

Community Advisory Group (CAG)
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Meeting Summary
Thursday June 10, 2010
1:30 - 4:00PM
Fort Edward, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: Phil Dobie, Manna Jo Greene, Jane Havens, Richard Kidwell, Bill Koebbeman, Roland Mann, Althea Mullarky, Merrilyn Pulver-Mouthrop, Sharon Ruggi, Julie Stokes, Rebecca Troutman.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Mark Behan (Behan Communications for GE), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communications), John Haggard (General Electric), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Larisa Romanowski (Ecology & Environment), Kristen Skopeck (USEPA), Charles Sullivan (USNPS).

Others Attending: Adam Ayers (General Electric), Chris Ballantyne (NYS DEC), John Connolly (AnchorQEA), John Davis (NYS Attorney General's Office), Lauren Ellmers (Clearwater), Ryan Davis (Anchor QEA), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), John Fazzolari (Ecology & Environment), Bob Gibson (General Electric), Andrew Ingels (General Electric), Liz Miller (USEPA), Mike McGowan (USEPA), Joe Moloughney (NYSCC), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Sam Stapleton.

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Meredith Sciarrio.

Members Absent: Andy Bicking, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Rob Goldman, Robert Goldstein, Gil Hawkins, Preston Jenkins, John Lawler, Aaron Mair, David Mathis, Dan McGraw, Lois Squire, Mary Fran Wachunas, Mindy Wormuth.

Next meetings: The next CAG meeting will likely be in September.

Action Items:

- CBI – Seek individual CAG member guidance on finding additional CAG members
- CBI – Plan September CAG agenda with Admin Committee.
- John Haggard – Provide CAG with Phase 1 capping information/data

Welcome, Introductions, Review March Meeting Summary

The facilitator welcomed everyone to the meeting. The draft March meeting minutes were approved without any changes. All CAG meeting handouts and presentation slides are available within one week of CAG meetings at: <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. A small group of CAG members met prior to the CAG meeting to learn about this year's habitat restoration efforts (see Appendix A for notes from that discussion). The facilitator reported that the facilitation team requested that the peer review panel present the findings of their Final Peer Review Report during the next CAG meeting, as requested at the last CAG meeting, and were told by those managing the peer review process that it would not be possible.

General Electric: Phase 1 Evaluation Report Overview

John Haggard (GE) and John Connolly (Anchor QEA) presented on General Electric's Phase 1 Evaluation Report. The slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

Phase 1 successfully removed 16,300kg of PCBs, however, there was more resuspension (200kg) than the annual load allotment (117kg), exceeding project standards. The resuspension rate fell within the average of other dredging sites (3-4%), but PCB levels increased in water, fish and sediments. GE utilized many strategies to control resuspension during phase 1, but does not believe that these were effective. GE measures to control resuspension during Phase 1 included a rock dike in the East Channel, sheet piling at Griffin Island, limiting tug operations in shallow waters, and minimizing bucket decanting of water back into the river. During Phase 1, the areas with higher PCB air levels (related to PCB volatilization), were primarily in places with low river flow and high in-river sediment PCB concentrations.

GE recommends that the dredging of the river continue for Phase 2 with modifications. GE would like to see a review of the resuspension standard for load, as newly suspended PCBs may be contaminating downstream sediment not slated to be dredged. They hope to prioritize certain "high value" deposition areas for removal to meet project standards and goals. GE feels it is crucial to complete Phase 2 within the planned five year timeframe because an extended timeline would delay benefits to the river. GE will be conducting long-term river monitoring to ensure that it continues to meet PCB standards.

Current efforts during the 2010 season include trying to find alternative disposal sites for the dewatered material, planning for expansion of the wharf, and habitat restoration (see Appendix). GE hopes to use their updated computer model to evaluate how much resuspension could be permitted before the benefits of dredging are compromised, and is working with EPA to determine whether and how model outputs can be used. The model is an update on the GE model from the late 1990s. GE is also currently running new scenarios with the goal of proposing a new load standard later this summer. GE would also like to see resuspension (load) limits for both the upper and lower Hudson.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to GE's presentation:

Sheet piling: GE determined that the sheet piling around Griffin Island was not stable enough to handle different water levels and they had to cut windows, which allowed some of the contained PCBs to flow out from the interior of the enclosure. It was noted that sheet piling is useful in isolated high concentration areas.

Bioavailable PCBs: One CAG member expressed concern over the focus on PCB levels in fish and water, given the fact that there are additional PCBs in the river bottom not being dredged that could become bioavailable at some point. GE representatives stated that PCBs buried in sediment do not pose as high a level of risk, and that this is a remediation and risk reduction project, not a mass removal of all PCBs.

Geography: CAG members noted the importance of dredging from upriver then moving downstream, and that dredging “high value” PCB deposits might be incompatible with this.

Hydraulic Dredging: Several CAG members asked whether hydraulic dredging could help reduce resuspension and capture contamination in small areas. GE indicated that hydraulic dredging had been looked at during project design but it was determined that mechanical dredges would be most effective for this project. Data from other dredging sites that have used hydraulic dredges have reported a similar rate of resuspension. The large amount of woody debris discovered during Phase 1 further supports the decision to use mechanical dredges.

Offloading: CAG members noted the offloading bottlenecks at the wharf, where there is the potential in Phase 2 for increased productivity without increased resuspension.

Upper Hudson: One CAG member expressed concern about the lack of load limits for the Upper Hudson, especially given possible redistribution of PCBs into other areas of the Upper Hudson, which will not be dredged, and concern about people picnicking, launching boats, and using the river.

CAG members thanked the GE representatives for attending and for sharing their analysis and recommendations.

EPA Project Update

David King, USEPA, gave an update on the overall dredging project. The slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. EPA is meeting with GE regularly and is currently reviewing GE’s new computer model. The peer review panel is analyzing the GE and EPA Phase 1 Evaluation Reports and will produce a draft report by the end of July. After the Peer Review Panel’s recommendations are released, EPA will make its final recommendations in regard to changes to the performance standards and GE will have 90 days to determine their commitment to Phase 2. GE and EPA are meeting this season to discuss structural work, such as modifications to the wharf. EPA will review cultural resource issues as they move down the river (several years out).

One CAG member asked about the impact of capped areas which did not meet the residual standard, and if their PCB concentrations were known before they were capped. John Haggard offered to prepare a summary on Phase 1 capping and PCB concentrations.

CAG Annual Check-in and Membership Review

2010 CAG Workplan and Meeting Locations: The next meeting is planned for September, with a following meeting in December.

CAG Membership Review Planning: CAG members suggested additional CAG members to replace those who have stepped down in past months. CBI will follow-up and see if there might

be a few more voices to bring to the table. CAG members said interested parties already attend meetings and others choose not to participate, so there isn't a strong need to reach out widely.

CAG Admin Committee: The facilitators asked for an active Admin Committee to help develop agendas and take care of occasional CAG-related tasks between meetings. Merrilyn and Althea will serve this function for now, with Sharon and Manna as their alternates.

Liaison/Staffing Changes: Kristen Skopeck is taking a position in the southwest with the US Army Corps of Engineers, so this is her last CAG meeting. She noted her appreciation for the CAG and her experience in Fort Edward over the past three years. Gary Klawinski announced that he has moved from Ecology & Environment to USEPA, and is now based in the Fort Edward Field Office.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.

Appendix A: Habitat Restoration Efforts

John Haggard, General Electric, presented an overview of habitat restoration efforts to date. GE and EPA developed the restoration plan, with other experts as needed. Restoration of selected areas will be completed this year, which will be the first step in a multi-year process of long-term monitoring of these areas to ensure that habitat restoration is successful. Seeds were collected in the Upper Hudson prior to Phase 1 and stored in a Pennsylvania greenhouse.

Ryan Davis, AnchorQEA, gave a detailed presentation on the current restoration process. He said the GE team is focusing primarily on Riverine Fringing Wetlands (RFW) and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), which were selected based on the pre-dredging delineation assessment. Approx. 0.4 acres of RFW will be planted and/or seeded in spring 2010; approx. 6.7 acres of SAV will be planted.

Most of the SAV vegetation is being planted 2-8 feet deep in the river and cannot be seen from above the water. Ryan described how the planting units, small plants in peat pots, were transported from greenhouses to the river, onto the dive platform, then sent down PVC pipes staggered two feet apart to divers, who plant them underwater. This technique is being used to efficiently and accurately separate the plants at two-foot intervals, and the peat pots protect the plants from damage. By sending the plants down the pipes, divers can stay underwater for four to five hours at a time, which is much more efficient than them coming up for every plant.

Contractors will be monitoring the 60,000 plants being installed in Phase 1 until the fall. The SAV plants being planted are water lilies, American pond weed and wild celery. Each planting unit is tracked from the greenhouse up to the site and to a specific spot in the river. Several divers wear video cameras on their helmets underwater, so contractors can review plantings and check they are installed correctly almost in real time. An adaptive management program will begin in spring with benchmarks. If benchmarks are not met, GE will work with the EPA to decide what changes need to be made. This benchmark program lasts up to seven years and is followed by an open-ended long-term monitoring program to ensure that success criteria are met.

CAG discussion focused on the following topics:

Process: One CAG member asked about the open-ended long-term monitoring process. GE said the process is open-ended based on when success criteria are met. GE and EPA are currently discussing the success criteria considering the broad scope of the overall river.

Invasive Species: One of GE's biggest concerns in the habitat restoration process is the possibility of invasive species. Benchmarks include monitoring for invasive species and removing them if they're found.

Capped Areas: Capped areas of the river still may have low levels of PCB in the sediment, which one CAG member noted should be considered prior to completing the habitat restoration.