

Community Advisory Group (CAG)
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Meeting Notes
Thursday September 11, 2008
1:30 PM – 3:20 PM
Saratoga Springs, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: Chris DeBolt, Philip Dobie, Richard Fuller, Robert Goldman, Robert Goldstein, Manna Jo Greene, George Hodgson, Bill Koebbeman, Betty Koval, Roland Mann, David Mathis, Merrilyn Pulver-Moulthrop, Lois Squire, Julie Stokes, Mindy Wormuth.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (E&E), John Davis (NYSDOJ), Joan Gerhardt (General Electric), Richard Harris (NYSCC), David King (USEPA), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Kristen Skopeck (USEPA).

Others Attending: Scott Blaha (General Electric), Paul Bucharcki (Times Union), Lee Coleman (Daily Gazette), Shawn Connelly (Town of Stillwater), Thomas Cronin (Atlantic Testing), Justin Deming (NYSDOH), Mike Deso (Baker Corp.), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), Tamara Girard (NYSDOH), Gary Klawinski (E&E), Jeremy Magliaion (OAG), Lisa Manzi (Congresswoman Gillibrand), Bob Meyers (Ecology & Environment), Brian Nearing (Albany Times Union), Ben Rice (NPS), David Rosoff (USEPA), Thars Trehy (resident), Lloyd Wilson (NYSDOH).

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Patrick Field.

Members Absent: Dan Casey, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Mark Fitzsimmons, Gil Hawkins, Preston Jenkins, Aaron Mair, Dan McGraw, Warren Reiss, John Reiger, Judy Schmidt-Dean.

Next meetings: The next CAG meeting is scheduled for December 9 at 1:00pm.

Action Items

- CBI – Compile Community Involvement Plan survey results and share with CAG.
- NYSDEC – Distribute USGS report on surface water time of travel to CAG.
- EPA – Circulate summary of types of support Technical Assistance Service to Communities (TASC) can provide.
- CBI/EPA – Plan tour of construction facility this fall.

Welcome, Introductions, Review of September Meeting Summary and Action Items

Facilitators welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the draft of the June meeting summary distributed in CAG folders was approved with no changes.

CAG Membership and Morning Meeting Overview

The agenda planning committee recommended that Shawn Connelly of the Town of Stillwater be given a seat on the CAG. The CAG agreed, with the caveat that there is a need to clarify representation issues with the Mayor on representation of the Town and Village of Stillwater, which are separate entities.

Many CAG members attended a private morning meeting on September 11 with representatives from towns in the area concerned about alternative water supply during dredging. All CAG members were invited to share their experience of that meeting at the outset of the afternoon meeting. They described how representatives from Stillwater, Mechanicville, Halfmoon, and Waterford expressed that their safe drinking water concerns have not yet been adequately addressed. The town representatives said their primary concern is that EPA has not put in writing their guarantee to ensure that safe drinking water alternatives are in place prior to the start of dredging.

Those CAG members who attended the morning session indicated a need for more two-way conversation with EPA: sharing concerns, being listened to, and getting responses. They ask that EPA, DOH and other state agencies focus on the major issue of providing safe water resources to the communities along the river in the next 30 days so that the CAG can move on other topics.

CAG members expressed a range of perspectives, grouped around the following key themes:

- *Communication.* Serious concern about the substantial breakdown in channels of communication between EPA and communities. Example cited poor communication with EPA included (a) EPA released a press release related to waterline access on a Friday afternoon after town offices were closed, (b) the sense that there had not been much outreach to residents on the topics of floodplains and agriculture, (c) EPA has not responded to requests that a hiking trail be organized in conjunction with the waterline right of way. Many CAG members described frustration due to their sense that EPA is not listening to the CAG on those issues that are most important to CAG members, and they expressed a desire for substantially improved two-way communication. They want to see the alternative water supply issue resolved in a way that reassures CAG members and communities that they are being taken care of appropriately. It was noted that one goal of the CAG is communicating serious concerns and getting serious responses from different agencies, and that many on the CAG do not currently feel they are getting serious responses to their inquiries.
- *Timeliness.* Concern that this topic was not resolved years ago, with one member noting some slow progress on this topic between EPA and towns.
- *Support for Dredging.* Consistent support of the overall effort to dredge.
- *Problem-solving.* EPA needs to problem solve around the communities' concerns. Given that an easy resolution is possible, it should be implemented after dialogue with the towns. EPA should write a letter to the towns telling the towns that they will make the towns whole when the dredging begins. That is all the towns want.
- *Request for Information.* Request for more information on how the risks associated with consuming 500ppb PCBs compare with other daily risks.
- *Safety.* Many declared that everyone should have a reliable, safe drinking water supply and not have to think twice about it. They said that safety has to be the top priority and that it is crucial that EPA and state agencies ensure safe, potable water for everyone.
- *The Role of General Electric.* One CAG member asked GE to do the ethical thing and help EPA and the communities.

Many made their request to EPA that this issue be addressed prior to CAG discussions about other important topics. A group of nine CAG members (60% of the CAG members present, 38% of total CAG membership) representing diverse constituents on the CAG then left the meeting, asking EPA to spend time between now and the next CAG meeting resolving their concerns with the towns over ensuring alternative water supplies during dredging.

Community Involvement Plan

Kristen Skopeck stated that EPA is updating their Community Involvement Plan (CIP). EPA has heard concerns that communication is a challenge, and is looking forward to improving the CIP to better meet community needs. CAG members were invited to weigh in on the CIP via anonymous web survey, and EPA will be reviewing those results and other input during the update process

Phase 2 Intermediate Design Report

Scott Blaha of General Electric presented on the Phase 2 Intermediate Design Report (P2IDR). The full text is available on the EPA website, and the presentation slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com>. The design approaches in this IDR are consistent with those used in Phase 1. After Phase 1 is completed, there will be an opportunity to review data from that process and make any necessary changes to Phase 2. Dredging in Phase 2 will occur from May through November, 24 hours a day, 6 days a week. Restoration and backfill will be done at the end of each season for the areas that were dredged that year, with planting the following season in wetlands and subaquatic areas. Performance standards remain the same for Phase 2 as in Phase 1.

There is one landlocked section between Thompson Island Dam and Fort Miller Dam that is not navigable. There will be an alternative approach to dredging there involving mechanical dredging and smaller equipment. As with the rest of the dredging project, barges will move the sediment over water up to the dewatering facility.

EPA is currently reviewing the Phase 2 IDR. Once it is approved, GE will have four months to develop the Phase 2 Final Design Report. Design assumptions for Phase 2 may be refined after seeing actual, on-the-ground performance during Phase 1.

A CAG member asked about habitat restoration and invasive species. GE's intention is to plant native species, and GE and EPA are actively working on the subject of habitat restoration. A CAG member asked if there would be adequate water coming through the canals to Lock 7, and a GE representative responded that GE is working closely with the NYS Canal Corps to ensure all canal-related operations work smoothly. CAG members wanted to know about the timing between Phases 1 and 2, and were told that there is no assigned start time for Phase 2, though it will begin after the review period and EPA's peer review of Phase 1. GE will be developing a report over the coming years indicating what will happen to the decommissioned site after the project is over.

CAG members asked again about the river flow speed at which dredging would be required to stop. A GE representative answered that at 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of flow (approximately 3 to 4 times the average summer flow rate), dredging must stop. CFS cannot be converted into mph

because cfs is a measure of volume over time (three dimensional) while mph is a measure of distance over time (two dimensional). The standard cfs in spring is 20,000, which is why dredging cannot begin too early. The cfs is measured at Ft Edward. Flow monitoring is usually able to predict high water/flood events. Kevin Farrar agreed to send CAG members a USGS report on surface water time of travel in the Hudson River.

Construction Update Video

A video made by GE of the dewatering facility site construction was shown. The video is available on GE's website at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com>. CAG members did not have any questions following the video.

Hudson Falls and Fort Edward Project Update

Kevin Farrar of NYDEC presented on the Fort Edward and Hudson Fall sites. His presentation can be found at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com>.

General Electric Hudson Falls Plant Site

The vertical shaft was completed at this site in March, and the tunnel excavation is approaching completion. The next phase of construction, in which pipes will be drilled into the bedrock to drain PCBs, should begin soon. The location of the tunnel was adjusted so it is further from the dam. The location adjustment will not reduce the quantity of PCBs to be removed. There has been substantial monitoring of air, dust and PCBs on this site. Mitigation measures were implemented to limit the potential for PCB concentration to exceed project criteria. These measures include actions like covering and watering spoils and limiting work during the hottest days of the year. Mitigations have been successful in limiting exceedences. Construction should be complete by fall 2009.

At this time, water and oil are already draining into the tunnel. The plan is to dewater the rock and have PCBs drain into the tunnel, thereby diverting PCB oil from draining into the river. This is the first time this technology has been used for environmental remediation in this way, and once construction is completed, this system will be in operation for the foreseeable future.

General Electric Fort Edward Plant Site

At this site, in 2003-2004 soil and sediment were removed with bladder dams that exposed a portion of the river bottom. Preliminary investigations were done in 2005, and the remedial investigation currently underway began 2007. The objective is to delineate the extent of the PCB contamination in the bedrock.

Monitoring wells have been installed, which are bailed out to determine if oil is present. PCB and volatile organic compound (VOC) analysis of groundwater is currently underway. GE continues to add well locations as needed. It is now clear that PCB oil has extended more than 200 feet. The vertical and horizontal extent of the contamination are not yet known, but it is known that PCB oil in the bedrock is not limited to the immediate vicinity of the formal outfall. The overall scale of the investigation continues to be modified. This fall, additional monitoring wells will be installed to the south and west and to determine if it is possible to recover oil from wells by bailing and letting them refill.

A CAG member asked if there is contamination by Old Grand Union. Mr. Farrar responded that monitoring wells in that area do not detect any contamination there (and groundwater does not run that way), but that PCBs were dug up and disposed of several years ago near the south side of Old Grand Union. Deanna Ripstein noted that the state presumes there is some PCB contamination under the building (additional characterization efforts are needed) and said the Old Grant Union project site remains open because there are residual PCBs detected beside the walls. She noted the goal of attaining a level of one ppm or less PCBs through the soil excavation effort.

Brief Updates

Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) Request – Given the EPA letter in response to the CAG request for TASC support on water supply issues, which many CAG members read as indicating no additional information could be developed through the TASC, the CAG will not further pursue TASC support on this topic. CAG members asked to review future TASC presentations in advance to ensure they are at the appropriate level for the CAG. Kristen Skopeck agreed to circulate a summary of the services TASC support can provide to the CAG.

Floodplains - David Rosoff of EPA presented on efforts to sample approximately a thousand locations in the floodplains between Fort Edward and Troy. The field sample plan has been approved, and General Electric will do the sampling starting in late September with EPA oversight. GE will be sampling approximately 300 parcels, of which approximately 200 are use areas (properties where people are using the land for recreational or other activities). This effort began in August 2008, when approximately 2700 letters were sent to people in local communities announcing the sampling effort and sharing a fact sheet developed by DOH and EPA on the floodplain investigation and recommended precautions for residents. This was followed by letters from GE requesting access from those on whose land GE hopes to do sampling. GE has received responses from approximately 60% of the landowners they contacted, primarily with positive results. GE will continue to try to get access to these sites, and GE hopes to be sampling by the end of September. GE will be able to present on these results to the CAG in late winter or early spring. This is the beginning of the research that will support a remedial investigation in the future. GE will pay for this effort and will provide most of the contractors, though some EPA contractors will be involved. The sampling this season is scheduled to be completed by mid-December. A CAG member mentioned that his property in the floodplain had recently been the site of an emergency action and that the whole process, from sampling his property through the remedy, was handled very well.

Future CAG Meeting Topics

CAG members suggested including habitat replacement, a dewatering facility site tour, and an update on the waterline construction on the next CAG meeting agenda.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20pm.