

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Economic Development Meeting
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Draft Meeting Notes
Thursday, April 27, 2006
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Saratoga Spa State Park,
Saratoga Springs, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: Ken Decerce, Mark Galough, Joe Gardner, Lois Squire, Judy Schmidt-Dean, Julie Stokes.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (Ecology & Environment), John Callaghan (NYS Canal Corp), Leo Rosales (USEPA).

Others Attending: Dan Culligan (NYS Canal Corp), Greg Dixon (Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce), Bonnie Naumann (Post Star), Todd Shimkus (Adirondack Regional Chamber).

Facilitator: Ona Ferguson.

Key Action Items

- Give EPA the contact info of people who want to receive field office updates.
- This group will meet again July 27, in the morning before the July CAG meeting.
- The groups working on this will create connections between their various websites and other sources of information.

Introduction

This meeting was the follow-up to a conversation held just prior to the March 23 CAG meeting, and was an opportunity for different groups to report on progress since that meeting. These groups volunteered to figure out how they would coordinate updated message about dredging progress to recreational boaters and to develop the idea of a joint outreach effort on behalf of the region.

Progress Updates

A. Chambers of Commerce

Greg Dixon reported on progress by a group of Chambers of Commerce that has met twice, joined by a Canal Corp representative, to discuss what their message might be and how might it be disseminated. They know of many existing communication channels, but this is their first time collaborating across chambers. They will continue to work

together informally, with Janet Kennedy (director of the Lakes to Locks program) taking the lead. The group will continue to work to craft a positive message about the canals. Their priorities going forward are to: (a) assess the current state of outreach in the region, (b) to prepare a strategic marketing plan to which willing chambers will commit, (c) to prepare a message about dredging when messages are necessary, and (d) to develop a longer term plan to educate people about the dredging. The overarching idea is to promote the canal system instead of dredging, and to involve affected businesses in the outreach. Willing chambers would donate time/staff to the effort for a regional marketing plan and address dredging when necessary to educate public boaters.

B. Saratoga Chamber

Julie Stokes reported on a meeting held by the Saratoga Chamber with all the county supervisors and mayors from Saratoga County along the river on the Saratoga County side. They began to develop a list of outcomes they'd like to see for their county. The meeting served to update these municipal and county leaders on the dredging project, and the group was to meet again the following week. Each group submitted a list of outcomes they would like to see, and they are hoping to hire a grant writer to bring in money for these efforts. Many of these lists included consistent themes: develop a hike and bike trail along the river, create a cohesive marketing plan, concerns about navigational dredging, shoreline stabilization, handling of contaminated artifacts, installation of dry hydrants at boat launches, and training equipment for EMS.

C. Canal Corps

John Callaghan stated that the Canal Corps might be able to help with making enhancements to existing launches and facilities. Canal Corps is currently looking into funding for these projects. Canal Corps will also help with collaborative marketing, and the efforts by the chambers seem to coordinate well with Canal Corps standard operations. The Canal Corps has included many of their thoughts on this subject in their comments on the FDR.

Canal Corp appreciates support from the group regarding the issues surrounding dredging the navigational channel to a 12 foot depth regardless of the level of contamination. Post-dredging the Canal Corp would have the same equipment and disposal limitations for navigational dredging in the upper Hudson as they have currently, if the 12-foot depth is not achieved during the environmental dredging. Canal Corp staff are currently concerned about the possibility that they will be unable to dredge contaminated areas of the navigation channel to necessary depth for navigation (12') due to challenges of costs and disposal for removing contaminated materials. The Canal Corp doesn't feel that GE took into account the amount of navigational dredging that would be needed to implement the project. The Canal Corp is asking that in the areas of the channel where dredging is slated, it continue to a depth of 12 feet. Canal Corp submitted this and other comments on the IDR and will re-submit them on the FDR

D. EPA

Leo Rosales went through the notes from the March meeting and compiled a list of what EPA can help with. EPA will be providing updated project information to the counties,

the chambers of commerce and the Canal Corps. The information it shares will be based on detailed work plans. It will do this through fact sheets, articles and advertising in newspapers, op-eds in regional papers, and may even get a boat to use to get out onto the water. EPA will be providing a map each month at public marinas that shows where dredging will be occurring. HRFO generates a lot of information, and that structure can be used to reach the boating community. EPA can work with the Canal Corp to create articles and ads for the "Canal Times" to provide project updates and information. Also ads can be run periodically in local papers announcing dredge locations. EPA could do some local and regional op-ed pieces to prepare communities for the onset of dredging. In addition, EPA is working on getting a boat for the field office, which could be used for outreach activities.

EPA would like a list to be developed indicating the existing media/outreach outlets, the contact info and the type or format of information need by each outlet.

The Canal Corp stated the EPA has been supportive of the navigation channel issue. One participant noted that the river is just as viable now as it was 50 years ago and that this message should not be diluted. Others feel that there are some areas where this is not the case (e.g. Fort Edward Yacht Basin), but that there are other factors besides lack of navigational dredging that have contributed to a decline in boating.

Outcomes

These groups will set up the systems for relaying information, such as links between chamber of commerce and the Canal Corps websites, over the coming months so that when there is information to share there will not be a delay. EPA will look to the groups at the meeting to provide contact names at the primary organizations that EPA should reach out to, as well as details on what each organization needs in the way of length of text, type of facts, etc. The group recommended to EPA the following top ways to get out information: (1) NYcanal.com, a private boating forum (David Krauter proprietor), (2) "Boating on the Hudson," (John Vargo, manager), (3) VHF channel 13, and maybe 9 and 16: canal equivalent to the "highway advisory" in the form of a notice to mariners.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15a.m.