Newtown Creek Superfund Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting Notes

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 | Virtual Meeting

Summary of Presentations and Discussion

After a brief presentation on the background and history of the Newtown Creek site, the 2025 steering committee was announced. Stephanie Vaughn, from the EPA, then presented updates on the site, including the appointment of John Brennan as a new Project Manager for the Newtown Creek site. The remainder of the presentation focused on the early interim action for Operable Unit Four (OU-4) also known as East Branch. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued for the early interim action shortly before the meeting.

Early Interim Action Components:

- Alternative EB-D was selected, which includes dredging to allow placement of a cap to maintain existing water depth, with localized deeper dredging in other areas
- The early action will include a Pre-Design Investigation (PDI). During the PDI there will be further investigation of seeps and sampling to fill in data gaps
- The early action will include in-situ stabilization (ISS) where necessary to reduce migration of and for treating Non Aqueous Phase Liquids (NAPL) or Principle Design Waste (PTW)
- After dredging, a cap will be installed, with an erosion protection layer, and then a habitat layer on top to restore flora and fauna
- In areas where deeper dredging is required, backfilling with sand will be employed
- There will be measures for shoreline stabilization and installing sealed bulkheads to contain seeps as needed based on the results of the PDI
- Due to the ongoing nature of upland sources of contamination, a monitoring program will be designed to find and contain seeps with sealed bulkheads while working with the state to address the upland source of contamination
- The site will be dewatered and dredged materials will be taken offsite
- A Post Remedy Implementation Monitoring Program (PRIMP) will be put in place with two goals:
    - Assess the performance of the remedy itself within the East Branch
    - Assess the impact on the protectiveness of the remedy over time
- The estimated time for completion of the remedy is 22 months and the estimated cost is currently $234.5M
- The next step is the EPA meeting with the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) to agree on the remedy (20 PRPs were added to OU4)

There were some further updates on OU1 and OU2 these included:

- An alternatives memo for OU1 was submitted to the EPA in Summer 2024 and is currently under review

- A Feasibility Supplemental Data Collection study was conducted to address data gaps and improve understanding of physical and chemical processes. Data is currently under review by the EPA and has not yet been released
- Samples were also taken from the National Grid site.

WRDA Update

Dan Wiley, Representative Velazquez's office, provided an update on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The key points were as follows:

- Navigation depth was deauthorized in the East Branch to allow for dredging to occur
- $125 million dedicated to water infrastructure, climate resilience, flood protection
- $25 million in water and wastewater improvements for Newtown Creek and its watershed
- Provisions for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to increasingly investigate flooding risk from extreme precipitation

A number of were raised during the course of the meeting. Key points were as follows:

- CAG members raised that it would be better to restore the creek to a more ecologically healthy waterway. The EPA expressed that they cannot make improvements beyond the remedial action itself. However, the EPA can consider future use of the area during the cleanup process to ensure that the site is compatible with reuse.
- One attendee asked about the use of bioremediation, including the use of macrophytes. The EPA explained its reasoning for why bioremediation was not the most effective remedy for Newtown Creek.

Next Steps

The CAG will next meet on February 19th and will focus on the OU4 ROD and the CAG's comments.