



Technical Assistance Services for Communities
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Technical Directive No.: 2.09 TD#13 United Heckathorn

TASC Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Site Name: United Heckathorn Superfund Site
Site Location: Richmond, California
Date: October 12, 2012

Introduction

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Technical Assistance Services for Communities Program (TASC) conducted this Technical Assistance Needs Assessment for the citizens of Richmond, California. The purpose of this assessment was to better understand the technical assistance needs of the community related to the United Heckathorn Superfund site and provide recommendations for EPA to consider implementing to meet those needs. This assessment complements efforts to conduct comprehensive cleanup of the site.

The recommendations contained in this summary are based on:

- Background site and community information gathered online.¹
- Attendance at a Technical Assistance Workshop on July 9, 2012, and discussions with 29 meeting attendees:
 - Anselmo Napoles
 - Barb Johnson
 - Ben Choi
 - Carole Schemmerling
 - Carolina Salazar
 - Chuck Carpenter
 - Don Schnepf
 - Dr. Henry Clark
 - Eduardo Martinez
 - Gabino Arredondo
 - George Kopf
 - Jael Myrick
 - Jennifer Ly
 - Jim Cannon
 - Jim Holland
 - Kathy Hoffman
 - Katie Barton
 - Larry Nagel
 - Loretta Maddly
 - Nicholas Alexander
 - Nicholas Targ
 - Pamela Schvola
 - Robert Hahn
 - Shasa Curl
 - Sherry Padgett
 - Tammy Luo
 - Terry Harris
 - Tom Butt
 - Yolanda Alvareo
- An in-person discussion with Shasa Curl, Administrative Chief, Environmental Initiatives, City of Richmond, on July 9, 2012.

¹ The end of this document provides a list of information sources.

- Telephone discussions with community members in July and August 2012:²
 - Bea Roberson, President, Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council
 - Carole Schemmerling, Founding Member, Urban Creeks Council
 - Gayle McLaughlin, Mayor, City of Richmond
 - Sandy Saeturn, Asian Pacific Environmental Network
 - Sherry Padgett, Former Member, Richmond Southeast Shoreline Area Community Advisory Group
 - Tom Butt, Councilmember, Richmond City Council
- An email exchange with Dr. Henry Clark, West County Toxics Coalition.
- A telephone discussion with EPA Region 9 United Heckathorn site team members Jackie Lane, Community Involvement Coordinator; Penny Reddy, former Remedial Project Manager; and Rachelle Thompson, current Remedial Project Manager.

Site Background Information

The 20-acre United Heckathorn Superfund site is a former pesticide formulation, packaging and shipping facility located on the Lauritzen Channel in the Richmond Harbor of the San Francisco Bay. The facility operated from the 1940s to the 1960s, during which time pesticides (primarily dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, or DDT) were released into site soil and the Lauritzen Channel. The site comprises five acres of land and 15 acres of marine sediments.

Elevated concentrations of pesticides and metals were discovered in soil samples by the California Department of Health Services in 1980 and the site was designated a State Superfund Site in 1982. EPA placed the site on its National Priorities List in 1990 and took the lead on site cleanup.

A variety of interim cleanup actions took place between 1982 and 1993, including digging up DDT-contaminated soil from the land portion of the site to meet industrial use standards. In 1994, EPA issued a Record of Decision stating that the Agency would do the following activities to complete site remediation:

- Dredge and replace contaminated sediments from the Lauritzen Channel and Parr Canal (which is adjacent to the Lauritzen Channel) with clean sand.
- Cap the land portion of the site with concrete to prevent erosion and contact with any remaining contaminated soil.
- Prevent future residential use by placing a deed restriction on the site property.

The ROD also established cleanup goals for DDT and dieldrin (an insecticide) in surface water and DDT in sediment. Cleanup activities were completed by 1998.

² TASC staff attempted to have one-on-one conversations with other community members who indicated interest at the Technical Assistance Workshop and were recommended by other community members. TASC's goal was to make sure the community's diverse perspectives were included in the process. TASC did not receive responses back from all inquiries.

However, subsequent monitoring during three Five-Year Reviews showed increasing concentrations of DDT and dieldrin above site cleanup goals. EPA is currently confirming these trends, collecting additional data to determine the source of the DDT, and investigating ways that sediment moves in and out of the channel. EPA intends to prepare a feasibility study of potential remedies that will make the site protective of human health and the environment. Following the feasibility study, EPA will issue a Proposed Plan and then a Record of Decision. Further cleanup will likely begin in 2015, after this process is completed.

History of Community Involvement

Prior to implementation of the cleanup activities outlined in the ROD, EPA engaged with the community to get its input on the cleanup remedy. There was no organized community group that focused solely on the United Heckathorn site at that time, such as a Community Advisory Group, or CAG. However, several community organizations were aware of and interested in the site (e.g., the West County Toxics Coalition and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, among others). EPA held public meetings and engaged with community members during the remedy selection process. During that time, the community was particularly interested in where the cleanup would deposit dredged marine sediments containing DDT.

After completion of the cleanup activities outlined in the ROD, EPA's community involvement activities decreased. EPA still provided briefings to the Mayor of Richmond and interested community groups when the Agency issued Five-Year Reviews. EPA also created fact sheets summarizing the conclusions of the first two Five-Year Reviews. Since January 2012, EPA has been updating Richmond City Council and the City Manager's Office on the status of cleanup and community engagement.

The 2011 Five-Year Review's conclusion that the remedy implemented for the marine area of the site was still not protective heightened community interest. EPA responded by increasing its community involvement efforts. EPA began updating Richmond City Council quarterly with current site information and issued a fact sheet and held a community open house in March 2012. The Technical Assistance Workshop on July 9, 2012, and this needs assessment are additional activities initiated by EPA. They will inform future community involvement efforts specifically related to technical assistance.

Community Areas of Interest Related to the Site

An overarching area of interest for community members is the number of environmental cleanup sites in the Richmond area. Community members believe that industry and environmental pollution make Richmond less appealing for residents, business owners and tourists. Community members would like the United Heckathorn site and other sites in Richmond cleaned up to protect public health, restore the environment and remove any environmental contamination stigma associated with Richmond. Citizens are particularly proud of Richmond's shoreline comparable to other Bay Area cities. They believe that keeping it clean will encourage public access to open space, increase tourism and improve Richmond's economy.

Community members also expressed interest in areas more specifically related to the United Heckathorn site. The subsections below summarize each of these areas of interest separately. The next section describes recommended technical assistance services related to the areas of interest.

Understanding the Cleanup Process

A few community members stated that they only needed very basic information about the site and that they wanted all available resources put toward completing the cleanup properly. Most, however, expressed interest in knowing more details about site remediation, especially because the previous remedy was unsuccessful. Updates by EPA to the Richmond City Council have been well received by those who have attended City Council meetings and those that have viewed meetings online or on television.

Specific areas of interest about the cleanup process expressed by community members include:

- The source of the current contamination.
- The type of sampling to determine this.
- Available cleanup options and the pros and cons of each.
- EPA's process for choosing its preferred cleanup option.
- Where the cleanup would deposit any dredged marine sediments.
- The risk associated with any toxins remaining on site after cleanup.
- The timeline for the cleanup.
- Site reuse.

A few community members expressed interest in forming a new CAG for the site or inquired whether the current Richmond Southeast Shoreline Area CAG (which focuses on the state-led Zeneca site) would consider also focusing on the United Heckathorn site. EPA has briefed the Richmond Southeast Shoreline Area CAG on the United Heckathorn site in the past.

Safety of Eating Fish

Community members were overwhelmingly concerned with the safety of eating fish caught from the Richmond shoreline. The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment currently advises no catching or consumption of fish from the Lauritzen Channel. The remainder of the Richmond shoreline is subject to advisories recommending maximum serving amounts for specific fish species. There are two advisories: one for women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 and another for men over 17 and women over 45. Signs with the advisories are posted in popular fishing locations along the shoreline.

Specific areas of community concern related to fish and fishing include:

- General health implications of DDT exposure.
- DDT levels in fish outside the Lauritzen Channel and the extent to which fish migrate out of the Lauritzen Channel and into the San Francisco Bay and surrounding water bodies.
- Some people (including both Richmond residents and out-of-towners) fishing along the Richmond shoreline likely do not heed the advisories. There may be several reasons for this. They may not see the advisory signs or otherwise know about the advisories. They

may be fishing to feed their families. They may not read English and do not understand the advisories.³

- The advisory signs are difficult to understand because they contain a lot of information and the advisories themselves are complicated.
- The “for more information” phone numbers on the advisory signs lead to offices which are not open on weekends and evenings and the staff answering the phone do not seem to know how to handle questions nor do they speak languages other than English. Furthermore, there is confusion over what agency is responsible for the advisories due to different agency names and telephone numbers on different signs.
- There is little information available regarding consumption of organisms besides fish (e.g. clams, tubers, birds).
- There is little information available regarding risks associated with exposure from swimming along the Richmond shoreline beaches (e.g. Miller Knox Park), especially for children and dogs.

Allocation of Future Natural Resource Damage Funds

Many community members stated that they are disappointed that past funding resulting from Natural Resource Damage Assessments performed on sites in Richmond went to projects outside of Richmond and Contra Costa County. Community members view this as a serious environmental justice concern and point out a consistent trend of funds resulting from damages occurring in Richmond going to areas outside of Richmond. Community members would like future funding resulting from Natural Resource Damage Assessments performed on sites in Richmond to stay in Richmond. Some community members are interested in understanding more about the distribution of Natural Resource Damage Assessment funding to projects and how this process may be amended to take into consideration communities that are disproportionately affected by environmental and health hazards.

Creating Employment Opportunities for Residents

Many community members expressed hope that the site cleanup would create employment opportunities for residents. In particular, they thought that agencies could hire fisherpersons to catch fish for sampling.

Recommendations for Technical Assistance

This section provides recommendations on meeting technical assistance needs as follows:

1. Provide information to community members about the cleanup process.
 - a. Continue updating city officials on the cleanup process via City Council meetings.
 - b. Continue hosting community meetings to update community members on the cleanup process and allow for their input.
 - c. Consider hosting one or more open houses where community members could talk one-on-one with site staff and ask questions about their topics of interest. “Stations” could provide information on topics of interest as well.⁴

³ Forty-seven percent of Richmond residents speak a language other than English at home (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richmond,_California).

- d. After implementing a.-c. above, check in with community members to see if their informational needs are being met. If not, consider whether a more formalized group (such as a CAG) might be an effective venue for citizens to participate in the cleanup process.

EPA could undertake these activities with assistance from the TASC program as needed.

2. Provide information to community members about the health implications and advisories for fish consumption.
 - a. Provide information on general health implications of DDT exposure and the extent to which fish migrate in and out of the Lauritzen Channel. This could be accomplished as part of a regular site update or community meeting or open house.
 - b. Talk with those who are fishing along the Richmond shoreline in their native languages to learn more about their awareness and understanding of the fish advisories and whether they follow them. If they are not following the advisories, ask them what would assist in helping them follow the advisories.⁵
 - c. If the above conversations indicate a need for further education, embark on a fishing education campaign. The campaign might include a variety of activities, such as regular outreach at popular fishing locations (e.g., talking with people, handing out pamphlets) or providing a series of trainings in accessible locations. Some of the trainings could be provided in conjunction with organizations such as Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Laotian Organizing Project, West County Toxics Coalition, Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization, Community Health for Asian Americans, Lao Family Community Development, Inc., the Catholic Charities of the East Bay English Action Center, the Richmond Progress Alliance, or Communities for a Better Environment.
 - d. Analyze the current fish advisory signage and make recommendations for how to revise the signs to make them more understandable. In addition, recommend ways to eliminate confusion about who is responsible for the advisories and make it easier for the public to obtain quick and effective answers to their questions.

These activities could be undertaken by EPA with close coordination with the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, Contra Costa Health Services, the East Bay Regional Park District and the City of Richmond. EPA's TASC program could assist where appropriate.

3. Provide information to community members regarding the Natural Resource Damage Fund process.

EPA does not perform Natural Resource Damage Fund Assessments nor does it provide input on allocation of funds. EPA facilitated a staff-level meeting between the City of Richmond and several Natural Resource Trustees to help the City further understand the

⁴ For 1 b. and c., attention should focus on reaching the diverse cultures of Richmond. Examples include providing meetings in different languages and holding meetings in accessible locations.

⁵ Preliminary information on this topic is available in the Contra Cost Health Services Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board's Consumption of Contaminated Fish Report. Available at: http://cchealth.org/pehab/pdf/consumption_of_contaminated_fish_report.pdf.

natural resource damages allocation process. The City may wish to continue conversations with the Trustees and provide community engagement on this topic.

4. Provide information to residents on possible employment opportunities resulting from site sampling and cleanup.

EPA could encourage its contractors to publicize any jobs that become available through site cleanup and consider ways to involve fisherpersons in fish sampling efforts at the site.

Sources Consulted for Background Information on the Site and the Community

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment Safe Eating Guidelines for Fish website (and related links). Available at: http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so_cal/index.html.

City of Richmond website. Available at: <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us>.

Contra Cost Health Services Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board (PEHAB) Consumption of Contaminated Fish Report. Available at: http://cchealth.org/pehab/pdf/consumption_of_contaminated_fish_report.pdf.

East Bay Regional Park District website. Available at: <http://www.ebparks.org>.

EPA Site Overview for United Heckathorn Co. Site. Available at: <http://www.epa.gov/region09/Unitedheckathorn>.

Technical documents accessed from this website include:

1. 09/28/01 First Five-Year Review Report
2. 09/01/06 Second Five-Year Review Report
3. 09/21/11 Third Five-Year Review Report
4. 03/08/12 Community Meeting Fact Sheet
5. 03/19/12 United Heckathorn Update Community Meeting Posters
6. 03/19/12 United Heckathorn Investigation and Cleanup Schedule, March 2012

Wikipedia website for Richmond, California. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richmond,_California.

U.S. Department of the Interior Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Programs website. Available at: <http://www.doi.gov/restoration/index.cfm>.

Contact Information

Skeo Solutions Work Assignment Manager
Krissy Russell-Hedstrom
719-256-6701
krissy@skeo.com

Skeo Solutions Program Manager
Michael Hancox
434-989-9149
mhancox@skeo.com

Skeo Solutions Director of Finance and Human Resources
Briana Branham
434-975-6700, ext. 3
bbranham@skeo.com

Skeo Solutions TASC Quality Control Monitor
Eric Marsh
512-505-8151
emarsh@skeo.com