



managed by Brookhaven Science Associates
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Dear Peconic River Working Group:

This letter recalls some highlights from our October 29 meeting.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR OCTOBER 29 MEETING

Present: Tom Talbot, Bob Conklin, Ron Paulsen, Denise Speizio, Nick Gibbons, Jim Lister, Ken White, Jen Clodius, Adrienne Esposito, John Carter, Tim Green, William Medeiros, Kevin Shaw, Siva Kumar, Keith Grigoletto

The working group resumed its regular monthly meeting after a three-month hiatus during which the project team developed draft documents related to a proposed cleanup and initiated a review of those documents with regulatory agencies. A status of the documents was provided along with new information about external activities related to the Peconic cleanup.

Ken White, Community Relations, welcomed the working group and noted that the Feasibility Study and Proposed Remedial Action Plan had been submitted to regulators in September and that working-group members could provide input on these documents after the regulators have conducted their reviews.

Skip Medeiros, Group Manager for Peconic River cleanup, next delivered a presentation on the Peconic River Path Forward.

- While updating the working group on the status of the risk assessment, Skip informed the group about an independent analysis of the risk assessment being conducted by CRESP (Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation). The U.S. Department of Energy headquarters requested the CRESP review; similar reviews have been conducted at other DOE locations. John Carter, Community Affairs Director of the local DOE Office, noted that CRESP intends to review the Risk Assessment. The scope and schedule of the CRESP review have not yet been determined. More information about CRESP is available at www.cresp.org. Some members questioned whether this review would change the decisions on the cleanup. It was explained that at present, this is simply a review to evaluate lessons that can be learned from the Peconic experience.
- The previously established conclusion was reaffirmed in that if enough fish of edible size were available in upstream portions of the Peconic River, a potential human health risk from consumption could exist. The primary risk driver is bioaccumulation of mercury and PCBs in fish. The previously identified ecorisk was also noted by both the project team and several community members.

- Many stakeholders are providing input in developing a cleanup process for Peconic River sediment. Representatives from Suffolk County Parks correctly added that the Parks Department is another key stakeholder providing input. The Powerpoint slide that acknowledges many of the participating organizations, if used again, would be amended to include the Suffolk County Parks Department.
- A discussion of the concept for the cleanup alternatives in the draft proposed plan was provided. All of the alternatives with the exception of “no action” would provide a substantial reduction in the contaminants. Among the conceptual alternatives for developing a cleanup plan were setting a cleanup level for mercury—both at an upper bound and a lower bound value—in the sediment and cleaning to that level. Another alternative discussed is a performance-based approach.
 - A higher cleanup value would create less disruption and still remove a high percentage of contamination.
 - The lower value would create more disruption, but would remove a higher percentage of contamination.
 - The performance-based alternative, through sediment removal, aims to bring down the bioaccumulation of mercury in fish thereby reducing the potential risk to humans. The performance-based alternative focuses on several areas where elevated levels of mercury tend to accumulate, such as the locations where anglers actually fish, and where methylation tends to occur. With the performance-based alternative, the primary objective is to verify a reduction in the bioaccumulation of contaminants in fish through follow-on sampling.
- Following the presentation, a discussion was held and the following points were noted:
 - Some working-group members expressed concern over whether a credible sport-fishing area exists. Skip pointed to a large map and noted that the section of the river near Wading River Road nearly always has water and has the potential to be fished.
 - Concern was also expressed over whether a pathway to humans exists. For example, some of the areas cited for probable bioaccumulation of mercury are not easily accessible and therefore the pathway to humans may not be credible. Even though the area may be difficult for fishermen to access, the access for fish is not limited and the area may serve as a source for bioaccumulation of mercury in fish.
 - Other working-group members noted that the emphasis should be on the possible risk to humans “and wildlife” both now and under potential future conditions.
 - Furthermore, some working-group members cautioned that good fishing spots today might change over time, along with other criteria that define a cleanup by today’s standards.
 - Recalling the 2001 survey, one of the working group members questioned why three legal fish, bass caught at Shultz Road, weren’t analyzed for mercury. Skip and Jim Lister noted the information and will investigate.
 - Other questions raised by the community were: Have you thought about long-term succession? What if nature is trying to put a swamp in, and not a fish-producing river?
 - Does a pathway to humans really exist?

- Next, Ken White of Community Relations closed the meeting by asking the working group to consider what's ahead with the Proposed Remedial Action Plan, and the Feasibility Study. He encouraged the working group to consider each of the alternatives and what each means. The working group offered the following comments:
 - What about invasive species and erosion? What are the long-term effects of bringing in the fill?
 - What about a commitment to maintain a phragmites-free area? We have not seen financial resources applied to maintenance and managing the ecosystem for long periods of time.

OUR NEXT STANDING MEETING

Our next meeting will take place as follows:

Date: Wednesday, December 4, 2002

Time: 6:30 - 8:30pm

Location: Building 51 Conference Room, Brookhaven National Laboratory

Based on feedback from our last meeting, everyone seemed to prefer the Building 51 Conference Room over the larger Berkner Hall, Room B. So, Our December 4 meeting will take place in the Building 51 room.

DIRECTIONS TO BUILDING 51

As you pass through the front gate, make a left turn at the traffic light; then make a second left turn at the second traffic light. Building 51 is the last building on the right.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Peconic River Habitat Assessment and Fish Biomass Prediction
- Six-Month Survey of Pilot-Study Area D Revegetation
- Phytoremediation Report Update
- Status of Risk Assessment, PRAP, and Other Documents

VISIT YOUR WEBSITE

The Peconic River Working Group Website can be accessed over the Internet at:

<http://www.bnl.gov/erd/peconic/WorkingGroup/peconicgroup.html>

Thank you once again for participating on the Peconic River Working Group. If you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience:

Keith Grigoletto

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