

**Community Advisory Group (CAG) Technical Meeting**  
**Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**Thursday, January 26 2006**  
**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**  
**Saratoga Spa State Park, Saratoga Springs, New York**

**CAG Members and Alternates Present:** Chris Ballantyne, Dan Casey, Ken DeCerce, Philip Dobie, Richard Fuller, Joe Gardner, Robert Goldstein, Manna Jo Greene, Harry Gutheil, George Hodgson, Roland Mann, Rich Schiafo, Lois Squire, Julia Stokes.

**CAG Liaisons Attending:** Danielle Adams (E&E), William Daigle (NYSDEC), Doug Garbarini (USEPA), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communications), David King (USEPA), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Leo Rosales (USEPA), Steven Sweeney (NYSCC), Dan Watts (NJIT).

**Facilitators:** Ona Ferguson, Pat Field.

**Others Attending:** Tom Brady (Albany County Health Department), Lee Coleman (Daily Gazette), Kenneth Crowe (Times Union), Doug Fischer (USEPA), Alison Hess (USEPA), Jim Kinney (Saratogian), Tom Kryzak (Air and Earth Works), James Kudback (Controlled Extraction Technology), Christine Margiotta (The Post Star), John Mulligan (Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.), Charles Vandrei (NYSDEC).

**Key Action Items:**

- EPA will forward additional noise evaluation information to the CAG via George Hodgson and the Technical Committee when it is received from GE. As indicated by EPA, noise mitigation approaches (as needed) will be included in final design and can be reviewed with that submittal.
- CBI will invite Local 25, the Canal Corp, and the group that worked in Cumberland Bay for a detailed discussion of dredging for the March meeting.
- CBI will draft a brief two-page summary of the CAG's noise concerns.
- CBI, EPA and the Technology Subcommittee will plan for meetings on a range of important topics in the FDR as soon as it is released (late March 2006).

The next CAG meeting will be held in Fort Edward on **Thursday February 23, 2006**.

**Welcome**

The purpose of the session was to review several technical questions in detail that time limits at general CAG meetings do not permit. It was noted that the afternoon session would be an Executive CAG session for CAG members, alternates, and facilitators only.

## **Technical Discussion about the IDR: Noise and Quality of Life**

Saratoga County spoke of its recent retaining of a firm to do limited, initial background noise monitoring. The study found that most areas today have background noise levels of 35-40dba. The quality of life noise performance standard that EPA has put in place is 65dba during the day and 55dba at night for the dewatering facility, and 80dba during the day and 65dba at night for dredging areas. Some are concerned that if the project were designed at those performance standard levels, there would be a significant decrease in quality of life for residents. They feel that noise standards are too high to be quality of life standards and are too high to prevent emotional/mental harm. Saratoga County would like the standards set at a maximum of 10-15dba above the background level, rather than at a standard, fixed level.

Saratoga County's consultant gathered data from three sites near the facility location and two sites along the river near residences. CAG members noted that most of Washington County is very rural and quiet. EPA stated that the data Saratoga County gathered is consistent with EPA's assumptions on background noise levels.

CAG members' concerns include: (a) the baseline is too high, and it should be reduced, (b) physical standards designed to prevent hearing impairment differ from quality of life standards, and the latter aren't being addressed, and (c) couldn't standards be unique for different areas in the region? CAG members see possible noise mitigation options including: (a) reduce the standard limits, and (b) change the duration or times of dredging so dredging noise won't keep people awake at night.

EPA's consultant explained the development of the standard: the DOT construction project standard was adopted as a starting point, receptors inside homes were considered, ambient noise levels were considered. Noise was modeled by researching the noise of the technologies likely to be used, as well as using the extensive existing research data available on noise. EPA noted that the nighttime noise standards were set at 65dba (at the shoreline) with the goal of not keeping people inside their homes up at night. Most typical houses have background noise levels of 40-45dba due to refrigerators, etc. The facility's standard will be 65dba (at fence line), which should mean that inside the nearest house dredging noise would be in the 45dba range or lower. For most of the dredging time the project won't be approaching these numbers in areas where people live.

EPA staff noted that noise standards will not be changed, nor will additional background noise data be collected, but that the CAG, GE and EPA have the same goal of mitigation and contingencies so as to affect peoples' quality of life as little as possible.

Comments on the noise issue from the CAG:

- Noise levels will fluctuate and will be more problematic at certain times (like when windows will be open).

- It is impractical to turn dredges on and off for larger parts of the day or night because of the time to restart them and how further reducing a short dredging season given the temperate climate would cause a significant loss of productivity.
- All parties have a shared goal of keeping the noise to a minimum, which will reduce neighborhood impacts and prevent complaints.
- IDR comments from state agencies include a set of guidelines on pages 26-30 that may serve as a foundation for what the CAG wants to create.
- The use of the railroad may have more effect on Fort Edward regarding noise and traffic than the dredging or dewatering. EPA staff noted in response that GE is intending to do all train yard work and facility construction during the day to address this noise concern.
- Noise standards may need to be set strictly at the beginning of dredging to minimize concern.

Requests on noise from the CAG:

- CAG would like EPA to show how they estimated their 45dba-range interior numbers.
- Background measurements should be made at the sensitive receptors for both facility and dredging noise to help better shape/influence the design. Note: EPA has stated previously that they do not intend to gather this information.
- CAG wants to see *draft* Final Design to see the noise mitigation efforts.
- The Final Design that GE submits in March will have public input, and the CHASP, due at the same time, will have a public comment period.
- GE is very innovative and should use its “eco-magination” to think creatively about the noise problem ahead of time as a gesture of goodwill to neighbors.
- EPA should keep in mind guidance in the DEC document/comment that recommended an increase limited to 10dba or less. EPA pointed out that this guidance is not applicable to the project and that the noise standard was developed in consultation with NYSDEC.
- CAG would like EPA and GE to strive to go beyond what is required to indicate their good faith in designing with the concerns of residents in mind.

*Noise Complaint Process*

As part of CHASP (due at the same time as Final Design), GE will be elaborating on the complaint process. CAG members would like to see a very prompt turnaround on noise complaints (ideally less than 24 hours). EPA noted that all complaints trigger responses and possible actions.

*Mitigation (Before and After Dredging Begins)*

A GE representative noted that GE has been doing noise modeling to identify specific activities and locations where the project might approach the noise standards. If GE finds areas that approach the standards, they will evaluate appropriate mitigation/contingencies. The FDR will have much more than the IDR on contingencies and mitigation. For example, GE may use dredge sequencing and scheduling for dredging as one of its mitigation options.

CAG ideas on mitigation:

- GE's goal should be surpass the standards to be met if possible.
- Final Design should be selective of where and when you dredge to assure peace of mind to residents. One example would be not dredging at night near residences.
- The CAG could provide clear mitigation guidelines for GE to aim for (like enclosed structures, limiting hours, etc). If GE doesn't have these guidelines, they can't follow them.

### **Technical Discussion about the IDR: Shoreline Issues**

EPA projected the diagram of dredging on shore and the 3:1 dredge slope and answered CAG questions about the formula and diagram. Maintaining shoreline stability is one of the design goals. Cutting into steep shorelines could cause erosion or collapse.

Details:

- The 5000 cfs (cubic feet per second) mark (average flow) was chosen to define the shoreline.
- Depth of digging (dredge cut lines) was determined from over 50,000 data points collected during the sediment sampling program.
- A 3:1 side slope will be stable and will ensure most contamination is removed.

It could leave behind a small wedge of contamination. If this occurs, then GE will do more sampling.

*The CAG's primary concern is whether pockets of contamination could be left behind if there is a predefined wedge shape for all shoreline dredging.*

It is possible that pockets of contamination could be left behind after the first dredge pass, which is one of the reasons EPA has decided to do additional sampling in the shoreline areas, and why the Residuals Standard was developed. If (after first pass dredging) sampling shows that additional contamination is left over 50ppm, additional dredging, backfilling/capping, or other mitigation techniques will be employed in accordance with the residuals standard

*CAG members stated that their concern about shoreline dredge procedure is connected to the fact that there is potential for human exposure to contaminants on the shoreline.*

EPA stated that the requirements are appropriate. EPA staff stated that the average depth of contamination is 1.9 feet. The project will dredge to a minimum of 3 feet. If there are exposed sediments, those will have to be capped and maintained. EPA sees a strong disincentive for GE to choose to cap contamination because caps have to be maintained over a long time. EPA also stated that the vast majority of sites in the floodplain didn't have much of a wedge of deposition except in very flat areas.

The TOSC Coordinator stated that creating a standard approach to shoreline dredging is a reasonable goal, and that concern about shoreline erosion is real. He hears CAG

concerns about contaminants that remain after dredging, for which sampling is key to determine what is left behind, and whether it is significant. The current plan says that if contamination remains, GE has a range of options for how to address it. According to EPA staff, the legal requirement is to cap all nodes that miss the standards with a circular (not triangular) cap. They noted also that this year there will be more sampling in preparation for the design for dredging of Phase 2 shoreline areas, and that between Phases 1 and 2 there will be an evaluation to see if shoreline dredging processes need to be adjusted. It was noted that it is not clear at this point exactly how many areas might have residual shoreline contamination. It could be a very small number of points/areas in Phase 1.

### **Additional Subjects: Habitat, Backfill, and Dredge Technology/Resuspension**

Due to meeting time constraints, habitat, backfill, and dredging technology and resuspension were not discussed. Dan Watts of NJIT will write up summaries of these subjects for CBI to send out to the CAG in February. He noted that primary concerns from the CAG on habitat that he has heard are: (a) that desired habitat will have to be actively restored immediately after dredging in order to prevent invasive species from moving in, and (b) a question about where these restoration plants will come from. EPA noted in response to the second question that GE intends to buy plants from commercial suppliers once they learn what the proportions of different plants are in the project area prior to start date.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.