

## Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting

### Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site

September 24, 2025 (Virtual | 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.)

#### Meeting Summary

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#### MEETING IN BRIEF

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site met virtually on Wednesday, September 24, 2025.

Presentation topics:

- EPA: Lower Hudson River Project Update
- NYSDOH: Update on Hudson River Fish Sign Pilot Program
- EPA: Upper Hudson River Project Update

EPA and NYSDOH responded to follow-up questions from CAG members as each topic was discussed.

Presentation slides and materials for this and previous CAG meetings are available on the CAG's website: <https://hudsoncag.wspis.com/documents.htm>

#### FOLLOW-UP ITEMS

- EPA to provide copy of 2004 Dispute Resolution document to CAG member who requested it
- A CAG member requested further discussion with EPA about sediment depth and bioavailability to fish.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next CAG meeting has not yet been scheduled. A virtual CAG meeting is anticipated for later this year – early next year.

#### DISCUSSION NOTES

##### Welcome and Introductions

Ona Ferguson, facilitator from the Consensus Building Institute, opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the virtual CAG meeting.

##### CAG Business

- Renee Bouplon of the Agriculture Stewardship Association (ASA) introduced herself as a new CAG member. She is filling one of two agriculture association seats. ASA is a land trust covering Washington and Rensselaer Counties, focusing on conservation forestry efforts.

- A CAG member expressed gratitude for shifting the meeting online as opposed to canceling outright following health limitations of a key EPA presenter. The CAG member referenced a letter that the Friends of a Clean Hudson (FOCH) coalition sent to the CAG facilitator, CBI, requesting that future in-person meetings include a hybrid component. EPA indicated they requested that their consultants explore the potential of doing hybrid meetings earlier in 2025 and they have been working on checking into the needed equipment and facilities available. EPA said hybrid meetings are challenging to do well and it's important that any CAG meeting be managed well. EPA also noted that given that the Superfund site covers a large geographic area (more than 200 miles) it's important to continue to do virtual meetings during months of potential poor weather-related travel conditions to maximize participation.

### **Presentations and Discussion**

Discussion notes include Q&A only; presentation slides are available on the CAG's website: <https://hudsoncag.wspis.com/documents.htm>.

### **Lower Hudson River Project Update**

#### **Segmentation of Lower Hudson River**

- A CAG member asked if the document transmittal that the EPA recently provided to FOCH included the most recent information about how the agency plans to segment the lower river for study purposes and if segmentation is part of the Remedial Investigation & Feasibility Study (RI/FS) process?
  - EPA said they shared the technical approach for how they plan to divide up the river with FOCH and discussions will continue with the CAG. EPA wants to discuss a few considerations with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) (considering four segmented areas instead of three) and bring GE into the conversation to see if they have any technical suggestions. The presented approach is just step one. The final segmentation of the Lower Hudson River (LHR), and what each segment will be called, etc., has not yet been determined.
- A CAG member noted that there are a lot of tributaries in the Lower Hudson and suggested that segmentation should consider the quality and volume of water from the tributaries.
  - EPA agreed that the tributaries are one of many factors being considered. The agency will need to evaluate the river considering many technical aspects.
- A CAG member said they suspect the river is cleaner in the Lower Hudson due to the actions taken to address PCBs in the Upper Hudson River (UHR).

#### **Recently-Deposited Sediment Sampling**

A CAG member asked for and received clarification on how to read slide 15 ("Recently-Deposited Sediment PCB Concentrations")

### **Sediment Sampling Depth and Bioavailability**

- A CAG member asked about the sediment sampling depth in relation to the bioavailability of PCBs to fish.
  - EPA noted that the purpose of the special study is to understand the relationship between PCBs in sediment and the fish. There is extensive literature and EPA experience indicating that sampling sediment from 0-6 inches is sufficient for that purpose.
- The CAG member followed up with a request for the [2004] dispute resolution document<sup>1</sup> that includes a discussion about surface sediment criteria and their use in developing the cleanup remedy.
  - EPA said there can be more discussion about this as needed. There are differing opinions among others. EPA is confident that the 0-6 inches well represent the fish, sediment and water relationship.

### **Fish Collection Program**

- A CAG member asked several questions about the fish collection program, including whether the current collection methods and locations match historical efforts, whether the timing of collection efforts were varied from spring to fall, if EPA collection efforts were similar to DEC and Department of Health (DOH) efforts, and how resident vs. non-resident/migratory fish are determined.
  - EPA said the entire 200 miles of fish program is modeled after the New York State spring and fall programs. Fish were collected from most of the same stations DEC uses and secondary stations were added for more coverage. In general, the state's program and the Superfund site program have slightly different focuses, the EPA program focuses on concentrations over time whereas NYS tends to focus on current concentrations to inform fishing advisories.
- A CAG member said striped bass alone could be studied. Time of year is critical for striped bass and anadromous fish because of their migratory patterns. They acknowledged that it's challenging to track data due to timing — bioaccumulation of PCBs depends on how long the striped bass are in the river. If they're migratory, they move back and forth into the river. Also, they don't die after they spawn like salmon.
  - EPA agreed that striped bass are challenging to track because some are migratory and some are not. EPA is working closely with DEC fisheries staff and also welcomes any other input CAG members may have to share.

### **Factors that Contribute to Fish Recovery**

- A CAG member asked whether lower levels of PCBs in the river can be attributed to remediation/removal activities or dilution over time.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA 2004 Final Decision Regarding General Electric Company's Disputes on Draft Phase 1 Dredge Area Delineation Report and Draft Phase 1 Target Area Identification Report

- EPA noted that striped bass are the most comprehensively studied and collected species so the agency closely looks at that data, but preliminary analysis shows similar declines across species. Any work done in the Upper Hudson River — particularly the dredging project — is going to assist the Lower Hudson in its recovery. PCB levels were very high in the 90s before dredging concentrations decreased. There are a number of factors to consider.
- A CAG member asked when people are expected to be able to eat fish and for clarification about whether the numbers were still above the advisory level.
  - EPA said there are no numbers for the Lower Hudson specified in the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD states that recovery in the upper Hudson will assist with the recovery in the lower Hudson.

### **Changes in PCB Levels Over Time**

- [RE: Slide 23, Long-Term Fish PCB Concentrations] EPA explained that the graphs demonstrate 35 years of fish data to show the change through time. A few CAG members said the group is primarily interested in what is happening post-dredging. A CAG member asked whether the graph shows PCBs levels are stabilizing.
  - EPA cautioned that this graph does not necessarily point to stabilization because a log scale was used on the Y axis. The agency does not disagree that there could be some stabilization, that analysis is underway.
- A CAG member said that looking at Poughkeepsie and Newburgh area of the river, the data in these areas appear different.
  - EPA said that they are looking at any differences in these areas more closely to see if more data collection is needed.
  - A CAG member suggested it may be a matter of recent storms of high or low tides. Another CAG member suggested it may be a difference in saltwater vs. freshwater. Methodologies for collection was slightly different in saltwater than in freshwater section.

### **Update on Hudson River Fish Sign Pilot Program**

#### **Fish Advisory Sign Messaging**

- A CAG member emphasized the importance of this program, and wished there was a way to create a more positive image of the Hudson River. People are tired being told what not to do. Ideally, the signs would strike a balance of the fact that the river is a wonderful asset to New York and New Jersey while also sending an advisory message. People are turned off by the fish advisory signs.
- A CAG member suggested including a small graphic to the DOH sign showing catch and release is allowed.
- DOH confirmed that the goal of signage is not to scare but to inform visitors.

#### **Locating Signs during Ground Surveys**

- A CAG member said they were unable to locate signs in Long Dock Park and Croton Point as part of their ground surveying effort.

- DOH said they will follow up to coordinate the location of the signs. They purposefully set up a large number of laminated signs throughout the area but are updating a map of where the signs are posted.
- EPA indicated they will support DOH with coordination with property owners to explain the importance of posting the signs.

### Upper Hudson River Project Update

#### **Habitat Monitoring and Invasive Species**

- A CAG member asked if there was a slide to discuss benchmarks criteria, noting sections of the river that were dredged more than eight years ago.
  - EPA said the current slide deck did not include a benchmark slide in this presentation but has presented that information at previous CAG meetings, but they are close to several habitat success criteria as defined 20 years ago. Technologies have improved since the criteria was established and EPA has GE using more advanced technology now. Overall, there are large areas that are close to meeting the success criteria but there are also some challenging areas and those are being addressed with GE.
- A CAG member mentioned invasive species and asked whether it made sense to spend time on them since it is fighting a losing battle.
  - EPA clarified that controlling invasive species is important, especially in areas that were stripped bare during the dredging efforts. There are no general invasive eradication efforts planned or underway; current efforts focus on giving the native plants a stronghold so they can compete with invasives.
- A CAG member asked if the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for floodplains was nearing completion.
  - EPA said the risk assessments are underway. They are actively doing response actions and looking at connections between the floodplain and the river. All of these are working in parallel, and the work is moving forward.

#### **WRAP UP AND CAG BUSINESS**

- A few CAG members expressed interest in having a hybrid component at in-person meetings. The intention is to have a virtual option for those unable to join in-person. They acknowledged hybrid meetings don't work if there are 15+ people joining virtually.
  - EPA flagged that their priority is to participate in a professional meeting and that there are technical limitations and level of expertise required to pull off a successful hybrid meeting. They are not opposed to the CAG pursuing hybrid meetings in the future but want to be sure the technological expertise and confidence is in place.
  - Kaplan Hall was noted as a location well suited for hybrid meetings.

## **MEETING PARTICIPANTS**

### **CAG Members & Alternates**

CAG Members: Jen Benson (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater), Renee Bouplon (Ag Stewardship Association), Rich Elder (Rensselaer County Department of Health), Drew Gamils (Riverkeeper), Laurie Griffen (Saratoga Sod), Gil Hawkins (Hudson River Fisherman's Association), Dan Jeanson (Hudson River Valley Greenway), Pam Landi (Washington County), Michele Langa (NY/NJ Baykeeper), David Mathis (Recreational Boating), Althea Mullarky (Scenic Hudson),

CAG Alternates: Stephen Ballentine (Scenic Hudson), Mike Dulong (Riverkeeper), Linda Von der Heide (Rensselaer County Economic Development & Planning)

### **CAG Liaisons & Facilitators**

Danielle Adams (WSP), John Brodt (Behan Communications), James Candiloro (NYSCC), Michael Cheplowitz (US EPA), John Davis (NYS OAG), John Fazzolari (WSP), Ona Feguson (CBI), Abby Fullem (CBI), Gary Klawinski (US EPA), Angela Martin (NYS DOH), Leslie Morlock (NPS), Devin Rigolino (Dutchess County), Larisa Romanowski (US EPA), David Tromp (NYS DEC)

### **Others**

John Armitage (NYSDEC), Joe Battipaglia (US EPA), Chris Bradley (WSP), Christine Bub, David Chernack (Scenic Hudson), Brian PJ Cronin, Justin Deming (NYS DOH), Margaret Dioddi Bauer (Hudson River resident, Green Island NY), Jenna Dodge, Kevin Farrar (consultant to Scenic Hudson), Kim Foskew, Gail Fulton, Bruce Friedmann, Curt Herring, Brian Iler, Rachel Kish (NYS OAG), Maki Parsons, Jennifer Phillippe (NPS), Denise Piechnik (NYS DEC), Sheila Rauch, Alexander Reese, Scott Schanke, Thomas Sweck (NYS DOH), Veronica Thompson, Chris Weiman (US EPA), Peter van Aken, Audrey Van Genechten (NYS DOH), Katherine von Stackleberg, Leeanna Varga, Ronna Wells (Saratoga National Historic Park), Grant Whittington (WSP), Matt Wiener (US EPA), Natasha Wozniak, Ronald Zorrilla, John Zuvic