreach activities to public officials, homeowners along the river, and neighbors of the sites associated with project operations before and during dredging operations. EPA and GE provide availability sessions and go door-to-door with information about what is planned for the year, what people can expect during dredging operations, and how to contact EPA and GE should they have additional questions. Targeted outreach is conducted for more intrusive activities like tree trimming and requests to pull out docks or other shoreline structures. Follow up letters are sent to remind people when dredging will begin, where it will happen, and who and how they can contact GE or EPA for more information. The Canal Corp publishes a weekly notice to mariners that includes dredging location

information. A telephone-based complaint management system is in place to process complaints, and people can call the EPA field office to discuss concerns at any time.

Noise complaints are probably the most common complaint received. Complaints about truck traffic are infrequent. Once a complaint enters the system, depending on the subject of the complaint, someone may be dispatched to assess the area and identify the cause of the complaint. In some cases, if the complaint can be linked to a specific mechanical issue that occurred near the complaint location, project staff do their best to address the issue. If the cause of the complaint can be identified and it is possible to adjust dredging or processing facility operations to address the complaint, the project team will do so.

CAG member questions and comments included the following:

- A CAG member thanked the EPA and GE for these numerous and varied efforts to keep the public informed about the project.
- A CAG member indicated that EPA and GE should contact the land trusts that hold agricultural easements along the river. Property owners might not think to inform EPA or GE that they have an easement, and land trusts are likely to want to be informed.
- A paddle wheeler at Lock 5 is promoting tours of the dredge area.
- A CAG member suggested that EPA and GE contact landowners in the floodplain if they have not already done so, and should be especially aware of trails and other community resources being planned for the future.
- A CAG member reported hearing that a group from down river traveled up river to view the dredging, but they were turned away at Lock 4 and told it was closed.

Fort Edward and Hudson Falls Plant Update

Will Shaw, New York State Department of Environment and Conservation, provided an update on the Fort Edward and Hudson Falls plant sites. Remaining work to be completed at the two plants includes:

The revised remedial investigation report for the outfall area bedrock at the Fort Edward Plant was received on June 19 and is currently under review. Remedy selection will likely occur over the winter of 2013-2014. The existing groundwater and PCB oil recovery systems at the south end of the site will continue to operate.

At the Hudson Falls Plant, the final fitting of the site-wide groundwater/PCB oil recovery system (Phase 4 of the Tunnel Drain Collection System) will occur in 2013-2014. The treatment plant may also be relocated because GE will need to access the shaft for the collection system. Technology assessments are currently being developed for various areas of the plants to address soil contamination. Soils remediation will likely occur between 2013 and 2015, and different areas of the plant will be cleaned up using different technologies depending on PCB concentrations and the presence of other contaminants like VOCs. The long building at the Hudson Falls Plant will be deconstructed to enable soil remediation. The overall impact of the plant site remediation seems positive. In response to a CAG member question about spikes between the April and June data, Mr. Klawinski said that PCB concentration levels sometimes fluctuate slightly. John Davis, NYSOAG, commented that a fluctuation between 0.9 ppt and 1.31ppt is essentially the same quantity given that PCBs are a mix of approximately 209 different compounds. The concentrations measured downstream of the plant sites at Rogers Island continue to be at levels consistent with or lower than EPA's goals for upstream source control in the Record of Decision. CAG members did not raise any questions or comments after Will's presentation.

Brief Updates and CAG Business

- A CAG member announced that the Canal Corps recently released an *intent to dredge* document. CAG members may review the document since public participation is an important step prior to getting permission from the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the navigation channel.
- Julie Stokes said that the Hudson Hoosic Partnership is interested in the discussion around the clean up of PCB contamination in the floodplain since they are currently mapping where they plan to install parks, pavilions, and boat launches over the next 10-15 years. She suggested that perhaps sampling of the floodplains be coordinated with locations of planned future use. She asked all CAG members to review the map and said EPA and GE would receive a copy in the future. She said the Partnership would like to sit down with both EPA and GE - she noted GE was missing from this meeting - to understand how testing in the floodplains will be conducted and how the clean up will be performed.
- Audrey Van Genechten, New York State Department of Health, provided a brief update for DOH fish advisory outreach. DOH continues to implement an active community outreach plan including presentations at a PCB Forum organized by Clearwater and Scenic Hudson, to boat and yacht clubs, to fishermen's association meetings, to church congregations in Spanish and English, and at food banks, among others. They have also been working with local officials in Yonkers and other cities and with Scenic Hudson to erect fish advisory signs in public spaces and on Scenic Hudson properties. Additionally, they are translating the signage into Chinese for a few locations.
- DOH is also updating their education materials. The information in the river brochure will clarify some details about fish consumption by women and children. A blue crab cooking and eating guide is also being developed, as are county-level maps to show where people should and should not fish. Finally, a fish skinning and trimming video will be posted to You Tube to teach anglers which parts of a fish to avoid eating. In response to this update, several CAG members commended the DOH on their efforts to inform the public about the fish contamination. One member requested the DOH not forget to do outreach in the upper river even though there are more people further south.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.