

EPA-GE Citizen Coordinating Council
Optional Meeting – March 15, 2006
Highlights

Participants: See attached list

Introduction: Suzanne Orenstein, Facilitator, and Dean Tagliaferro, EPA Project Manager, opened the meeting with a round of introductions and a review of the agenda. Topics for discussion in this meeting were:

- Newell St. II, update
- Upcoming remediation work
- Status report on the OPCAs

Newell St. II

Dean Tagliaferro began by noting that the Consent Decree called for an engineered barrier, or cap, for the GE-parking lot portion of the Newell St. II site. It was known then that the former Western MA Electric site was very contaminated by drums and PCB oil that had been disposed of on the site. Excavations in the fall provided additional evidence of those drums, including some drums with liquid PCBs in them. The presence of liquid-filled drums caused EPA and GE to go beyond the original plan in order to evaluate whether the original remedy was protective given the discovery of those drums.

In the fall, excavation of the Western MA Electric site revealed 34 drums with liquids in them. After extending the excavation in February to a wider area and to a depth of from 3-6 feet, and removing drums, drum remnants, and capacitors, no additional drums containing liquid were found, beyond the original 34 drums. Based on the fact that no additional drums containing liquids have been found, EPA has determined that the likelihood of additional drums containing liquids below the GE-owned parking lot is low. If additional drums and/or capacitors are found as the excavation approaches the GE parking lot portion of the site, those drums and capacitors will be removed, including any “veins” that extend under the parking lot.

Based on the fact that no new drums with liquids have been found, and that the volume of liquids in the drums already found is low compared to the volume of liquids originally poured onto the ground, EPA has determined that the remedy for the GE-owned Newell Street parking lot, as required by the CD, is still protective.

Bill Lovely, site project manager for EPA, added information about the extent of the excavation and clean up to date. The project is 70% completed. Since February, an additional 2800 cubic yards of soil and debris and 45 drums containing solid materials have been excavated and stored on-site in Buildings 63 and 68. This material will be shipped off-site for disposal. Air monitoring continues at the site, for PCBs, VOCs, and particulates. There have been no exceedances of the action levels, and there was one exceedance of the PCB notification of 0.05 ug/m³ level by .01 ug/m³. To address the exceedance of the notification level, the excavation area is backfilled as soon as

possible with clean fill and foam suppressant is in use at the open excavation areas at the site.

Mr. Lovely showed a cross-section diagram of the water table at the site, and provided information about the pool of PCB oil that is under the site. The extraction process for this oil has pumped out 36,000 gallons of PCB oil already and will continue to pump on an ongoing basis when the removal of the drums is completed. The extraction has been stopped while the excavation work has been conducted, but will resume when electricity can be turned back on at the site. Mr. Lovely estimated that 100,000 gallons of PCB oil are still under the site, and that it will be impossible to remove 100% of it over time. Monitoring wells along the river and upgradient of the site are used to monitor for migration of the oil into the river, and none has been found. The monitoring wells along the river are also monitored for PCBs and other constituents dissolved in the groundwater. To date, there have only been three slight exceedances of PCB groundwater standards that are set to be protective of surface waters. This is further indication that the proposed engineered barrier at the GE-owned site is protective since groundwater contamination is expected to decrease, not increase, over time. Furthermore, since the dumping of PCBs occurred over 50 years and no oil has migrated to the river yet, it is unlikely that it will in the future.

CCC members made the following points and comments.

- Two members expressed disagreement with the plan to cap the GE parking lot without removing the many capacitors that are known to be in the soil under it.
- Groundwater monitoring is needed for areas along the river in a southern direction also. EPA confirmed that this monitoring is included in the current plan. The commenter added that groundwater monitoring at a depth of 40 feet is also needed.
- In response to a question about monitoring of the cap, EPA noted that groundwater monitoring will take place for the foreseeable future. EPA further noted that the cap will be more impervious than the current parking lot surface.
- In response to a question about testing the plume of PCB oil and groundwater contamination, EPA confirmed that it was testing for all Appendix 9 substances.
- In response to a question about notification of the exceedance levels during recent excavation activities, EPA confirmed that they did notify those in the neighborhood when it occurred.
- A member noted that there has been a very noticeable odor coming from the excavation area. Another member suggested that solid resin in the drums can have that odor. EPA explained that the foam suppressant was required to address the odor issues.
- In response to a question about the environmental effects of the foam suppressant, GE stated that it was similar to soap suds, and a resident reported it is described as 100% biodegradable on the manufacturers' web site. The foam will be disposed of with the soil that is excavated.
- The air monitoring data for the site is posted on the EPA web site; it is currently embedded in GE monthly reports, but EPA will post it separately so that it can be easily accessed.

Upcoming and Future Clean Up Projects

Dean Tagliaferro reported that the following projects are or will be completed soon:

- Commercial property cleanup on Newell St. (Newell I)
- Excavation of the 1 ½ mile reach (Restoration will begin soon.)

Remediation projects to be undertaken in July and August include:

- Floodplain soils below Pomeroy Ave.
- Oxbows A and C, which is located behind the Elm Street car wash
- Lyman St Area, which is located between East St. and the river, and includes the GE Lyman St. Parking lot
- Oxbows upstream of Newell St (Oxbows J and K).

In response to a question, Susan Steenstrup from DEP confirmed that Dorothy Amos Park and the West Branch are also scheduled for work to begin this summer.

Status Report on the OPCAs

Some of the material from the upcoming remediation projects is slated to go to the OPCAs, including about 1500 yards of sediments from the river. There is no schedule at this time for the resumption of activities at the OPCAs. In response to a question, Dean confirmed that Allendale School contacts will be notified a week in advance of any resumption of activity at Hill 78 or Building 71. Also in response to a question about the letter submitted to Mayor Ruberto by Pittsfield pediatricians, Dean noted that Mayor Ruberto has asked EPA for its opinion of the letter, and that EPA will be providing that response to the mayor. Dean also noted that EPA will participate in any meetings the mayor might ask them to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 7 PM.

Attendance: March 15, 2006 CCC Informal Meeting

Name	Organization	Email Address	Attended
Members			
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