

McLouth Steel Superfund Site Community Advisory Group (CAG)

TECHNICAL MEETING SUMMARY

May 11, 2023 | Virtual Meeting No. 11

MEETING IN BRIEF

The May 11, 2023, meeting of the McLouth Steel Superfund CAG took place virtually via Zoom. The objective of the meeting was to share updates on:

- The remedial investigation & feasibility study of the Superfund site
- Recent issues related to the northern portion
- Roads and sewage

See **Appendix A** for a list of CAG members, alternates, and agency representatives who were present. Links to summaries, presentations, and recordings from this and previous CAG meetings can be found at the CAG website here: <https://mclouthsteelcag.org/resources-and-documents/>.

ACTION ITEMS

Responsibility	Item
CAG members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide feedback to improve the accuracy of this draft May Meeting Summary● Disseminate final May Meeting Summary to constituents and community members
US EPA/EGLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share updates on remedial investigations on the NPL site and RTRR portion at future meetings
MDHHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share updates on the Human Health Risk Assessment when available
CBI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Produce and distribute the draft May Meeting Summary, integrate CAG feedback, and share the final version for CAG dissemination and EPA posting● Coordinate with Leadership Board on agenda for the next CAG meeting and internal CAG business

DECISIONS REACHED & PROPOSED TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Decisions reached

- CAG members and members of the public should send questions or concerns about cleanup or investigation activities at the McLouth site to EPA, EGLE, and/or Stacie Smith, CAG facilitator (stacie@cbi.org). Information or responses will be sent to the CAG to disseminate to the public.
- The next meeting is scheduled for August 10, 2023.

Proposed topics for future discussion

- Review of the Human Health Risk Assessment report from MDHHS
- Further updates on Remedial Investigation (EPA & EGLE)

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Consensus Building Institute (CBI) facilitator, Stacie Smith, welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda and ground rules. CAG members and representatives from agencies introduced themselves.

Updates on the NPL site (southern portion)

Greg Gehrig (US EPA Region 5) introduced James Romig (CDM Smith). CDM Smith is EPA's contractor for the remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) of the Superfund site. CDM Smith has extensive experience with remediating former steel mill facilities, including one that was analogous to McLouth Steel. CDM Smith has already conducted extensive work on the Conceptual Site Model and planning for the remedial investigation.

Mr. Gehrig reminded CAG members of the schedule for the cleanup (see page 3 [here](#)).

EPA intends to conduct extensive surface soil, subsurface soil, and groundwater sampling between mid-July and early August. EPA hopes to use many of the existing monitoring wells and will make use of unmanned aerial systems (drones) for preliminary surveys. This will be the first of several sampling events.

EPA also plans to conduct sediment and surface water sampling in the Trenton Channel in coordination with EPA's other work in the Detroit River. The sampling will include sediment cores, pore water, sediment traps, and surface water from the McLouth Steel site. This sampling should take place from August 21 to September 1.

Mr. Gehrig also updated the CAG on his conversations with the site owner around their redevelopment plans. There are no significant plans, but the owner has leased a portion of the site for trailer storage.

CAG members offered the following comments and questions (*answers in italics*). [Note: some of these questions or comments were made during later parts of the agenda – they are documented here to promote clarity. Some answers have been expanded in order to ensure that all the member's questions have been addressed.]

- **The sampling process will take several years. The property owner does not currently have direct plans but could make proposals during that time. How would you work around any development plans that come forward if EPA could later identify that the area developed needs to be remediated?**
 - *EPA: The owner has obligations under the purchase agreement that they are required to meet before they can undertake any development. The goal is to mitigate any source areas before construction begins. Given that the source areas are relatively shallow, any contamination that is present would likely be uncovered during site preparation.*
- **What is the distance from the southern boundary of the property to the last well by Elizabeth Park?**
 - *EPA: The distance is roughly 1.2 miles.*

- **I am pleased to see that Grosse Ile will benefit from some of the testing. I am concerned that some of the contaminants could travel from the McLouth Steel site underneath the river. Are there plans to test at those depths?**
 - *EPA: The year 1 sampling should help us address that concern. We will examine the data together at a meeting later this year and see what that implies for additional sampling needs.*
- **I am concerned about the condition of the site fence. Can the CAG have an influence in raising the concerns of the community to the property owners?**
 - *Wendy Pate: Based on my understanding, it seems to be an ordinance issue. Sometimes sites set up screening to block the viewshed. I will follow up from the Trenton side.*
 - *Chuck Norton: I will follow up from the Riverview side.*
- **How deep will the wells go?**
 - *EPA: They will be roughly 60-70 feet deep and will go to bedrock.*
 - *CDM Smith: We plan to conduct a well survey within the next couple weeks.*
 - **I am also concerned about contamination that might be deeper than bedrock.**
 - *EPA: We have the contingency to drill into the bedrock and beneath if the data above suggests a need to do so.*
- **At what point should the CAG begin the process of looking at data and being more involved in decision-making? Should we plan an in-person session?**
 - *EPA: The investigation process will not be quick; I do not expect anything to come forward that would be time critical and would require the CAG's immediate attention. This is partly because EPA has already conducted removal actions on the site. If we were, however, to find something requiring immediate action, we would notify the CAG and any residents affected. However, we anticipate that the timing of meetings (quarterly) should be fine going forward. At the next meeting, we plan to have an update on the sampling process, and can review some preliminary data in November. Then, we can plan to share more refined information in February.*
 - *CBI: On the question of meeting in-person, the CAG Leadership Board can discuss and come to their own decision.*
- **For Mr. Romig, how are you feeling about the site compared to other sites that you have worked on?**
 - *CDM Smith: One thing that stood out immediately was that gaining access for drilling will be fairly easy. There are no tight spaces and other constraints that would typically limit access. In terms of the contaminants, I would expect them to be similar to previous steel mill sites that I have worked on. It will be an*

interesting project, and I am looking forward to working on it and getting the job done.

- **How do you determine whether contamination has a completed pathway? Does it have to cause detrimental health effects? Does it depend on which portion of the site it is found on? I am particularly concerned about the high pH pit found on the northern parcel. How would the CAG and community be notified? I am**
 - *EPA: Typically, when there is a completed pathway, the state is notified, then the state notifies EPA. EPA will then usually send an on-scene coordinator to the site to investigate. This process is meant to take place in rapid time.*
 - *EGLE: In terms of which agency has responsibility, there is a clear distinction between the two properties [the northern parcel is EGLE's responsibility and the southern parcel is EPA's responsibility]. EGLE will explain more about the high pH pit in the next presentation.*

Updates on the northern portion

Marc Messina and Elizabeth Garver (EGLE) provided updates on the investigations and remediation of the Northern/Riverview Trenton Railroad (RTRR) parcel.

In February, a CAG member notified EPA and EGLE about a high pH pit on the northwest corner of the RTRR parcel (near West Jefferson Avenue). The pit surrounds a portion of the site where the owner is installing a grade crossing. When Mr. Messina initially visited the site on March 8, he recorded a pH between 11 and 12 from the liquid that was overflowing the curb and flowing into a gutter. He investigated and found that the high pH solution was mixing in the gutter with other liquid from an overflowing manhole with a pH of 6, which neutralized the high pH solution before it entered the storm drain that leads to the creek.

In March, Mr. Messina investigated the pit and found a pH of 12.46. EGLE also visited the nearby creek and observed a white substance in the creek along with dead fish. EGLE requested that the facility owner install a fence and berm around the pit. EGLE returned several days later to investigate the surface water of the creek and found that the white substance had disappeared (which might be due to the direction of flow in the creek). The facility owner installed a camera to allow for daily observations of the creek so that EGLE can investigate the feature whenever it returns.

Mr. Messina also reviewed historical background to that area of the site. Before 1937, the entire area was part of the creek flowing southward. Since then, the creek was diverted on the northern part and filled in. EPA carried out a corrective action in the past and installed a berm that would restrict flow of contaminants in that area of the site. Part of EGLE's phase II investigations into the site will focus on understanding the subsurface flow in the northern part of the property.

CAG members offered the following comments and questions (*answers in italics*).

- **Did the property owner receive a permit and begin construction without notifying EGLE?**

- EGLE: We did not receive any notification.
- I will also check with MDOT to see if they issued a permit.
- **In the past, there was a storm drain and swale that provided a path for water to travel. There used to be some puddling in the past when it rained. The berm was essential for keeping the high pH suspension localized. When they cut the grade, they cut a pathway through the berm. It looks like some kind of remediation will need to be done to that area, but there will now be a railroad going through that portion.**
 - EGLE: That is a concern, and we intend to learn more via their work plan. We have identified a specific point to monitor.
- **Thank you to Bob Burns for identifying this issue and alerting the agencies.**
- **Are you looking into water that is flowing into the road? Could the property owner install some warning signs to alert members of the public who might be passing by?**
 - EGLE: I plan to make those requests to the facility owner, but EGLE does not have authority to require the property owner to install signage. From an enforcement standpoint, pH levels above 12.5 are considered “characteristically hazardous”. However, the pH recorded was 12.46. The immediate concern was the pool of leachate, and we took measures to get the berm in place and ensure immediate danger was restricted. EGLE has a [Corrective Action Consent Order \(CACO\)](#) with the facility owner that identifies specific areas where the facility owner will need to do work. The CACO also allows EGLE to identify new areas of interest. We have named this area as a new area of interest and have required the facility owner to submit a work plan within 60 days. We are prepared to coordinate with MDHHS on this issue and are hoping to collect a sample as soon as possible. However, regardless of that sample, EGLE has named the area a new area of interest under the CACO.
 - **It is good to hear that the facility owner has been compliant so far in terms of limiting contamination. Now that we know that there are potential pathways to the public, it is your agency’s responsibility to work on this. I want you to stay on top of it and make sure no one gets harmed. It is also disappointing that it took a citizen to discover this situation.**
- **Is there a risk of people passing by in cars or on bikes coming into contact with the substance?**
 - EGLE: The fence and berm should prevent contact. We were very clear with the facility owner that no fluid should flow over into Jefferson Avenue.
 - **In Hazel Park, there was a similar issue and there was a safety perimeter during cleanup. There should be some guidance to the public. If I see water, I will not be driving through it.**
 - EGLE: We will discuss that request internally.

- **Something that has been missing in this conversation is the name of the chemical – calcium hydroxide. The Monguagon Creek used to run through the property and was backfilled with this chemical.**
 - *EGLE: That will be part of our investigation and we will hope to clarify what the chemical is. We have our suspicions but need the data to be able to arrive at these conclusions.*

OTHER SITE AND MEMBER UPDATES, FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPIC IDEAS, AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Update on roads and sewage

Courtney Fung (EGLE) provided an update on sewage issues near the site. Several manholes at the intersection of Jefferson Avenue and King Road have had issues with overflowing water. The water from these manholes (one of which is labelled “DTE” for Detroit Edison) has been pooling and causing concerns about safety and hazards.

EGLE was first notified about the DTE manhole around July 2022. DTE pumped down the manholes to attempt to understand how water was infiltrating the conduits, but was unsuccessful due to a rapid refill rate. The City did tests to better understand the issue and ruled out a water main leak or issues with other utility lines. DTE also sampled the water to see if the constituents were similar to the nearby Sibley Quarry but determined that this was not the case. There is the possibility that groundwater has infiltrated the conduits and is flowing up through the manhole.

DTE is still attempting to pump down the water and has installed berms to help direct the water away from the road. As of March 2023, that approach seemed to be working (though residents should inform Ms. Fung if that is not the case).

Wayne County, the City of Trenton, EPA, and various EGLE divisions have been meeting regularly to figure out what exactly the issue is and come up with a permanent solution.

CAG members offered the following comments and questions (*answers in italics*).

- **Do you know if there was any analysis done for metals or any chemicals of concern?**
 - *EGLE: I have not seen any reports, but DTE shared that the preliminary results showed low level detections of per-fluorinated compounds, volatile organic compounds, and some metals, but did not detect PCBs. We did also get pH results, which showed a pH of 7.4. Nothing suggested an immediate health risk or concern, but investigations are ongoing.*
- **During a recent tour of the site we observed a ground spring near the pump station which is less than 100 feet from where the quarry discharge line runs out to a diffuser. It appeared to be clear water and may just be surface drainage. However, given construction work along the nearby railroad tracks, it may be that some of the water flow is getting pushed toward the river. It might be worthwhile to take samples near the pump house to see if there is any connection.**

Public comment

One member of the public raised a concern about the level of exposure from the chemicals in the high pH pool and whether samples were taken and assessed against exposure standards for toxic substances. EGLE did not have those exposure standards on hand.

The member of the public also asked why it took over 30 days for the monitoring camera to be put in place. Mr. Messina replied that while 30 days sounds like a long time, EGLE also had to wait several days for sampling results from the lab and was required to give the facility owner several days to turnaround deadlines. However, EGLE and the facility owner were in constant communication throughout.

Ms. Fung also shared links to Michigan's [cleanup criteria](#), which contains criteria for compounds and exposure pathways. Ms. Fung also shared EPA's presentation to the CAG on [risk assessments](#). CAG members also shared a [safety data sheet](#) for calcium hydroxide along with [CDC's occupational safety guidelines](#) for calcium hydroxide.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

Ms. Smith thanked the CAG, presenters, and members of the public for their participation, questions, and comments. The CAG plans to meet next on August 10, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Appendix A. CAG members and agency representatives in attendance

Primary and alternate CAG representatives present at the **May 11, 2023** meeting are listed below.

Affiliation	Representative
City of Trenton	Jim Wagner Wendy Pate
City of Riverview	Chuck Norton
Grosse Ile Township	
Riverview Brownfields Authority	Brian Webb
City of Trenton Brownfields	
Trenton Visionaries	
Grosse Ile Nature and Land Conservancy	
Grosse Ile Civic Association	Greg Karmazin Bill Heil, alt.
Friends of the Detroit River	Robert Burns
DownRiver Waterfront Conservancy	Paul Frost
Past Employees of McLouth Steel	
Abutters	Robert Johnson
At-large Community Representatives	Edie Traster
Liaison for Rep Debbie Dingell's Office	Cal Kirchen
Downriver Community Conference	John D'Addona

Agencies & consultants represented

Greg Gehrig, US EPA Region 5
Kirstin Safakas, US EPA Region 5
Courtney Fung, EGLE
Elizabeth Garver, EGLE
Marc Messina, EGLE
Amber Falkner, US EPA Great Lakes National Program Office
Dr. Puneet Vij, MDHHS
James Romig, CDM Smith
Brandon Chambers, Consensus Building Institute
Stacie Smith, Consensus Building Institute