

WEST CHICAGO INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM
May 9, 2008
Minutes

ATTENDEES

Barbara Magel, Counsel for Local Communities
Jim Smith, West Chicago City Council 2nd Ward
John Wills, CBBEWL, Local Communities
Jamie Geils, CBBEWL, Local Communities
John Coakley, City of Warrenville
Tom Williams, IEPA
Chuck Grigalauski, IEPA
Kelly Grahn, IEMA/DNS
Gerald Karr, Illinois Attorney General's Office
Mary Constantino, DuPage County State's Attorney's Office
Jim Kleinwachter, The Conservation Foundation
Don Feld, TAG
Mark Krippel, Tronox
Jack Comperda, Daily Herald
Ammon Simon, Bellande & Sargis
Tim Fischer, U.S. EPA, Superfund
Rebecca Frey, U.S. EPA, Superfund
Janet Pope, U.S. EPA, Superfund Community Involvement
Mary Fulghum, U.S. EPA, Office of Regional Counsel

INTRODUCTIONS / COMMENTS

Becky explained that the topics in the forum are being put in a different order from now on so that people who only want to hear the creek/river cleanup update can leave after that is discussed.

As there were a few new attendees, everyone introduced themselves. Becky also introduced Janet Pope as EPA's newly-assigned Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) for the Kerr-McGee sites.

REED-KEPPLER PARK SITE

Tim reported that all the monitoring wells at Reed-Keppler Park (RKP) were abandoned in March 2008. After EPA's completes its review and approval of the final report from Tronox, EPA will prepare a Final Closeout Report for the RKP site, and the site will then be eligible for deletion from the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). The process for deleting sites from the NPL involves publishing notices in the Federal Register, with an opportunity for public comment, and more information about this process can be provided to the Forum in the future.

KRESS CREEK/WEST BRANCH DUPAGE RIVER SITE

Public Information Meeting

Tim reported that EPA and the Local Communities held a public information session on March 25th at Warrenville City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to let everyone know that the 2008 construction season was starting at the end of April and to provide an update regarding progress to date in Reach 5E of the river. The session was fairly well-attended.

Cleanup Progress

On April 26th EPA held a pre-construction kick-off meeting with Tronox and the regulatory group to discuss the remaining portions of Reach 5E and Reach 6 that will be completed this year. In Reach 5E, there were 5 “pods” of contamination remaining to be completed in Reach 5E. Three were on the east side of the river near the Emerald Green complex; one of those areas was completed this week, and the other two will be completed by next week. The other two “pods” are located near the Williams Road bridge, and those should be completed within the next couple weeks. After that, the cleanup effort will move downstream to the Cenacle property in Reach 6 of the river. Early next week Tronox will start constructing support areas (entrances, parking lots) for the cleanup on the Cenacle property. Tim also reported that planting of trees and shrubs in Reach 5C is ongoing.

All the river cleanup work this year is again being done using 3-sided sheetpile enclosures. Tim also said there would be no work on weekends this year, just weekdays. Construction work in Reach 7 is scheduled for 2009.

SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT SITE, river portion

Tim reported that EPA received the Final Completion Report for Reach 5A of the river, and EPA will be placing that document in the information repositories (West Chicago and Warrenville Public Libraries).

The final planting of trees and shrubs is occurring in Reach 5B, with the goal of completing restoration activities in Reach 5B by early next week. A final walkthrough inspection will then be conducted to verify that the restoration has been completed in accordance with the work plan.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS SITE

Recap of “old cleanup residual” issue: Kerr-McGee conducted a cleanup of 100+ residential properties in West Chicago in the mid-1980s. The issue is whether there is potentially any low-level residual contamination that was left behind at the bottom of the old excavation in the mid-1980s that was then covered with clean backfill soil. If such residual low-level contamination exists, it would probably be just slightly above EPA’s

current cleanup standard, and the clean soil that was placed over it may have prevented EPA from detecting it during the Superfund investigation and cleanup that started in the mid-1990s. This issue was raised and EPA is now working to resolve it. This issue affects only those particular properties that were part of the mid-1980s cleanup. Properties that were not part of the 1980s cleanup are not affected by this issue.

At the March 2008 forum meeting Becky had reported that EPA was gearing up to start the field effort to do the additional testing, and that the field work was on track to begin in late March. Becky also had reported that the field work would be done by a combination of in-house EPA people and EPA contractors, and that the fieldwork at each property would be done in phases:

- 1st phase – surface gamma walkover survey (done by EPA in-house staff)
- 2nd phase – subsurface investigation involving soil borings (EPA contractor), down-hole gamma logging (EPA in-house staff), and any necessary subsurface soil samples (EPA contractor). Soil samples would be analyzed by IEMA/DNS lab. Subsurface investigation work is slated for all areas that were excavated in 1980s cleanup.

Becky reported that there is a lot to report on since the last forum meeting.

Field mobilization

Becky reported that the EPA in-house team mobilized to site the week of March 24th to set up their small field trailer, get all their equipment up and operating (computers, GPS/satellite equipment, radiation instruments, etc.), and do GPS set-up work (surveying-in field benchmarks, etc.). The 1st phase of fieldwork, the surface gamma walkover surveys, started on April 2nd.

Since the last meeting, Becky said she also brought Weston on-board through EPA's START contract. Weston mobilized to the site on April 21st and started putting in boreholes the next day. Weston is using a small portable geoprobe unit with a 2" drill bit. The geoprobe unit is on wheels and can be maneuvered around and operated by two people. Shortly after Weston started putting in boreholes, the EPA in-house team started down-hole gamma logging the boreholes.

Access

Becky reported that currently, 32 properties have been identified that need additional testing. (At the last forum meeting it was 26, but additional properties have been evaluated since then.) EPA sent out the first batch of access letters to affected property owners went out the same day as the last forum meeting, March 7th, in both English and Spanish. Other access letters went out as properties were identified as needing testing. On March 28th, EPA resent the access letters to all non-responders, this time including a prepaid business reply envelope. Becky said she has also made door-to-door attempts at access at several different times. To date, EPA has access to 23 of the 32 properties

currently identified for testing. (Of the 23 properties with access, 19 are privately-owned residences, 3 properties are Tronox-owned, and 1 is a portion of a city street.)

Fieldwork Progress / Findings

Becky reported that fieldwork has generally been progressing well. There have been some weather delays (rain) and some “bumps in the road” (equipment issues), but all-in-all, the fieldwork is going well.

Phase 1:

EPA has completed the surface gamma walkover surveys at all 23 properties with access. Some “elevated” areas were identified on some properties that need to be further investigated. EPA will include such “elevated” areas within the areas being further investigated in Phase 2 (if not already within the area slated for subsurface investigation work). Becky reminded everyone that, besides thorium materials originated at REF, several different sources can contribute to gamma readings observed in the field, such as naturally-occurring Potassium, naturally-occurring radioisotopes in fertilizers, and certain nearby building materials (bricks, granite, etc.). Also, many of these properties had cleanup work under Superfund, but only materials exceeding the 7.2 picoCurie per gram (pCi/g) cleanup standard had to be excavated and removed. As a result, Becky said she expects to find some “borderline” areas that were not excavated because they did not exceed the cleanup standard. This means that some areas might be “elevated” above background but still below the cleanup standard. EPA is using the surface gamma surveys as a screening tool to help locate any additional areas that need to be further investigated. Soil sampling will be ultimate deciding factor of whether soils are above or below the 7.2 pCi/g cleanup standard.

During the surface gamma scans, the gamma probe and all the GPS equipment used during the survey is mounted to a baby jogger/stroller. This is a rig the field crew came up with at other sites and it has worked well.

Phase 2:

Becky explained that the goal with borings and down-hole gamma logging is to investigate the subsurface soils to a depth of 5 feet, even though many of the excavated areas from the 1980s were much shallower than that. Reaching a depth of 5 feet has at times been difficult for the small geoprobe unit, and there have been several instances of breaking geoprobe rods or other parts, but the vendor is located nearby, so getting repair work and/or replacement parts does not take long. EPA has also had some issues with the down-hole gamma logging instruments and has had to send some of the probes (the part that gets lowered down the hole) back to the manufacturer for repair/replacement. The manufacturer is fairly certain it’s a moisture issue, so the field team has now taken steps to prevent moisture from getting inside the probe, and it seems to be working.

EPA decided to start doing the borings and down-hole gamma logging work at one of the Tronox-owned properties, to make sure all the equipment and the testing process was working as it should before moving to privately-owned residential properties. EPA completed the borings and the down-hole gamma logging at the Tronox-owned property and at one residential property, and is about halfway done with the work at another residential property. All three of the properties so far have had borings located across the entire property; the first two properties had about 70-80 borings each, and the third (a double lot) will have close to 200 borings. The fourth property in line for testing also will have close to 200 borings (another double lot).

Becky reported that, so far, EPA is not finding much during the Phase 2 subsurface investigation work. At the approximately 160 boreholes at the two properties where the down-hole gamma logging work is done, only two down-hole locations were identified that had slightly elevated down-hole readings. EPA collected soil samples at those locations but does not yet have the lab results.

Becky said that there is plenty of work ahead at the properties where EPA already has access, so EPA is not making another access push right away for the properties without access. There is also more file evaluation work to do for the remaining properties involved in the 1980s cleanup, so there might be additional properties that are identified as needing testing. The plan is to work on this first batch of 23 properties, then have a second batch, etc.

Basements

At last forum meeting, Becky reported that a student aide at EPA had finished going through all the files for the nearly 2200 properties to see which properties had basement testing and which did not. Before all the results are tallied, Becky is going through the student aide's work to make sure that all properties without basements (such as streets, alleys, vacant lots, etc.) are properly categorized as "n/a." The student aide will then summarize the numbers in each category (tested, not tested, n/a). Of the 119 properties that were part of the 1980s cleanup, a preliminary tally shows that 58 had basement testing, 42 did not, and 19 appear to be "n/a" (subject to further review).

Becky also noted that she has had discussions with some property owners whose basements were not tested previously to let them know EPA would like to test the basements. EPA and the owners now need to schedule a time for the surveys.

Communications

Becky explained that a question was raised at the last forum meeting about whether the Community Relations Plan (CRP) for the Kerr-McGee sites should be updated. The original CRP for the sites was prepared in the mid-1990s. Janet Pope explained that that EPA can definitely update the CRP. Janet is working to schedule a time when all the EPA staff people are available, and will set up a schedule for conducting community interviews in the area over a 2-3 day period. EPA will publish an ad in the local

newspapers announcing the interviews and letting interested people know who to contact to schedule an interview time. Interview times will be available during both daytime and evening hours, and EPA can also conduct telephone interviews if that works better for some people. A Spanish translator will also be available. The purpose of the interviews is for EPA to listen to community concerns and to gather information about the best way to involve the community and the best way for EPA to communicate information to the public.

Becky said that Janet had other ideas for getting information out to the public by making more information available on the EPA website. For example, past forum minutes could be posted on the website; the minutes provide updates on all four Superfund sites, so this could be one way to get information out to the public. Janet also thought EPA could post a list of who to contact for different issues. For example, who a property owner should contact for basement testing, how to access the City's technical consultant, etc.

Other Residential Issues

Paula Neltner asked how property owners would have known about the unilateral administrative order (UAO) that EPA issued to Kerr-McGee ordering them to conduct the residential cleanup, and why certain provisions of the UAO were not disclosed to property owners. For example, Paula said the UAO includes a provision regarding "consideration of compensation" for access. Mary Fulghum said the UAO is a public document and was not intentionally kept from anyone. The UAO was certainly discussed in public forums, and copies of the UAO were provided to various parties including the Thorium Action Group (TAG). Don Feld of TAG said the UAO is also in the information repository in the library.

Paula also said that property values have gone down, but also said that some property owners went to the tax assessor's office and requested that their taxes be reduced, and the tax assessor's office reduced the property values.

Paula also asked about whether the properties that Tronox currently owns were cleaned up. Becky said that all the properties that were identified as needing cleanup under Superfund were cleaned up, including properties owned by Tronox (formerly Kerr-McGee).

Paula said that there is a group of homes in an unincorporated area west of the REF that are on private wells, and wondered if their water had ever been tested. Becky said that EPA has not tested any private wells, but the State agency (IEMA/DNS, formerly IDNS) had tested a number of wells in the West Chicago area, including some that were known to have soil contamination across the entire property. No contamination of private wells has ever been observed. If owners of private wells want their water tested, the IEMA/DNS will do the testing at no charge to the property owner. Becky and Kelly Grahn noted that thorium is very insoluble unless in the presence of very strong acids.

Paula asked how the thorium contamination in the neighborhood east of the REF could have gotten so deep if it was all windblown contamination. Windblown contamination should only be at the surface, not a couple feet deep like many of the cleanups in that area ended up being. *[Note: After the forum meeting, Kelly Grahn of IEMA/DNS explained that the thorium contamination at many properties, even if initially deposited at the surface by wind, could have gotten deeper due to the heavier particles gradually working their way down through the soil. He explained that thorium is a metal, and is physically heavier than other common soil components. Over time, heavier particles can work their way down some distance in the soil through normal physical processes.]*

Someone asked when EPA would be having another meeting for residents. Becky said that EPA would need to discuss that. The October 2007 meeting was designed for a specific subset of properties affected by the 1980s cleanup issue, and there was some discussion about having another, larger meeting at some point in the future. Paula said that many of the newer property owners just need some basic information about what's going on. Becky said it's simply a matter of getting such a meeting planned and scheduled. Janet said that instead of a formal public meeting, another option is to have an informal "availability session" where people from EPA and all other governmental parties are available all day and all evening to just talk with people and answer questions as residents come and go as their schedule allows.

OTHER ISSUES

Update on NOAA Grant Projects

John Wills provided an update on the five projects that are being conducted through monies received under a NOAA grant. Two of the projects have already been built. The first is the Deep Pool project, which is continuing to be developed as an aquatic resource. The next step on this project is to shock the entire pool to get rid of the carp that moved in during the August 2007 flooding. IDNR will then restock the pool with very high quality fish species. The second project, constructed in 2007 and just about completed, is vernal pools, which serve as amphibian habitat.

Three other NOAA-grant projects are on the books but not yet built. One is a Headwater Creation project, and involves a parallel tributary being created that will have a higher water quality than the West Branch DuPage River itself, because it will tap into groundwater seepage. That project is moving through the permitting and environmental assessment process. Another project is the modification of the Warrenville Grove Dam. There will be a public meeting on this issue in mid-June. The final project planned under the NOAA Grant is a Research Fish Facility that will be complementary to the idea of recovering streams in urban environments. The plans for the facility itself are fairly well developed but are going through a siting process that is reviewing and considering a number of different potential locations.

Another new project, under a separate grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, would modify the McDowell Grove Dam, very similar to the Warrenville Grove

Dam project. That project will also be presented at the mid-June public meeting. This project is not connected to the NOAA Grant but is a separate grant.

Kress Creek/West Branch DuPage River – Site Tour?

Someone asked about the possibility of touring the ongoing creek/river cleanup project, and possibly some of the NOAA grant projects, after the next forum meeting. Tim said he would look into setting up a tour for interested forum members.

NEXT FORUM MEETING

The next meeting of the West Chicago Intergovernmental Forum is scheduled for **Friday, July 25, 2008, at 10 a.m.** in West Chicago City Council Chambers, West Chicago.

West Chicago Intergovernmental Forum Agenda

West Chicago City Council Chambers
May 9, 2008
10:00 am

INTRODUCTIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

SITE STATUS UPDATES

- **RKP Site**
- **Kress Creek Site**
- **STP Site (river portion)**
- **Residential Areas Site**

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS / ISSUES

- **Update on NOAA Grant Projects**

SET NEXT MEETING DATE

ADJOURN