

Community Advisory Group (CAG)
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Meeting Notes
Thursday, September 27, 2007
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Saratoga Spa State Park, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: Dan Casey, Richard Fuller, Mark Galough, Robert Goldstein, Manna Jo Greene, George Hodgson, Bill Koebbeman, Betty Koval, Aaron Mair, Roland Mann, Merrilyn Pulver, Warren Reiss, Rich Schiafo, Lois Squire, Julie Stokes

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (Ecology & Environment), John Callaghan (NYSCC), William Daigle (NYSDEC), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communications), David King (USEPA), David Kluesner (USEPA), David Rosoff (EPA), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Kristen Skopec (USEPA).

Others Attending: David Adams (Saratoga County EMC), Nikki Baldwin (resident), Lee Coleman (Daily Gazette), Rami Cummings (Empire State College), Greg Dixon (Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), Robert Gibson (General Electric), Peggy Farrell (Ecology & Environment), Tim Kruppenbacher (General Electric), Lisa Manzi (Rep. Gillibrand), Donna Richard (resident), Tom Richardson (Town of Mechanicville), David Rosoff (USEPA), Diane Simonelli (Maximillian Technologies), Anna Marie Smith (Skidmore), Andrew Timmis (D.A. Collins Company), Ken Watson (AHEJ), Jeanne Williams (Lakes to Locks Passage).

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Patrick Field.

Members Absent: Cecil Corbin-Mark, Mark Fitzsimmons, Robert Goldman, Harry Gutheil, Gil Hawkins, John Lawler, David Mathis, Dan McGraw, John Reiger, Judy Schmidt-Dean, Mindy Wormuth.

Next meetings: The next CAG meeting will be scheduled for either late October or another time before late December.

Action Items

- A construction site tour will be scheduled once the dynamite issue has been resolved.
- Greg Dixon will share the URL of the Tourism website with CAG members for feedback once it is ready to be made public.
- Facilitators will make sure that CAG members who want to discuss navigational dredging know how to move forward, as requested by the CAG.

Welcome, Introductions, Introduction of New Project Team Members, Review of Minutes

David King introduced Kristen Skopec, EPA's new Public Affairs Specialist, replacing Leo Rosales. Kristen was a public affairs officer in the Air Force and then for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. She introduced herself and noted that she looks forward to

working with the CAG. David King then introduced David Rosoff, from the EPA Emergency Response Program, who will be working with David King at the Hudson River Field Office.

Over the past few months there have been several changes in CAG membership: Rich Schiafo will be leaving Scenic Hudson and the CAG, and Warren Reiss, General Council for Scenic Hudson and Rich's current alternate, will be filling that seat for the time being. Bill Koebbeman, who has lived in Saratoga for 30 years, will be taking Chris Ballantyne's seat on behalf of the Hudson Mohawk chapter of the Sierra Club. All other participants then introduced themselves, and the CAG approved the May meeting notes.

Dewatering Facility Update

Tim Kruppenbacher of General Electric presented on the construction of the dewatering facility. Please see <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/> for the full PowerPoint presentation. GE's Hudson website (www.hudsonredging.com) also has many photos of the construction.

Construction started on April 23, 2007. GE recently completed over 138,000 personnel hours without a lost time incident. Severson Environmental Services, Inc., is constructing the processing and treatment facilities, Railworks USA is constructing the railyard, and D.A. Collins is doing the facility site preparation work. There are generally over 100 workers on site each day.

Most of the earth-moving activities are complete, except at the wharf (due to the dynamite find). The access road to Route 196 is open and will be paved in October. Internal roads will be paved before winter. There is temporary electrical power to the site to run construction equipment at this time, and the drainage system is nearing completion. Efforts are underway to bring a permanent power source onto the site. The geomembrane liner work is underway. Liner seams will get stitched if the liner is fabric and welded if it is membrane. The liners in the coarse material staging area include thick layers of sand and gravel. The grading of the rail yard area is complete. Rail track is being installed. Major pieces of equipment are currently being fabricated around the country. Storm water drainage systems are almost in place. The building foundations are under construction.

The rail yard construction includes installing five miles of track, two miles of rail yard service roads, a 7000 square foot rail support service building and a scale to weigh train cars.

The route 196 access road and feeder canal bridge opened August 16 for use by the public. It includes a bridge, guardrails, signage, and a flashing signal at Rt. 196. It will be paved in the next few weeks. This is also the new public access point into Lock 8.

There is an active noise, light and dust-monitoring program. Thirty-eight hundred measurements have been taken to date. Ninety-nine point six percent are below the EPA control and standard levels, and there have not been any exceedances on site since July 1. GE has installed specialized backup alarms on 21 pieces of equipment, such that when they back up they make a quacking sound that is less jarring than the regular beeping back up alarms. GE is trying to eliminate non-critical truck traffic along the property boundary to keep traffic-associated noise

towards the center of the site. GE has also installed shrouds and noise barriers on some equipment to reduce the volume of louder activities.

GE has trained 600 workers in four hours of safety training or more. There have been more than 700 employee safety observations. These are part of a peer-to-peer safety program in which one worker observes another complete a particular task and they look for any dangerous situations preventatively. Reviews of these observations resulted in identification of 14 near misses, all of which were resolved before safety issues arose. Safety planning and reinforcement are the reason for the achievement of the more than 138,000 personnel hours logged without a lost time incident.

The access roads will be paved in early October. GE expects to continue work in the near future to install the steel pipe piles at the wharf, to continue placing the geomembrane liner, and to complete most of the rail yard this season.

CAG members had a range of comments and questions. Several noted that the work completed is impressive. Others asked about noise concerns, saying that they were glad to hear that GE is addressing noise concerns. Mr. Kruppenbacher noted that GE representatives haven't had a complaint registered for at least six weeks and that complaints on noise generally coincide with those times when monitoring data shows that the construction has been loud. GE will be watching noise levels especially closely during installation of steel piles in the coming weeks. GE and EPA representatives said they are pleased with the quality of work and the focus on safety.

UXO Challenges

David King presented on Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), see presentation at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/>. On August 24, 2007, workers found over 800 sticks of dynamite in wooden cases buried on site. The dynamite was generally in good condition, probably, but not for certain, from around 1910 (the manufacturer operated from 1905-1913). The emergency response followed the Community Health and Safety Plan (CHASP), and the area was immediately secured and evacuated. The dynamite was located right where equipment was to be installed on the wharf. It is possible this unused dynamite was buried to keep it at stable temperature.

The state police bomb disposal unit took the dynamite, soaked it with fuel oil, staged it, then set fire to it remotely. It is a "high explosive," which means an explosion is required to set it off. That dynamite is now gone. A UXO specialist is now on site for future work. Areas nearby have been approved for continued work. The Health and Safety Plan will be amended to include an explosives section, and GE will clear the area for the remaining construction earthwork.

CAG members noted that the Health and Safety Plan process worked very well in this case, that GE did accept responsibility for providing equipment to the state bomb squad, and that project situations like this one do impact town, county and state staff and resources

It will take several more months to clear the site, so the CAG tour of the construction is postponed for the time being.

Update on Regional Tourism Efforts and Preparing for Dredging

Julie Stokes gave some history about the CAG economic development effort that helped bring five chambers of commerce together to discuss the importance of boat traffic and tourism in the region during the project. That subcommittee's work spun off into an effort carried out separately by those chambers of commerce.

Greg Dixon of the Saratoga Chamber of Commerce presented on the efforts of the regional chambers' work over the past months. This group was comprised of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County, Rensselaer County Tourism, and Lakes to Locks Passage. The group formed about a year ago and took on two projects. The first is a website. People use websites for boat and road traffic information when they are traveling. The group is now in the final revision stage of a joint website that is intended to market the appeal of the area for visitors and provide the right information for visitors. The goal is for all relevant information from the chambers and tourism organizations to be available through one place. Mr. Dixon will share the website URL with the CAG for feedback as soon as it is ready. The second component of this joint work was on public relations and tourism. The group developed a media familiarization tour. They sent out information to concierges, travel and local media for this fall. They are hoping to get coverage now, as magazines have a long lead-time and the fall is lovely along the Hudson. They will take maybe 30 media representatives on a two-hour canal boat ride and hope they'll get coverage in the form of articles by next spring, so hope it might have a long term effect. The group feels that by working together on these projects they have laid a framework for working together in the future as necessary, and Mr. Dixon noted that he is impressed with everyone's willingness to collaborate.

CAG members suggested the canal tour be videotaped so those who do not attend can benefit from it and noted that the overall collaboration among municipalities and counties is much broader in scope than any outcome originally envisioned when the CAG Economic Development Subcommittee formed.

Update on Flood Plains Interim Removal Action

David Rosoff presented on the short-term response action in the Upper Hudson River Floodplain (see full PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/>). GE has taken some actions to address short-term human health risks. Investigations in the past few years showed that there were relatively high levels of PCBs in floodplain soils, and some of those areas were high use areas. EPA determined that when there was contamination in use areas above a certain amount, action needed to be taken.

In January 2007, EPA and GE came to consensus on the Response Action Work Plan. In this case the response action includes installation of warning signs and /or installation of an isolation

cover over the PCB-containing soils in the identified recreational use areas. Signage and covers will be monitored and maintained over time. These areas will be reevaluated over the long-term. A total of 18 properties and 14 transects were identified for short-term response actions.

This interim action started several weeks ago. One example is a stone cover over contaminated soil that allows the property owner access to the river without interacting with the contaminated soil. Another example is 6" of seeded soil laid over a property, and a third is a beach area where additional sand was brought in to cover a contaminated area. Erosion will be an issue in all these areas, so there will be ongoing maintenance of these sites until there is a decision on the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) floodplains overall. EPA expects all interim measures will be complete by November, 2007.

A CAG member mentioned the formation of an agricultural work group made up of Washington County and other state agencies and counties that will be working to ensure that concerns about agricultural areas are addressed. Following is a summary of the discussion:

- *What were the contaminant levels at these sites?* The highest levels were 1000ppm, but general levels were 50ppm at these sites. The short-term acute risk, from a risk assessment is 10 ppm in soils (as determined by a study developed by GE and approved by EPA.)
- *Are you finding anything below Lock 5?* We have not yet investigated below Lock 5.
- *Plants don't uptake PCBs, right?* Yes, but anything that lives or feeds in the sediment could be exposed to PCBs in the sediments. [Another CAG member mentioned that there is bioaccumulation of PCBs up the food chain.]
- *Is there a schedule for the RI/FS?* GE has submitted a work plan for the remedial investigation, which EPA is currently reviewing. We hope to start sampling in the next year or so.
- *Of all the sites where you have data (whether or not it is a use area), what percentage will likely require some type of action? How much of the floodplain will ultimately need to be remediated?* We need to complete the RI/FS before we can characterize the extent of what action will be required for the floodplains. EPA will present to the CAG once the RI/FS is complete.
- *Where is Section 3 of the River?* It starts at Lock 5.
- *The response action was based on human exposure, not ecological exposure or uptake?* Yes. The full RI/FS will collect the data required to address other areas.
- *You will take additional soil samples down the river?* Yes.
- *Who will maintain these isolation covers?* GE will maintain them indefinitely until the Record of Decision is given for the whole floodplain. GE representatives noted that all landowners understand that GE will be back to maintain the covers.

Brief Updates

Phase II DAD

David King stated that the Phase II Dredge Area Delineation (DAD) report is almost complete. EPA expects it will be finalized by the end of October.

Water Supply

David King said EPA is looking at alternatives for bringing water from Troy to Halfmoon and Waterford. EPA believes that they have a route that would work. In next few weeks they will convene people from the water departments of both towns plus Troy to determine if it will meet everyone's needs, then consider costs and analyze that alternative. Alan Steinberg, Regional Administrator of EPA's Region 2, in consultation with Steve Ramsey, GE Environmental VP, will make the final decision about how to proceed on this issue.

One CAG member suggested EPA work on water supply needs along Route 4 and in Fort Edward. A member of the public shared his pleasure hearing of this progress on the drinking water issue in Halfmoon and Waterford. A CAG member stated that people on the CAG still want to address concerns about navigational dredging at the CAG. EPA responded that the areas of concern to the CAG with regard to navigational dredging are outside the scope of the Consent Decree and EPA has no authority to compel GE further on that subject. CAG facilitators will help make sure CAG members who want to proceed know how to do so.

CAG Member and Alternate Only Discussion

CAG members and alternates met privately to discuss what is working well with the CAG and what the CAG needs to move forward this year. They shared varied perspectives on whether the CAG's main purpose is to inform, consult, or involve community members. Many noted that the CAG is a useful forum but that it is difficult to measure the impact that CAG members have on the project. CAG members want CAG meetings at least every other month, even if there are no new updates from EPA or GE, and they want to address navigational dredging, the economic impact of the project on the region (including site reuse), habitat restoration, and archaeological updates either at CAG meetings or as offshoots. Several also noted that they'd like more time for public comments during Q&A sessions after presentations.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.