

**EPA-GE Citizen Coordinating Council
Optional Meeting – May 17, 2006
DRAFT Highlights**

Environmental Records Center
SITE: GE - Housatonic
PROJECT: 13.4
CMBN: 252906



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Participants: See attached list

Introduction: Suzanne Orenstein, Facilitator, opened the meeting with a round of introductions and a review of the agenda. Topics for discussion in this meeting included:

- Overview of Study Results and Plan for West Branch Contamination
- Update on Work at Pittsfield Residential Properties

Anna Symington of MassDEP, provided context for the discussions by explaining that contamination in the West Branch of the Housatonic falls outside of the consent decree area, so it is being managed under an Administrative Consent Order between MassDEP and GE. She also introduced Joanne Flescher, MassDEP Project Manager for the West Branch efforts.

West Branch Presentation and Discussion

Dick Gates of GE introduced Jim Nuss of Blasland, Bouch and Lee, the consultant to GE who worked with GE on the site investigation and developed the proposed remediation plan. Dick clarified that the remediation plan is still under discussion with MassDEP, and will not go forward until the necessary permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Pittsfield Conservation Commission are obtained and MassDEP subsequently approves the plan.

Jim Nuss provided the following overview. Slide from his presentation The highlights and presentations made at the meeting will be available shortly on EPA's dedicated website: www.epa.gov/region1/ge. They can be accessed by selecting the "Meetings and Events" button.

Background: In 1997-1998, GE remediated contamination at Dorothy Amos Park, which is adjacent to the West Branch area that is the subject of this meeting. At that time, about 27,000 cubic yards of contaminated material were sent offsite for disposal. Following this effort, EPA sampled the river bank and the surface water in the adjacent river, as well as in the confluence area. MassDEP further sampled to supplement the EPA data set, synthesized both sets of data, and identified several areas of potential contamination in a report prepared in 2005. These investigations resulted in several conclusions and recommendations from MassDEP.

- Riverbank adjacent to Park – remediation required
- Sediments adjacent to Park – further investigation and potentially some localized sediment remediation
- EPA sample location near confluence (60.5 ppm PCB) warrants further investigation

- Other sediment and bank soil areas pose no risk
- Assess groundwater at Park for non-aqueous phase liquids, PCBs, lead, and arsenic
- Conduct PCB surface water sampling upstream and downstream of Park.

In 2005, GE responded to MassDEP's recommendations, and further investigated the presence of PCBs in the surface water and sediment. They reported to MassDEP in April 2006 that the EPA, MassDEP, and GE sampling data provide sufficient site characterization to support the conceptual design of remedial actions. Their report further concluded that:

- Soils and sediments adjacent to the Park require remediation
- Soils and sediments downriver of Park require no further activity
- Surface water requires no further activity
- Groundwater requires continued monitoring for PCBs (lead and arsenic were at non-detect levels)

Current activities: GE has proposed to remove 100 cubic yards of material from between one and four foot depths adjacent to the park. The post-removal goal is a PCB concentration below the 10 ppm performance standard for recreational use. For sediments, the proposal is to remove 600 cubic yards of sediment to bring the average concentrations at surface and depth to below .5 ppm. The maps showing proposed locations for these removals are included in the meeting presentation slides posted on the web site, as noted above.

Discussions with MassDEP and EPA are ongoing concerning the proposed remediation activities. Next steps include detailed remedial design through a remedial action work plan for MassDEP approval, after federal, state and local permitting activities are completed.

Question: What would the average post-removal concentration be at the five foot depth?

Answer: The investigation at five feet was to find a clean spot to make sure that the extent of contamination was delineated well. The remediation will stop at four feet, based on the data obtained.

Q. The proposal document in the repository shows two tables that seem to be identical: E4 and E5.

A. We will take a look at why that is.

Q. Why was there a gap from 2000 to 2005 before action was taken on the data?

A. Anna Symington noted that when she assumed her current position in 2003, the project and data were brought to her attention. The project was made a high priority and the data report evaluated and discussed with EPA and then issued, with direction to GE to resume the investigation. She cannot explain the delay before that time, but noted that the agency had suffered severe staff loss during that time period.

Q. When GE does the clean up and are working under the bridge, would they be willing to remove other debris, such as old shopping carts?

A. Yes.

Q. There have been and continue to be concerns about kids fishing in the river in the contaminated area. Has there been any sampling of the fish in the West Branch?

A. A fish advisory exists for the entire river. Advisory signs will be posted along the West Branch. The Southwest Branch is stocked with trout by MassWildlife.

Q. What will be the estimated level of PCBs in the sediment after the removal?

A. Less than 0.5 ppm for sediment and less than 6 ppm for the riverbanks.

Q. What is the highest level found that will not be removed?

A. Between 1 and 3 ppm.

Q. Are you still testing upstream, and how far?

A. Further testing of groundwater continues, but there is no further testing planned for surface water, or riverbank and sediment soils.

Q. What is the status of MassDEP activities to address the King St. dump?

A. The dump investigation is being overseen by MassDEP's Solid Waste Division. DEP CCC members will advise those working on the project of the request for an update on this project and provide contact information of those working on it for interested CCC members.

Comment: Please make the update on the King St. Dump an action item from this meeting.

Update on Residential Property Activities

Dick Gates of GE provided an overview of activities to remediate residential properties in Pittsfield, as requested in previous CCC meetings.

Historic Activity: Between 1997 and 2006, GE sampled 351 properties and remediated 179 of those. Those not remediated had sampling results below 2 ppm and did not require remediation.

Current Activities: There are six residential properties scheduled for remediation. Work will start on May 22, and about 200 cubic yards of soil will be removed. There are also planned remediation activities in the East Street Area 1 South and at Brattle Street and Grand Avenue. In addition, sampling and remediation will occur at several commercial properties, including 9 parcels on Dalton Avenue, where sampling is complete and a detailed remedial implementation plan is due in August. Sampling is also complete for sixteen additional parcels on Commercial Street, with one parcel remediated to address property owner construction needs, and a final report of the sampling due in June.

Question: Property owners on Grand Ave. reported that there was excavation of soil there today. Is this part of your project?

Answer: Our project is scheduled for later. GE will investigate what the current excavation is.

Question: There has been historic information about oil in a manhole in the East St. area neighborhood. We are worried that there might still be NAPL below homes, which may have a chance of migrating.

Answer: The GE study was designed to address those issues. We sampled sumps and monitored extensively for 18-24 months and saw no evidence of NAPL. There is a NAPL recovery system by building 69, and recovery has dropped off there. The Ground Water Management Area One extends into the same neighborhood, and we periodically examine the wells in the area. We haven't detected NAPL in the wells.

Question: What levels are you finding on the Dalton Ave. commercial properties?

Answer: Some isolated, very high levels that are addressed very specifically in the remediation plan. Otherwise the levels run the gamut. Commercial St. levels are generally lower than Dalton, but a few are in the 1000 ppm range.

Question: Could the drain at the point where Commercial Street drains into the river be a preferential path for contamination, and would you monitor the drain?

Answer: Preferential pathways refer to NAPL contamination, which we have not found. GE believes we have sampled near the drain pipe.

Question: Can we still submit comments to DEP on GE's West Branch proposal?

Answer: Yes. We have submitted the proposal to MassDEP's risk review staff in Boston, so there is still time.

Question: Regarding the 351 properties and the 179 remediations, how many of the unremediated sites had PCBs at levels not requiring action?

Answer: GE will get that information for you.

Question: Is it possible that Citizens for PCB Removal could get a list of those who's property was remediated to assist them in obtaining the letters from EPA that promise future buyers that they won't be liable for contamination ("comfort letters")?

Answer: The owners of the remediated properties are sensitive about giving out that information. In order to respect their privacy we do not provide that information.

Action Items

1. BBL will review whether Tables E4 and E5 in the conceptual design proposal are identical.
2. MassDEP will assist CCC members to obtain information about the status of the King St. dump project.
3. GE (Dick Gates) will provide information about the number of remediated properties that had PCB contamination below the action level of 2 ppm.

Future Meetings

Suzanne Orenstein reported that the next CCC meeting is scheduled for September 13. The agenda will include, among other issues, planning for the CCC for the September 2006 to June 2007 time frame.

One element on the fall CCC schedule is a planned meeting on Alternative Technologies. Since that will be an in-depth workshop, EPA is considering scheduling it for a half day on a Saturday in October. CCC members did not object to the Saturday scheduling, however, the HRI representative indicated that HRI was considering doing its own workshop on alternative technologies, later in the year. He noted that HRI was more interested in newer thinking and developments, rather than the tried and tested methods EPA would probably focus on. Ms. Orenstein asked HRI to discuss their plans with her and EPA to see if a coordinated effort was possible and the HRI representative agreed to do so.

Dean Tagliaferro, who was unable to attend the meeting, asked the facilitator to report that ongoing construction would make a CCC tour in June difficult. He suggested that the issue of a tour be revisited in the fall. Some CCC members asked if a tour of the GE site could be combined with a fall tour and GE noted that there was nothing going on that the public could not see on its own.

The meeting adjourned at 7 PM.

CCC Attendance: Optional Meeting on May 17, 2006

Name	Organization	Email Address	Attended
Members			
Thelma Barzottini	Citizens for PCB Removal		X
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Others (Please sign in if your name does not appear below)			
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