

Community Advisory Group (CAG)
Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site
Meeting Summary
Thursday, June 30, 2011
1:00 – 4:00PM

Fire Hall, Fort Edward, NY

Members and Alternates Attending: David Adams, Phil Dobie, Rich Elder, Manna Jo Greene, Richard Kidwell, Roland Mann, David Mathis, Althea Mullarkey, Merrilyn Pulver-Mouthrop, Lois Squire, Julie Stokes, Rebecca Troutman.

CAG Liaisons Attending: Danielle Adams (Ecology & Environment), Tom Brosnan (NOAA), John Davis (NYOAG), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), John Fazzolari (Ecology & Environment), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communication for GE), Bob Gibson (GE), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Sharon Leighton (NYSCC), Deepali McCloe (Ecology & Environment), Joe Moloughney (NYSCC), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Larisa Romanowski (USEPA), Lisa Rosman (NOAA).

Others Attending: Rob Alvey (USEPA), Chris Ballantyne (NYSDEC), Mark Barash (DOI), Jeremy Brettholtz (Clearwater/Hopewell Jct), Margaret Byrne (USFWS), Chris DeBolt (Assemblyman Tony Jordan), Peter deFur (ESC), Terri Edwards (USFWS), Judith Enck (USEPA), Shanna Farrell, Bruce Fidler (The Louis Berger Group), Jay Field (NOAA), Bob Foley (USFWS), Tegan Gifford (Ecology & Environment), Brad Gursky (Great Lakes Dredge & Dock, LLC), George Hodgson (Saratoga), Regina Keenan (NYSDOH), Joel Knopf (CBI), Maureen Leary (NYOAG), Jim Murphy (USEPA), Brian Nearing (Times Union), Brian Stratton (NYSCC), Andrew Timmis (D.A. Collins), John Vetter (USEPA).

Facilitators: Ona Ferguson, Meredith Sciarrio.

Members Absent: Cecil Corbin-Mark, Darlene DeVoe, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Robert Goldman, Robert Goldstein, Jane Havens, Gil Hawkins, Christine Hoffer, Ed Kinowski, Aaron Mair, Bill Peck, Tom Richardson, Sharon Ruggi.

Next meeting: The next CAG meeting may be scheduled to occur mid to late summer.

Action Items:

- EPA – Present on floodplains work to CAG.
- CBI – Circulate notes from Natural Resource Damage Assessment Pre-Meeting.

Welcome, Introductions, Review April Meeting Summary

The facilitator welcomed everyone to the meeting. The draft April 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>.

EPA's Dredging Project Update

David King, USEPA, gave an overview of Phase 2 dredging to date. His slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. The primary points from David's presentation included:

Schedule, Scope and General Updates – Dredging started June 6 and is operating on a 24/6 schedule. EPA is currently working in Certification Units (CUs) 9, 10, 11 and 19 as flow permits, and performing tree-trimming and debris removal as needed. The total sediment dredged to date is 31,279 cubic yards.

EPA has found significant amounts of clay in CUs 9, 10, and 11, which indicates that the area is clean but also slows the loading of the scows. The conveyor system at the dewatering facility has been improved so sediments can be unloaded more efficiently.

CU Compliance Review - All monitoring data has been in compliance with no capping or backfilling, and very little capping is expected in CU 9. Dredging has achieved the objective through most of CU 9 (less than 1mg/kg Tri+PCBs), and 75-80% of CU 9 achieved that level on the first dredge pass. Project staff will be addressing the remaining areas on a second dredge pass. Once GE has completed work in CU 9, backfilling/capping percentages and amounts from that CU will be publicly available on the dredging data website via a nodal capping index.

Water Quality Data – Mid-field PCB monitoring for Phase 2 is showing approximately 100ng/L PCBs to date, fairly consistently, which is below the standard. Comparing mid-field data with previously collected data, project staff determined that the Thompson Island data collection station was not producing accurate results. Thus, rather than using the 24-hour standard data, the team has started to run manual transects rather than use automated stations. Additionally, a string of sampling buoys has been run at the safety cable above the dam, and the results are now consistent with the mid-field data. Ultimately the Thompson Island monitoring location will be moved to a more appropriate place.

Special Studies & Habitat Reconstruction – Special studies currently are being conducted including evaluating changes in PCB concentration downstream of dredging, measuring PCB loss at dams via volatilization, and co-locating cores after the first pass to check dredge prisms. GE is replanting a total of 68,563 SAV plants this season in Phase 1 dredging areas.

Ongoing Activities – GE's ongoing activities include continuing observations, diving in CU 29 and CU 30, and conducting terrestrial and underwater surveys to search for cultural resources. When artifacts are discovered, they will be assessed and documented in accordance with SHPO guidance, and the dredge design may be revised based on the discovery. GE also is conducting a coring program south of CU 30 to improve delineation of depth of contamination, planning to collect 700 cores this year using vibracore and sonic coring.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to EPA's presentation:

- *Capping* – A CAG member voiced concern about the capping from Phase 1 and inquired if the caps were disrupted by recent high flows. EPA responded that the caps are in place and are not damaged. A CAG member noted that when the river flooded, the caps were silted in.
- *Lower Hudson and Air Quality* – A CAG member inquired about water sampling in the lower Hudson and whether EPA is finding any air exceedances. EPA staff have found the PCB levels in the lower Hudson are remaining low and air quality levels have not exceeded .06 micrograms per cubic meter (and are typically as low as .015 micrograms per cubic meter).
- *Navigational Dredging and Yacht Basin* – Several CAG members inquired about how the Fort Edward Yacht Basin was impacted by the high flow and how it will be dredged. EPA noted that the Yacht Basin got ten feet of fill in some places, which will need to be tested. The cap is intact. Per Joe Moloughney, NYSCC will need to test the sediment and then get approval from NYDEC to dredge the Yacht Basin. NYSCC currently is developing a plan to address any potentially high concentrations of PCBs found there.
- *Sediment Redistribution and Resuspension* – A CAG member inquired about the evaluation of sediment redistribution as a result of the recent flooding. GE is currently resampling many areas targeted for dredging following the 2011 season as well as reviewing the edges of the dredge prisms for any changes in mass per unit area. Another CAG member was concerned about resuspension during high flows. EPA will be backfilling as soon as the data returns from the second dredge pass, which will limit redistribution.

Conversation with EPA Regional Administrator

Judith Enck, EPA Regional Administrator for Region 2, thanked CAG members for their efforts and for inviting her to their meeting. She said CAG discussions have been extremely informative and helpful for EPA, and that EPA would not have gotten this far on the project without the CAG's input. She noted that this project is a high priority for EPA Region 2 and that she and her colleagues value everyone's hard work including that of DEC, NYSCC, and NYSOAG. Judith said that CERCLA (the Superfund law) prevents EPA from requiring navigational dredging unless it relates to maneuvering project barges. EPA seeks to better the conditions of public health, the river itself, and the regional economy, and she believes that getting the river remediated will mean much brighter opportunities throughout the Hudson Valley.

CAG members discussed the following topics with the Regional Administrator:

Roles, Process & ROD – A few CAG members asked Judith to clarify the roles of GE, EPA and the Natural Resource Damage Trustees. Judith noted that generally GE would design the project and EPA and state government would oversee it. The Trustees are in a purely advisory role to present information about the project to the EPA. A couple of CAG members inquired how data on elevated PCB levels outside of the project scope presented by the Trustees to the CAG in the pre-meeting would be addressed. Judith responded that the EPA is committed to following the ROD and will continue to hear the Trustees' perspectives.

Navigational Dredging – Brian Stratton, NYSCC, inquired if EPA could help with navigational dredging even though CERCLA forbids their demanding it be done. EPA is interested in working cooperatively with NYSCC in terms of sharing information, but cannot direct GE to conduct navigational dredging. Judith noted that it would make sense to address navigational and environmental dredging simultaneously, but it's a legal issue.

Floodplains – A CAG member inquired about plans for remediation of the floodplains. EPA and GE have collected about 5,000 soil samples, which will inform the remediation study. Per Gary Klawinski, EPA will provide an update to the CAG on floodplains at a future meeting, and will be doing more sampling this summer.

Economy and Commerce – One CAG member voiced concern about the economy and commerce in the region since the well-paying jobs from the dredging will be gone at the end of the project. He requested that EPA consider the implications of this and long-term economic health of the area.

CAG members thanked Judith for her attendance at the meeting.

Hudson Falls Plant Update

Kevin Farrar, NYSDEC, gave an update on the Hudson Falls Plant. His slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. Kevin's presentation included an overview of how the Hudson Falls Plant is related to the EPA-led Hudson River dredging project, including the 2004 ROD to construct a Tunnel Drain Collection System (TDCS) to drain PCB oil from the bedrock. The TDCS was installed in 2007-2009 beneath the primary bedrock horizon to collect the oil. It became operational in May 2009 when the drain wells were opened to the tunnels. Groundwater and PCB oil drain into the central sump and are pumped to the treatment plant, bringing water at less than 65ng/L PCBs back to the river. The water is treated before it is returned to the river by a granular multimedia filter to create clear water then with UV chemical oxidation, an air stripper and activated carbon filtration. The oil separated out goes to Port Arthur TX, and solids go to a hazardous waste landfill. Bedrock water levels are monitoring remotely by telemetry from TDCS piezometers.

NYSDEC's findings indicate that there is good containment of the PCB oil by the TDCS. GE is close to achieving EPA's ROD goal for upstream source control. According to data collected at Hudson Falls and Rogers Island, PCB concentrations increased during construction of the tunnel, but have consistently remained low since the tunnel became operational. Concentrations along the southern plume boundary are typically below the drinking water standard (0.5ppb), but slightly above the groundwater standard (0.09ppb). The TDCS will remain in place for the foreseeable future as a containment remedy while there is still PCB oil coming out of the bedrock. Kevin noted that this site, while a local source that can be measured, is no longer a significant source of PCB contamination to the Hudson River at large.

Hudson Dredging Data Website Update

Larisa Romanowski, USEPA, gave an update on the Hudson Dredging Data Website. Her slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

The website, www.hudsondredgingdata.com, has been updated for Phase 2 to be more interactive. The calendars for quality of life and water quality monitoring contain links to daily monitoring data, which is updated as it is received. Interactive maps enable users to retrieve data for different river sections. There is a link at the bottom of the webpage to access Phase 1 monitoring data, which is distinguished visually from Phase 2 data by being displayed in a different color. Other updates to the website include: PCB load information reflects Phase 2 standard and compliance information, residuals/capping/backfilling data is updated regularly (usually weekly), and the Project Activities section shows what's happening on the river, via calendar and map, and is updated daily. Some CAG members noted that they would be viewing the new site and may contact Larisa at a later date with their feedback.

Brief Updates

TAG Update – Clearwater has retained Peter deFur as their TAG advisor. CAG members are welcome to refer to him for an independent opinion or science translation via Manna Greene. Peter worked on the Peer Review of the Hudson in the 1990s and is currently working on a project on the Housatonic River. Clearwater has asked him to monitor project activities and inform the CAG as needed.

Report out from Natural Resource Damage Assessment Pre-Meeting – Althea Mullarkey reported on the pre-meeting held before the full CAG meeting about the Natural Resource Damage Assessment. Ona will circulate the pre-meeting notes and the presentation is available at: <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

DOH Fact Sheets – Deanna Ripstein (NYDOH) distributed updated fact sheets on swimming, public health, and fish consumption advisories. These are also available on the CAG's website.

CAG Business

CAG Meeting Date – The next CAG meeting may occur mid-late summer.

Future CAG Meeting Topics – The facilitators reviewed a list of agenda topics CAG members have requested for future meetings, to which CAG members added. The combined list includes: CAG membership for River sections 2 and 3, NRDA, current habitat restoration work, new sampling and coring, computer modeling, DOH health worker study, sediment redeposition, grabs and traps, floodplain sampling and remedial actions, and the option of a boat tour during the dredging season.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.