Community Advisory Group (CAG)
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Meeting Summary
Thursday December 8, 2011
1pm-4pm

Fire Hall, Fort Edward, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: David Adams, Philip Dobie, Manna Jo Greene, Jeff Kellogg, Richard Kidwell, William Koebbeman, Roland Mann, David Mathis, Sharon Ruggi, Julie Stokes, Rebecca Troutman.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), John Fazzolari (Ecology & Environment), Joe Finan (for Charles Sullivan, NPS), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communication for GE), Tegan Gifford (Ecology & Environment), Tim Kruppenbacher (GE), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Joe Moloughney (NYSCC), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Elizabeth Robinson (UE Local 332), Larisa Romanowski (USEPA).

Others Attending: Peter DeFur (Environmental Stewardship Concepts), Therese Gillis (Fort Edward resident), Scott Hair (UE Local 332), John Mattison (retired GE employee), Brian Mayes (General Electric), Brian Nearing (Times Union), Bill Richmond (Behan Communications), John Riffey (CDMC), Richard Seegal (NYS Department of Health), Mark Surette (Ecology & Environment), Audrey Van Genechten (NYSDOH).

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Elizabeth Fierman.

Members Absent: Cecil Corbin-Mark, Darlene DeVoe, Rich Elder, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Brian Gilchrist, Robert Goldman, Robert Goldstein, Gil Hawkins, Christine Hoffer, Ed Kinowski, Aaron Mair, Althea Mullarkey, Bill Peck, Merrilyn Pulver-Mouthrop, Tom Richardson, Lois Squire.

Next Meeting: The next CAG meeting may be scheduled for late February or March.

Action Items:
- Admin Committee – Create next meeting agenda.
- EPA – Make draft adaptive management plan review of 2011 and proposed changes for 2012 available to CAG for input and comment.
- EPA – Clarify TAG grant scope.
- EPA – Contact project neighbor to discuss noise.

Welcome, Introductions, Review September Meeting Summary

The facilitator welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The draft September meeting summary was approved without changes. All CAG meeting handouts and presentation slides are available within one week of CAG meetings at: http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm.

CAG member Philip Dobie announced he is retiring and will be leaving the CAG at the end of the month. He brought Jeff Kellogg who will be filling the Labor CAG seat to attend the meeting. He thanked the CAG for a good learning experience and wished the group well.

Dredging Project Update

David King, USEPA, presented an update on the 2011 dredging season. The primary points from his presentation included:

Schedule, Scope and General Updates – During the 2011 dredging season (June 6 – November 8), approximately 363,000 cubic yards (cy) of sediment were removed from Certification Units (CUs) 9-16 and 19-25. Compliance with the Engineering Performance and Quality of Life Performance standards was improved from Phase 1.

Resuspension – There were no exceedances of the resuspension standard (500 ng/l) during the dredging season. A PCB monitoring program and special studies to assess resuspension and re-deposition will help further refine best management practices (BMPs) and identify necessary operational modifications for future dredging seasons.

Residuals and Capping – A one-foot backfill layer was placed in all dredged areas, covering approximately 75 acres. Capping was done in about 3.05% of the remaining area, which is much less than the 11% allowed. Only two nodes were capped within the Navigation Channel, after which 14 feet of clearance remained. EPA credits the better depth of contamination data and fewer dredge passes for reducing the residuals and, therefore, the need for capping.

Productivity – Despite a storm-delayed start, Phase 2 productivity surpassed its target of 350,000cy, reaching 363,000cy. Sediment was removed at an average rate of 16,000cy per week. There is still a surge pile waiting to be shipped off-site, and this should be complete by the end of 2011.

Quality of Life (QoL) Performance Standards – There were fewer exceedances than in 2009, and BMPs are being used proactively. There were nine air QoL exceedances at the processing facility, mostly near the unloading operations, and seven along the dredge corridor for a total of 16 exceedances in 2011; down from 81 exceedances in 2009. Noise appears to be the biggest challenge; while no serious issues around odor, light or navigation have been reported.

Engineering Performance Standards – This year, several efforts contributed to improved performance standards outcomes including better depth of contamination delineation, limiting the number of dredge passes to two except if concentration above 500ppm were found after the second dredging pass (this only occurred in CU 16), overcuts (dredging deeper than the coring data suggests) on second dredge passes, and minimizing the number of "bucket bites."

Best Management Practices – A number of BMPs were utilized this year which reduced the impact of dredging in the river, including: reduced number of dredge passes; limited number of dredge platforms operating simultaneously; procedures to stop dredging when clay or bedrock was found; controlled bucket decanting to reduce the volume of water requiring treatment; placement of backfill as soon as possible (often within 5-7 days); controlled tugboat propeller wash; and proactive approach to implementing additional BMPs such as oil absorbent and containment booms and alternating dredge areas.

Off-Season Activities – During the off-season, several improvements are being made to the processing facility: a second barge unloading station is being built, the staging area is being expanded, additional size separation equipment is being installed, and a second gravity thickener is being installed. These improvements will increase productivity, make it easier to do maintenance, and improve the facility's ability to continue functioning if a piece of equipment like a gravity thickener breaks down.

2012 Dredging Season: In 2012, dredging will be resumed in CU 26. GE's goal is to reach CU 55 (the bottom of Griffin Island), which would mean removing over 450,000cy of sediment while EPA's goal in the performance standards is still 350,000cy. The project will still likely take five years. 2011 project documents will also be updated with lessons learned for 2012. Dredging in the West Griffin Island Area and Three Sisters Islands will require special attention, due to their physical characteristics. These areas will be addressed early in the year, to avoid re-contaminating areas downstream; GE is looking at a separate contract for these areas.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to EPA's presentation; responses are in italics:

- Surge Pile – Several CAG members asked about the sediment surge pile on site at the dewatering facility. They wanted to know whether it is composed of processed or unprocessed sediment, whether the pile is ever covered, and whether its size is associated with air exceedances. *The pile is mostly material that has gone through the size separation equipment, and includes oversized, dry, and coarse materials; everything else is stored inside, and filter cake has already been shipped away. Coarse materials stored in the surge pile typically have lower PCB concentrations than the filter cake. The material is not capped because it is always in flux, as material is continually added and shipped away. This, and the size of the pile, makes using a tarp to cover it impractical and difficult to manage safely. Last year, when the pile remained over the winter, it was capped using a cellulose-based material designed for landfills; that is not necessary this year because it will be shipped away before winter. The pile is currently approximately 60,000-70,000 tons; at its maximum during the year, it was 150,000-175,000 tons of material. EPA will be looking at how to limit the amount of material staged outside next year, potentially through volume and surface area limits or by starting transportation earlier.*

- Quality of Life (QoL) – Several CAG members and members of the public expressed concern and frustration about noise, and in particular about the method of assessing noise exceedances by average volume per hour when it is sudden loud (impact) noises at the processing facility that are of concern to neighbors. A CAG member asked whether citizens living around the site are contacted in an effort to gather firsthand information about noise, lighting and other QoL issues. A member of the public said that project personnel had not addressed her complaints and request for a noise monitor. *EPA periodically reaches out to residents in the area about QoL issues, and will follow up with the member of the public who asked for a response. BMPs are being utilized to aid in noise reduction at the Processing Facility, for example operators have been instructed to minimize scraping buckets, and truck backup alarms have been replaced with those that do not travel distances.*

- Peer Review & Comments – A CAG member asked whether there would be an opportunity for comment and peer review of this year's work and lessons learned. *There will not be a formal peer review process, but comments are welcome. EPA is compiling a list of changes, in line with its adaptive management approach, which EPA can circulate for comment.*

- Archaeology – A CAG member noted there had recently been a meeting on archaeology, and asked EPA to summarize what happened. The member also requested that the Lake Champlain Maritime Foundation be invited to speak to the CAG about its work. *Archaeology work has been completed as far down the river as EPA plans to go. The only artifacts found were two anchors, a rudder and a buoy. The rudder and buoy were made of wood and contaminated, and have been disposed of. The state museum was contacted and has said it does not want the anchors, so they will likely go to a community organization or a visitor center. The anchors require preservation, but do not need treatment other than high-pressure washing.*

- Water Monitoring – A CAG member asked what monitoring is done on water that is returned to the river from the processing facility. *All water that runs through the facility is sampled on a weekly basis and discharged to the river via the canal. Results from these samples have always met discharge requirements. Next year an on-water treatment barge may be used. This would allow water to be treated onsite and returned to the River and allow more room in the barges for transporting sediment, increasing efficiency of the Project. This treated water would have to meet the same standards as water treated at the processing facility.*

Former Capacitor Worker Health Study

Richard Seegal, NYS Department of Health, presented findings from a study on former GE capacitor workers at the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward sites. The study objective was to assess effects of occupational exposure to lead and PCBs on these workers' nervous system function. Overall findings included: PCBs are persistent; occupational PCB exposure may be associated with increased Parkinson's Disease (PD) mortality in women (this may be related to hormone loss associated with menopause); bone lead levels in the worker population are similar to those in the general population, but are correlated with IH ratings for job categories with high lead exposure; bone lead levels are associated with deficits in motor, memory, and executive function performance, especially in women. The study authors may conduct a follow-up study in the future to see if any further effects are observed.

A CAG member asked what the impact of screening out participants with PD was for the study. Richard said he believed that if the study had not screened out these participants, an even stronger relationship between PCBs and PD mortality, including in men, might have been found.

2011 Dredge Season Review of Key CAG Questions

Peter DeFur, TAG advisor, presented an overview of the 2011 dredge season, seeking to address in particular questions raised during the year by the CAG. He also distributed a report to the CAG further detailing his work. The primary points from his presentation included:

Water Quality Monitoring – Monitoring focused primarily on PCB concentrations. Data from along the river indicated just one exceedance of the control value of 500ppm (it was 561ppm at Waterford on March 21, 2011, before the dredging season). PCB load monitoring data was last collected on November 8.

Air Quality Monitoring – Monitoring began June 6, 2011 at stations near dredging operations. Peter noted that exceedances documented for three consecutive days at a particular river location or the processing facility are an indicator that either BMPs have not been followed or that a new BMP needs to be implemented. Peter suggested that EPA's website could indicate whether the residential or industrial air quality standard had been exceeded.

Quality of Life Performance Standards - Some odor was detected on November 4, 2011, based on a report by either a resident, a member of the public, or the remedial action team report. Otherwise, odor didn't appear to be a significant concern. Noise is bothersome and though there were no official reports of exceedances, some remedial action and/or BMPs should be pursued. Peter noted that noise, which is perceived as a nuisance, is a function of the sound itself and what's happening in the person's life at the moment they hear it. In this context, noise may be especially frustrating because it feels like a supplemental impact to neighbors. There were no official reports of problems with excess light.

Dredging Operations Update – Overall, dredging operations exceeded expectations this year because there was only one PCB exceedance (prior to dredging), there were fewer irregularities and fewer quality

of life issues. Increased use of BMPs appears to have had a positive impact, and Peter hopes that BMP enforcement will be emphasized as dredging operations increase next year.

Habitat Construction – Replanting in Phase 2 seems to be working better than in Phase 1, though additional assessment and evaluation will be done in the coming year. It is inherently difficult to return habitats to their pre-dredging state, since we cannot recreate natural processes and want to avoid recreating conditions that were problematic before dredging (e.g. erosion cause by human activity). With regard to CAG questions about reintroducing mussels, habitat work indicates that reintroduction of various mussel species may be viable.

Modeling – Three different models are being used to try to answer questions about the connection between PCB concentrations in sediment and water and PCB concentrations in fish tissue. Using multiple models helps ensure quality of data, since each modeling method has its own strengths and weaknesses. The goal of this effort is to understand whether it is possible to make fish tissue PCB concentrations low enough for human and wildlife consumption after dredging is complete, and if so, how. The models have also helped set current operating conditions for the dredging underway now.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to the presentation; responses are in italics:

- Air Quality Exceedances – A CAG member asked what the source of the 3-day exceedances were on River and if the exceedances at the Processing Facility were in direct relation to the size of the surge pile . *EPA said that the exceedances occurred in CUs 16 and 24 in River Locations C and D which were very contaminated CUs. The other 3-day exceedance occurred at the Processing Facility, although it is hard to identify correlations with specific activities with the exceedances since there is a lot going on simultaneously; environmental cues like wind direction can aid in the identification of what caused the exceedance. The exceedances occurred near the unloading dock and not the surge pile. Another indication that the exceedances were not in relation to the surge pile is that contamination levels are substantially lower at the processing facility now that activities have stopped for the season, and only surge piles are left.*

- 136 Acres and Floodplain ROD – CAGs member expressed concern about recent news that there are 136 acres in the river with elevated PCB contamination that are outside of the scope of the Record of Decision (ROD). Another CAG member noted that people are collecting data for a second ROD to address floodplain contamination. Several CAG members asked for more clarity around what can and cannot be done under the TAG grant to review questions about what EPA, DEC, NOAA and FWS think about the 136 acres outside of the Dredge Area Delineation.

- Scope of the TAG Grant – A CAG member expressed the understanding that one use of the TAG grant is to provide information on problems related to the clean-up. Work undertaken under the language authorizing TAG grants indicates that technical assistant cannot be used to challenge the ROD itself, but it should be able to look at whether the performance standards and operations support the goals of the ROD. Clearwater, as the recipient of the current Hudson River TAG, is seeking more clarity in coming weeks as to the extent of work the subcontractor, Dr. Peter deFur of Environmental Stewardship Concepts, can do in this regard, so there may be more information at the next CAG meeting.

Brief Updates

Soil Sampling in Floodplains – Joan Gerhardt, General Electric, explained that GE is currently gathering soil samples. Approximately 198 properties have been sampled. About 50 property owners have been

unresponsive to sampling requests, and around 15 have declined sampling. Field crews are still working, and sampling not completed before weather makes sampling impossible will be finished in the spring.

Canal Corps Dredging – Joe Moloughney, NYS Canal Corps, noted that he responded in writing to CAG questions from the last meeting on the topic of the potential for the Fort Edward Yacht Basin re-silting and responsibility for testing and dredging sediment. The Canal Corps does have responsibility for testing and dredging, but it has not begun testing and does not yet have an Army Corps of Engineers permit for dredging.

2012 Schedule – The facilitator suggested holding four CAG meetings in 2012: one before the dredge season begins, two during the dredge season, and one after the dredge season ends (aiming for the fourth Thursday of the month where possible). A CAG member suggested holding the first meeting of 2012 in late February or early March. A member of the public noted that daytime meetings can be difficult for citizens to attend. The facilitator mentioned that meetings are intended to be at a time that is as convenient as possible.

Participation – Members of the CAG and the public want to be sure that residents are notified of CAG meetings and know they are open to the public. Both EPA and the facilitation team send regular updates on CAG activities to those who sign up. For instructions on how to sign up for the EPA listserv, go to http://www.epa.gov/hudson/listserv.htm, and email oferguson@cbuilding.org to be added to the facilitator's CAG email list.

Topics – Topics suggested for upcoming meetings (in addition to the overall project update) were: habitat replacement; Lake Champlain Maritime Museum presentation on archeology; and floodplains.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.