

**Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting**  
**Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site**  
**Fort Edward, New York**  
**Thursday September 27, 2012 – 1:00-3:00pm**

**Meeting Summary**

**Members and Alternates Attending:** Rich Elder, Manna Jo Greene, Abigail Jones, Jeffrey Kellogg, Richard Kidwell, William Koebbeman, Roland Mann, David Mathis, Althea Mullarkey, Merrilyn Pulver-Moulthrop, Julie Stokes.

**CAG Liaisons Attending:** Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communications), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Tim Kruppenbacher (General Electric), Jerney Magliao (NYS Office of the Attorney General), Deanna Riptein (NYS Department of Health), Larisa Romanowski (USEPA), Charles Sullivan (National Park Service).

**Others Attending:** Jerney Brettholtz (Green Mountain College), Lee Coleman (Daily Gazette), Regina Keenan (NYSDOH), Mark Surette (Ecology & Environment), Steven Sweeney (NYSCC), Audrey Van Genechten (NYSDOH).

**Facilitators:** Ona Ferguson, Eric Roberts.

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

**Next Meeting:** The next CAG meeting will be in late November or early December.

**Action Items:**

- Admin Committee – Create the next CAG meeting agenda.
- Manna Jo Greene – Check about getting the CAG a copy of Peter Defur's feedback on the Five Year Review and the habitat restoration (per agenda items from June CAG meeting).
- All – Contact Ona Ferguson if you are interested in joining the CAG Admin Committee.

**Welcome, Introductions, Review June 2012 Meeting Summary**

The facilitators welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The draft June meeting summary was approved with some technical corrections. Althea Mullarkey introduced Abby Jones, the Riverkeeper representative replacing Rebecca Troutman. Ona Ferguson introduced Eric Roberts, a new CBI Associate who will be part of the CAG facilitation team. All CAG meeting handouts and presentation slides are available within one week of CAG meetings at:  
<http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

**2012 Dredging Season Update**

Mr. Tim Kruppenbacher, General Electric, gave an update on the progress of the summer dredging work. Key points in his presentation included:

*Schedule, Scope and General Updates* – Dredging began on May 9<sup>th</sup>, a month earlier than the 2011 dredging season. GE expected to remove 350,000 cubic yards in 2012, but they have surpassed that goal, dredging approximately 466,000 cubic yards to date operating 24 hours a day, six days a week. Dredging

is underway in certification units (CUs) 45, 46 and 47. GE expects to dredge CUs 47-49 by the end of the season when the locks close (around November 15). Backfilling is complete in CUs 26-34, and GE is finishing the documentation for backfilling in CUs 37-40. GE is backfilling in CUs 41, 42 and 43. The Three Sisters Islands area took more effort to dredge than anticipated due to low flow conditions. The average flow this season was 2000 cubic feet per second, and the machinery operates most efficiently with a flow rate of approximately 5000 cubic feet per second. GE expects to finish the dredging operations in the Three Sisters Island area within the next two weeks.

*Processing Facility* – The facility improvements from last winter increased the efficiency of the processing facility. The facility is shipping 28,000-29,000 tons of sediment off-site every week, mostly to Oklahoma and Ohio, sometimes to Michigan. There is more filter cake this year due to large quantities of very fine sediment. All the sediment at the facility should be shipped off site by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

*Water and Air Quality, Habitat Restoration* – There were no water quality exceedances identified at Waterford, but at Schuylerville there were three exceedances in August and one in early September. These occurred when dredging operations were on-going in areas where previous dredge spoils were deposited from historical canal maintenance. PCB concentrations in these areas are highly variable and sometimes highly contaminated, which makes it challenging to maintain low re-suspension levels. Occasional exceedances of air quality standards occurred in the Three Sisters Islands area. GE is working with EPA to monitor and control air emissions in areas where they expect higher PCB concentration levels. GE is tracking PCB levels on the barges to ensure that loads with the highest PCB concentrations move as quickly as possible off the barges and into the facility. While 2012 has been a lighter year for habitat restoration than 2011, a new plant harvesting method has enabled GE to transplant plants more quickly. Monitoring of 2010 and 2011 plants shows good growth, especially where replanting occurred. GE is currently evaluating 2012 dredge habitat and expects to plant four CUs from the 2011 dredge areas before the end of the 2012 season.

*Concluding the Season* – GE is planning for winter demobilization and weatherization. This includes planning for equipment rehab, winterization of equipment, and determining where to store the equipment. GE is also preparing the 2013 dredging schedule and will procure services for the 2013 season soon.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to the presentation:

*Rehandling Areas* – GE encountered occasional surprises in the dredge spoil areas (i.e., re-handling areas). The re-handling areas are full of debris, which makes it challenging to penetrate while dredging. GE occasionally found contamination deeper than expected in these areas, but in other areas of the river they encountered clay or rock layers and did not need to dredge as deeply as anticipated. GE is becoming more familiar with identifying these areas based on the surface appearance and as a result the second-pass ratio is much lower this year than last year. To date, most re-handling areas are on the eastern side of the navigation channel and GE does not cap entire re-handling areas. GE has encountered two re-handling areas to date near CUs 26/27. GE has not yet begun investigating where potential re-handling areas may be located in future years but will work with EPA and NYSCC to identify them.

*Are there more DNAPL sheens?*— GE is not finding more DNAPL sheens this year, and does have booms in place to maintain any they come upon.

*River Sections* – By the end of 2012, GE will have nearly finished dredging River Section 1. CUs 55 through 60 will be completed in 2013 and GE expects to enter River Section 2 next year.

*Processing Facility* – A question was asked whether or not any plans had been made regarding the use of the facility following the completion of the dredging project. EPA indicated that the Town of Fort Edward has been discussing options,

### **Fish Consumption Advisory Outreach Activities Update**

Regina Keenan, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), presented information about the Department of Health's ongoing activities to make people aware of Hudson River Fish Advisories. She presented on the following key topics:

*Outreach Goals and Activities* – DOH wants to communicate the consumption advisory to as many people as possible. It focused in 2012 on reaching populations in the capital district who may eat striped bass, as the fish are highly contaminated there. A primary message is that women under 50 and children under 15 should not eat Hudson fish. Many people eat crabs, which can contain a lot of PCBs, and DOH needs to especially reach non-whites who tend to be less aware of the advisory. To convey the consumption advice to as many people as possible, DOH produces signs, posters, brochures, coloring books, magnets and wallet cards and DOH staff visit food banks, English as a Second Language classes, community festivals, fairs, fishing derbies and speak to the angler's family members.

*Challenges* – A variety of factors challenge DOH's ability to get the message to some of the most-at-risk people. Language and literacy can be a barrier with many populations. In locations where river water is used as the city drinking water source, people may not understand why more PCBs are found in fish tissue than in the water column. Additionally, many believe they would be able to taste the contamination (though PCBs at levels in fish are tasteless and odorless). People may be confused about who can eat fish from different parts of the river because the consumption advice varies between different river segments and different demographic groups. They have even encountered some who think the dredging is completed and that the contamination is gone.

Cultural practices, distrust of the government, and the time and locations where people fish can make accessing and speaking with anglers difficult. Some people who eat Hudson fish cannot read in any language, which means written information is not useful. Some anglers are distrustful of the government and so do not believe DOH warnings. Anglers who fish at night or on private property are particularly hard to reach since they fish after normal work hours and government employees cannot trespass on private property to speak with them.

*Partnerships* –DOH partners successfully with local organizations to convey the fish consumption advisory. These include food banks, municipal governments and many agencies, non-profits, fishing and boating associations and groups which they fund: the Hudson Basin River Watch, the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County, and the Rockland County Cornell Cooperative Extension. These groups distribute consumption advisory information, held a conference on fishing on the Hudson River, and speak to anglers about the consumption advisory.

*Future Plans* – DOH plans to continue partnering with the Cornell Cooperative Extensions, begin partnerships to do Hudson fish consumption surveys in three more counties and to explore more partners to work with in New York City. They will also produce a brochure specific to the upstream section of the Hudson River, a crab cooking and picking guide, and an online demonstration of how to trim and skin a fish to reduce PCB consumption.

CAG members discussed the following in response to Ms. Keenan's presentation:

*Importance of reducing PCB concentrations in sediment* – CAG members said it is essential that this dredging project be completed to bring PCB contamination levels in fish down.

*Toxicity of PCBs* – In response to a question about whether DOH's opinion on the toxicity of PCBs has changed, Deanna Ripstein, NYSDOH, said DOH's perspective of PCBs remains the same: PCBs are probable human carcinogens and pose health risks.

*Warning message on DOH materials* – CAG members asked why the DOH materials state that eating fish *may* cause health issues rather than stating that eating fish *will* cause health issues. One CAG member said this language is due to both concerns of liability and the fact that people's biology differs so how they are affected by PCB contamination also differs.

### **Public Water Supply Monitoring Program Update**

Deanna Ripstein, NYSDOH, presented information about the public water supply monitoring program funded by the EPA and implemented by DOH. The sampling program entails sampling raw (untreated) and finish (treated) water at the public water supplies at Green Island, Rhinebeck, Port Ewen, and Poughkeepsie. She said that background (pre-dredge) sampling results along with sampling results collected during the dredge seasons show that the PCB concentrations present are low and comply with the drinking water standard for PCBs. Further, there is no significant difference between the PCB levels measured at the public water supplies before dredging began in comparison to the levels measured during dredging.

### **RI/FS Work, Hudson Falls and Fort Edward Plant Update**

Kevin Farrar, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), presented an update on the RI/FS work at the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward Plants. At the Fort Edward plant site, the Remedial Investigation (RI) report for the bedrock investigation along the river near the former outfall area is due this fall. GE is monitoring above, at and below the Fort Edward outfall, and finding very low or non-detect PCB concentrations in surface water. At this point, the site's impact on the water column appears limited.

At the Hudson Falls plant site, the remedial design for soils is ongoing as NYSDEC evaluates GE's proposal to geographically break up the soils into different groups for design. The concentration of PCBs at the base of Bakers Falls is very low or non-detect even though ten years ago this same area was highly contaminated. The positive news is that the plant sites no longer appear to be ongoing sources of PCB contamination of river wide significance.

Kevin also described how surface water PCB concentrations have been very low or non-detect downstream of the plant sites and of the areas dredged to date but upstream of the current dredging work. This reduction of surface water PCB concentrations appears to be the result of both the upstream source control work by GE at the plant sites, and the downstream EPA-led sediment remediation program, also being implemented by GE.

CAG members asked about the influence of storm activity such as Irene on PCB concentrations in the water column. Kevin said that sediment deposits from Hurricane Irene were very small in the Upper Hudson, so it is unlikely the storm event is associated with an increase or reduction in PCB concentration levels. But this might not hold true on the Lower Hudson, where a clean layer of sediment flushed out of the Schoharie Creek / Mohawk River drainage basin during Tropical Storm Irene may have settled on top of contaminated sediment, at least temporarily reducing surface water PCB concentrations in the mid Hudson valley.

## **Other Topics**

Julie Stokes gave an update on a meeting related to Navigational Dredging. Members of the Hudson Hoosic Partnership are actively considering how they can use the Hudson River for economic development purposes and have identified the need to dredge the river to facilitate the transportation of goods and services on barges.

In response to a review of Action Items from the June CAG meeting, EPA said the maps requested of all three river sections illustrating coring locations (including those outside the Dredge Area Delineation) and the navigational channel are not yet completed. EPA acknowledged the request for documenting and assessing mussel beds in the dredge areas and the mussel beds being removed through dredging.

## **CAG Business**

The CAG Admin Committee is seeking another community representative. Admin Committee representatives participate on a phone call or two and to respond to a few emails between the CAG's quarterly meetings. The role of the representative is to help determine agenda topics for CAG meetings.

Topics suggested for the next meeting included:

- A presentation by the NRD Trustees on restoration projects
- An update on the fall fish sampling schedule
- A presentation by Peter DeFur on mussel restoration elsewhere (if it falls under the TAG)

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.