

**Community Advisory Group (CAG)**  
**Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**Thursday, September 22, 2011**  
**1:00 – 3:45PM**

**Fire Hall, Fort Edward, NY**

**Members and Alternates Attending:** Phil Dobie, Robert Goldman, Manna Jo Greene, Richard Kidwell, William Koebbeman, Roland Mann, David Mathis, Althea Mullarkey, Merrilyn Pulver-Mouthrop, Lois Squire, Julie Stokes.

**CAG Liaisons Attending:** John Davis (NYOAG), Kevin Farrar (NYSDEC), John Fazzolari (Ecology & Environment), Joan Gerhardt (Behan Communication for GE), John Joyce (NYSCC), David King (USEPA), Gary Klawinski (USEPA), Jeremy Magliaro (NYOAG), Deepali McCloe (Ecology & Environment), Joe Moloughney (NYSCC), Deanna Ripstein (NYSDOH), Larisa Romanowski (USEPA), Charles Sullivan (NPS).

**Others Attending:** Nathan Carlton (Applied Ecological Services), Lee Coleman (Daily Gazette), Bob Gibson (GE), Andy Guglielmi (NYSDEC), George Hodgson (Saratoga), Tim Kruppenbacher (GE), Betsy Lewis-Michel (NYSDOH), Brian Mayes (GE), Rick Sheldon (GE).

**Facilitators:** Ona Ferguson, Tushar Kansal.

**Members Absent:** David Adams, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Darlene DeVoe, Rich Elder, Mark Fitzsimmons, Richard Fuller, Robert Goldstein, Gil Hawkins, Christine Hoffer, Ed Kinowski, Aaron Mair, Bill Peck, Tom Richardson, Sharon Ruggi, Rebecca Troutman.

**Next meeting:** The next CAG meeting will likely be scheduled for November 17 or December 8.

**Action Items:**

- None specified.

**Welcome, Introductions, Review June Meeting Summary**

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

**Morning Boat Tour**

David Matthis, CAG Member, provided a short recap of the morning's Boat Tour of the dredging project. The tour was narrated by David King of EPA and organized and hosted by Joseph Moloughney of the NYS Canal Corps. David Mathis observed that the cleanup appears to be very well run, safe, and impressive in scale. He also noted that his boating friends said it was not causing any delays for river traffic.

**Dredging Project Update**

Tim Kruppenbacher, General Electric, gave an update on Phase 2 dredging to date. His slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. The primary points from his presentation included:

*Schedule, Scope and General Updates* – Dredging started June 6 and is operating on a 24/6 schedule with processing on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. May storms and bad weather delayed the start of the dredging season. Dredging has begun on Certification Unit (CU) 9, west of Roger’s Island and proceeded south. In river operations began initially with one dredge, then two, and a third dredge has since been added. Dredged sediments are being processed seven days a week. This season, dredging has taken place in 11 CUs. CU 21 is the furthest point south that dredging has proceeded to date. In addition, 216,000 cubic yards (cy) of material have been dredged as of September 18 out of a seasonal target of 350,000cy. 146,000 tons of material have been used for backfill and capping. To this point, the project has a nodal capping index of 1.4%, representing dredged areas that have been capped. In total, about 5.7% of the area has been capped (including areas that do not count toward the nodal capping index). Dredging will likely continue until late October. This year the dredging has achieved 65-70% efficiency compared to 40% efficiency in 2009.

*Best Management Practices, Resuspension and Processing Facility Improvements* – This season, as compared to 2009, a number of improvements have increased efficiency while keeping resuspension low. These improvements include limiting the number of dredge passes; fewer dredges operating simultaneously; dredging in contiguous CUs; having a better understanding of the Depth of Contamination (DoC); and a simplified CU acceptance process. CUs are typically accepted within a 5-day period. The term “acceptance process” describes a multi-step process by which EPA determines that a CU has been dredged to a level of PCB concentration below acceptable limits. GE has also upgraded various pieces of equipment at the processing facility, so things are moving faster and better in many systems. Better defined dredge prisms have led to increased accuracy and efficiency. There is a new sediment unloader; an improved barge haul system; a new barge decant station; a new trommel feed system and an additional bank of hydrocyclones. Also, material undergoes additional washing in the trommel; and the size of the polymer feed system has been increased. This season, the processing facility has unloaded ~ 400 barges of material and 13 trains have shipped materials to disposal sites in Michigan and Idaho.

*Habitat Reconstruction* – Replanting was necessary in most of the Phase 1 dredge areas and was done during June and July, 2011. The design of the 2011 dredge area reconstruction is underway.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to this presentation:

- *Debris* – A CAG member asked about debris being dredged and was told that most debris is pulled up during the first dredge pass this season.
- *Dredge Materials on Site* – A CAG member asked if it was likely that, like in 2009, dredged materials would remain in piles on site during the winter. GE responded that it was too early to tell. GE’s operations are on track, and there should be no backup at the landfills, but tropical storms in late summer caused railroad damage that might cause transport backups.
- *Navigational Dredging* – CAG members asked about depth of caps this season (all are required to provide a water depth of 14 feet or more), whether the Canal Corps would be able to dredge the newly silted-over caps without harming the cap (e.g., in the Fort Edward Yacht Basin) and whether dropping an anchor or dredging an area that has been capped will disturb the cap and potentially allow for the release of PCBs. An EPA official stated that no caps have been placed in the navigational channel this year. An EPA official noted that heavy spuds could penetrate the cap but that recreational anchors probably would not. CAG members later noted the need to restore the full use of the river for navigational dredging, and possible overlap between the Canal Corporation’s navigational dredging needs and the additional 136 acres delineated by the NRD Trustees.
- *Sediment Redistribution and Resilting*– A CAG member noted that there has been resilting at the Fort Edward Yacht Basin and asked if there have been any findings about contamination there. An EPA official responded that new sediment from up-river in closed CUs is not within the

purview of this project and that NYSCC will conduct testing at the Yacht Basin. A CAG member inquired as to how GE can test the soundness of the cap through 10 feet of silt. A GE official responded that GE can use bathymetric surveys to conduct tests and would look for differences between surveys. Findings to date indicate that there has been no movement in the caps. This is the case even in CU 1, where sediment deposition has occurred on top of the cap and has not disturbed the integrity of the cap.

- *Record of Decision* – A CAG member noted that there are significant concentrations of PCBs outside the area defined by the record of decision, that these areas will not be addressed by the cleanup process, and that the next record of decision (on the floodplains) should be more responsive and adaptive to new developments and findings.

### **Floodplain Sampling and Remedial Action**

Gary Klawinski, US EPA, presented about past and current sampling by EPA and GE of PCBs in the Hudson River floodplains. His slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>.

The EPA has an agreement with GE to evaluate PCB contamination in use areas and to conduct removal actions; both components of this work are near completion. GE and EPA evaluated flood mud this summer and sampling is still underway, as it has been since 2000. Findings indicate that PCBs are more commonly found in low-lying areas that are more often flooded and are more commonly found closer to the river. Between 2008 and 2010, approximately 8,000 samples were collected across 400 properties. Of these, about 80% showed <1 ppm, 14%: 1-10 ppm, and 6%: >10 ppm. 99% of samples in agricultural fields were <1 ppm.

EPA has been instituting interim remedial measures (until a permanent remedy is complete) via soil covers and/or placing signage in locations where PCB concentrations are found to be greater than 10 ppm. To date, EPA has placed 35 soil covers and placed 15 signs. This year EPA has placed 7 soil covers and 1 sign. EPA and GE have both took samples of flood mud after flooding this year.

CAG members discussed the following topics in response to the floodplain presentation:

- *Wildlife Exposure* – A CAG member pointed out that wildlife cannot read posted signs so as to avoid contaminated areas, and that capping is only taking place in human use areas.
- *Agricultural Areas* – CAG members stressed the importance of sampling agricultural areas thoroughly, of taking remedial actions in agricultural areas as needed, of following the science of plant uptake of PCBs as it evolves, and of being sure that farmers are not exporting PCBs with the sod, dairy and crops they sell. GE staff noted that farmers have to allow GE or EPA to test on their land, and that some have denied this permission for testing.
- *Plant Uptake* – A CAG member commented that the state of knowledge about uptake of PCBs by plants is continuing to evolve.
- *Future Use Areas* – A CAG member noted that towns along the river will likely bring new areas into use in the future that are not currently in use and that therefore EPA should be testing floodplains the entire length of the 40 miles of river, not just those currently in use. EPA staff responded that the entire stretch of floodplain is being sampled, with some additional focus on current use areas.

### **Public Health Study**

Dr. Elizabeth Lewis of the NYS Department of Health presented results of a study examining the health impact of living in close proximity to the Hudson River as measured by incidence of hospitalization for

heart disease and stroke. Her slides can be seen at <http://www.hudsoncag.ene.com/documents.htm>. The study found that there was no significant effect of living close to the river and that income levels play a much more significant role in correlation with hospitalization for heart disease and stroke. In response to a question from a CAG member, Dr. Lewis said she concludes that Dr. Carpenter's study overstates the implications on health of living close to the river.

## **Brief Updates**

*NYS CC Canalway Grant Program* – John Joyce, NYS Canal Corps, a consolidated funding opportunity that allows government bodies and nonprofits to submit a common application for grants from nine state agencies. A total of \$1 million is available and each grant is about \$100,000-\$150,000. Applications are being accepted now until October 31, 2011. Many types of projects would be eligible for support, including expanding public access, promoting tourism and econ development, protecting environmental and historic canal resources, and many others. For more info see: [www.nyworks.ny.gov](http://www.nyworks.ny.gov).

*Navigational Access and Navigational Dredging* – John Davis from the Attorney General's office reported that he had briefed his management on this issue, and that the AG leadership understands the salient issues

*TAG Grant* – Manna Jo Greene, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, said that Dr. Peter deFur, TAG advisor, is analyzing data about air and water exceedances. She will be asking him to look at the potential effects of not dredging the 136 acres of PCB-contaminated surface sediments that are outside of the Dredge Area Delineation, which the Natural Resource Damage Trustees have raised concerns about with regard to fish tissue, and how soon humans could safely eat fish again with or without removing this additional acreage. She also noted concerns about whether possible NRD projects, such as restoring mink (whose reproductive capacity has been damaged by PCB exposure) to the shores of the Hudson, would be impacted by this. And she raised concerns about habitat restoration, including the impact of dredging on freshwater mussels and the need for greater diversity of aquatic plantings. Another CAG member expressed hope that there be opportunities to adaptively add issues such as mussel restoration into project activities as needs are identified.

## **CAG Business**

*CAG Meeting Date and Topics* – The next CAG meeting may occur on November 17<sup>th</sup> or December 8<sup>th</sup> (after the dredge season is over) and will present as much data as possible from the 2011 dredge season. CAG members requested discussion at future meetings of mussel habitat, plant uptake of PCBs.

*Expanding CAG Membership* – In June, a CAG member asked whether the CAG should expand to include other down-river communities. Participants discussed this question and determined that there are communities down-river with CAG representatives who do not attend because they do not have immediate concerns. When other communities indicate interest, they will likely be welcome to join.

*CAG Membership* – Brian Gilchrest of the Washington County of Cornell Cooperative Extension will join the CAG as the Agricultural representative.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.