

**Community Advisory Group (CAG)**  
**Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**Thursday July 16, 2009**  
**12:15 PM – 2:45 PM**  
**Fort Edward, NY**

**Members and Alternates Attending:** Chris DeBolt, Phil Dobie, Robert Goldstein, Manna Jo Greene, Jane Havens, George Hodgson, Richard Kidwell, Bill Koebbeman, Ima Le Clair (for Preston Jenkins), Roland Mann, Anthony Maresco, Althea Mullarkey, Julie Stokes, Rebecca Troutman.

**CAG Liaisons Attending:** John Davis (NYSDOJ), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), Joan Gerhardt (General Electric), Glen Hendricks (NYSCC), David King (USEPA), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Kristen Skopec (USEPA).

**Others Attending:** Joanne Fowler (Ecology & Environment), Abel Hurtado (Clearwater), Angela Gius (Consensus Building Institute), Peter Johnston (Ecology & Environment), Tim Kruppenbacher (General Electric), Tom Kryzak (Air and Earth), Jeremy Magliano (NYSOAC), Joe Moloughney (NYSCC), Chris Murphy (Watershed Assessment Associates), Doug Reed (Hudson Basin River Watch), Nick Reisman (Post Star), Larisa Romanowski (Ecology & Environment), David Rosoff (USEPA), Kyle York (Society of Environmental Journalists).

**Facilitators:** Jeff Edelstein, Ona Ferguson, Patrick Field.

**Members Absent:** Andy Bicking, Shawn Connelly, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Robert Goldman, Gil Hawkins, Preston Jenkins, John Lawler, Aaron Mair, David Mathis, Dan McGraw, Merrilyn Pulver-Moulthrop, John Reiger, Judy Schmidt-Dean, Lois Squire, Mary Fran Wachunas, Mindy Wormuth.

**Next meetings:** The next CAG event will be an informal opportunity for Q&A on August 19 from 4-5pm at the Fort Edward Fire Hall, prior to a public meeting at 6pm.

**Action Items**

- EPA to provide baseline water monitoring chart to CAG.

**Welcome, Introductions, Review of May Meeting Summary and Action Items**

Facilitators welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the draft of the May meeting summary was approved with one change. All CAG meeting handouts and presentation slides are available within one week of CAG meetings at: <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

Prior to the formal start of the meeting, EPA showed a video of active dredging and associated activities. Joan Gerhardt (GE), Tim Kruppenbacher (GE), Kris Skopec (USEPA) and David King (USEPA) explained what was being depicted in the video footage. The video can be seen at: <http://www.hudsondredging.com/>.

David King noted that the archaeological work on a sunken sailing vessel from the late nineteenth century that was found during dredging has been completed. GE is drafting a report of that archaeological work for EPA.

## **General Project Discussion**

This CAG meeting was designed as a general check-in on Phase 1 of the dredging project. The discussion was structured around the questions and comments posed by CAG members, and prepared participants for a site visit immediately following the CAG meeting to view dredging. The following topics were discussed.

*Phase 2 Implications* – CAG members asked whether there is any reason to believe at this point that Phase 2 will not occur or that GE would argue that it should not, and when the decision about Phase 2 will be made and by whom. Currently, EPA and GE are monitoring efficiency (cycle time and volume removed) and PCB concentrations resulting from specific activities. Because it is so early in the dredging, no assumptions are being made in regard to Phase 2. At the conclusion of Phase 1, GE and EPA will each prepare a Phase 1 evaluation report that will assess the first phase of dredging relative to the engineering performance standards. Each of the reports will then be submitted to a peer review panel of independent experts. The panel will review both reports and make recommendations. EPA will review the panel's recommendations, as well as public input, and will then decide what should be changed for Phase 2. Once EPA notifies GE of EPA's decision regarding changes, GE has 90 days to make a decision. This date is set out in the consent decree.

*Transportation of Sediment* – CAG members asked for more information in the future about the operations and results of sending sediment to the facility in Texas. Tim Kruppenbacher (GE) reported that two unit trains have gone to Texas and another one is ready to go; there are 81 cars in a unit. Railcars are being loaded daily.

*Public Safety* – A CAG member voiced concern for public safety after having observed some project trucks speeding and other unsafe driving in the area that the CAG member thought might have been related to the dredging project. Another said that project employees have behaved extremely well.

### *Water Monitoring and PCB Resuspension* –

- Bucket closure, debris removal and weep holes – Several group members expressed concern that debris is preventing the dredge buckets from fully closing and wondered if that is increasing resuspension in the river. David King (USEPA) said that the debris on the bottom of the river must be removed in order to dredge beneath it; once the debris is removed it is possible to get better closure of buckets. As far as resuspension, water monitoring has shown that PCB levels have been below the drinking water standard. EPA is looking at all parts of operations to see what can be done to make debris removal as effective as possible. EPA has also asked GE to take a look at the woody debris to determine if it is a source of PCBs. Following a request at the last CAG meeting, EPA stated that the water coming out of the clamshell buckets will be analyzed. GE is doing water sampling before and after a bucket of sediment has been removed from the river (sampling water coming out of the bucket), to track and understand the water quality

- impact of individual scoops. The water from the clamshell buckets that goes into the hopper barges with the dredged sediment gets pumped out at the treatment plant.
- Protective measures – CAG members discussed protective measures that are in place to prevent resuspension, such as silt curtains and sheet piling. Silt curtains help prevent resuspension, however, they do not go all the way to the bottom of the river (they stop 1-2 ft above the bottom). The curtains are also opened daily to let vessels through. Dave King (USEPA) noted that water monitoring is occurring 100m upstream and 100m and 300m downstream of where dredging is taking place. The monitoring has shown that total suspended solid levels have been very low which indicates that sediment does not remain in the water column very long. While in place, sheet piling works to contain contaminated sediment, however, using sheet piling around all dredging would be too burdensome and would significantly slow the project's progress. During Phase 1, GE and EPA are evaluating all of the various protective measures that are in place to determine which are the most effective.
  - PCB levels and notification – CAG members inquired about current PCB levels in the river near where dredging is taking place and near Waterford. David King (USEPA) responded that PCB levels near Waterford have gone from a baseline of ~40ppt (2004) to ~50ppt during dredging and offered to send CAG members a graph of the pre-dredging baseline water monitoring data. As set out in the Community Health and Safety Plan, EPA will notify those municipalities who use the water downstream if PCB levels surpass the 500ppt drinking water standard.
  - Core sampling and residual dredging – During dredging, PCB monitoring is done in the water column. After dredging, a sediment core is taken, divided into six-inch lengths, and analyzed. After a five-acre unit is dredged, 40 core samples are taken to determine if residual dredging is necessary. If residual dredging is needed, the area will be redredged until samples indicate that the removal effort has achieved its goals. Joan Gerhardt (GE) noted that residual dredging has begun in the Fort Edward Yacht Basin and near Griffin Island.
  - Dredging Procedure – A CAG member stated that some environmental groups in other places where dredging is proposed object to clamshell dredging. Another member noted that the circumstances in those places require different technology than what was determined to be the best method here.

*Phase 1 Improvements* – A CAG member asked what kinds of measures have been undertaken to improve the effectiveness and safety of operations during Phase 1 and when that information will be available. David King (USEPA) stated that many aspects of Phase 1 are being evaluated for effectiveness and will be documented in the Phase 1 evaluation and during the peer review process.

*Noise* – A CAG member voiced concern about dredging-related noise levels. David King (USEPA) said the noise monitoring results are on the EPA data website and, while there have been a few exceedences, noise levels have generally been below the limits set out in the Quality of Life performance standards.

*Wildlife* – A CAG member said that they have observed unusual wildlife movement since dredging began. David King (USEPA) and Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC) stated that they are not aware of any way to measure this.

*Volatilization/Air* – A CAG member asked for information about air exceedences. David King (USEPA) said that they have learned that the longer sediments are left sitting out after they've been taken out of the river, the more rapidly the PCBs volatilize. As a result, GE is now moving the dredged sediment from the mini hoppers to the deeper hopper barges faster. Keeping the sediment wet also works to decrease volatilization. The CAG member expressed concern about local impacts as well as the global burden and asked that GE strive to keep both low and to consider covering sediments sitting on barges.

*Navigational Dredging* – A CAG member reiterated the need for dredging to navigational depths, noting the regular loss of economic development opportunities for the region because the channels have not been dredged to navigational depth for years due to the PCB contamination.

*Protective Standards* – A CAG member noted that GE and EPA are focused on the work as laid out in the Record of Decision (ROD), and that the standards in the ROD are the most rigorous, stringent standards ever set. It is difficult and complicated for a project to achieve all the standards simultaneously, however they are working hard to carry out the work as safely and efficiently as possible.

*Habitat/Contract 5* – Several CAG members requested information on habitat replacement. David King (USEPA) suggested a presentation on this topic at a future CAG meeting. Only native plants will be planted in Phase 1 backfilled areas, and planting will start in spring 2010.

*Quarries* – One CAG member voiced a suspicion of an unpermitted quarry being used for the project. Joan Gerhardt (GE) asked that the CAG member provide her with additional information on this.

*In-River Transportation* – One CAG member noted that they have not experienced any unreasonable delays due to the project when boating recreationally on the river, and that communication with barge operators worked perfectly. Another expressed appreciation that GE distributed boater safety sheets to the chambers of commerce.

*Natural Resources Damages (NRD)* – A CAG member requested an update on the NRDA studies and restoration planning. John Davis (NYSDOJ) said that studies are underway on the toxic effects of PCBs on mink, some birds, and Atlantic sturgeon and their eggs. Kevin Farrar said that DEC can present to the CAG on the NRDA studies and restoration planning at a future meeting.

*Facility* – One CAG member asked if the facility is being fully utilized and was told that it is working at capacity and that all its operations are working well. Several CAG members noted the importance of ensuring that the dewatering facility can be reused after the dredging project is completed, which would require adequate navigational access to the facility.

*The CAG Process* – Several CAG members expressed concern that the CAG summer schedule was changed without adequate CAG input. They would like CAG members to set the schedule and for meetings to be frequent during Phase 1. One CAG member expressed their belief that, since its inception, the CAG has contributed very little to the dredging project overall. Several others responded that the CAG has accomplished an enormous amount over the years, citing the creation of the Community Health and Safety Plan, increased awareness about the need for alternative community drinking water supply, getting a trail as part of the waterline project, and the surfacing

of important issues for EPA and GE, including topics like air volatilization in advance of the dredging. The facilitator said CAG members can advocate independently through non-CAG channels while sitting on the CAG. David King (USEPA) noted that the CAG's that are forming at the Sacandaga Lake and GM Massena Superfund Sites are being modeled after the Hudson River CAG.

### **Brief Updates**

*Community Involvement Plan (CIP)* – The updated CIP was distributed to the CAG on CD.

### **Committee Business**

*CAG Agenda Topics and Next Meeting* – CAG members requested presentations at upcoming CAG meetings on Contract 5 (habitat replacement), the NRDA studies and restoration planning, and sediment transport to Texas. The next CAG gathering will be an informal Q&A session on August 19th from 4-5pm at the Fort Edward Fire Hall prior to a public meeting at 6pm.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm. Interested CAG members and members of the public then viewed dredging in-person from the banks of the Hudson River in Fort Edward.