

**Newtown Creek CAG Steering Committee Meeting**

Thursday, April 23, 2015

2:30 – 3:30 PM

via conference call

**Attendees:**

Deb Mesloh

Leah Archibald

Lilli Genovesi

Mike Schade, co-chair

Mitch Waxman

Paul Pullo

Ryan Kuonen, co-chair

Sarah Durand

Sean Dixon

Willis Elkins

Walker Holmes

**Relevant materials for call (attached to email with agenda):**

1. Draft notes from February 11, 2015, CAG meeting.
2. EPA's February 2015 response to CAG's December 2014 letter about Phase II sampling plan.
3. Agenda for May 20, 2015, Contaminated Sediments Technical Advisory Group (CSTAG) meeting.

**Discussion:**

*1. EPA CSTAG Meeting on May 20:*

- Contaminated Sediments Technical Advisory Group (CSTAG, pronounced “sea-stag”). CSTAG’s purpose is (quoted from [CSTAG Website](#)):
  - To help Remedial Project Managers (RPMs) and On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) of a select number of large, complex, or controversial sediment sites appropriately investigate and manage their sites in accordance with the [11 risk management principals](#).
  - To encourage national consistency in the management of sediment sites by providing a forum for exchange of technical and policy information.
  - To provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the progress at a number of the largest or most complex contaminated sediment sites.
- The CSTAG advisory group has looked at about 20 sites, arguably the most complex, most contentious, and most contaminated – including Gowanus Canal and Passaic River.
- Additional background/thoughts on CSTAG from steering committee members:
  - Gowanus Superfund site participated in CSTAG in November 2011. The City said during that process that that CSOs aren’t a significant source of contamination, aren’t a risk in the canal, aren’t contributing solids; and

- that contamination is from other sources, such as upland, overland, runoff. We should anticipate a similar response for Newtown Creek.
- Benefit of the process: We will hear from outside scientists about Newtown Creek.
  - We should ask how CTSAG activities will get folded into the plans at Newtown Creek. Follow-up from CSTAG at Gowanus has not been obvious; this could be because timeline is very long.
  - CAG has been invited to attend and give a 20-minute presentation at the meeting. Steering Committee needs to decide what key issues/concerns the CAG wants to raise.
  - Deadline for sending presentation to EPA: May 1. Quick turnaround, but steering committee members agreed it is an important opportunity and worth the effort.
  - Subcommittee meeting to develop ideas: Sunday, April 26, 6pm, Café Budin, 114 Greenpoint Ave. Attendees: Willis, Sarah, Mike, Ryan. Mitch, Paul, Deb will attend if possible. Sean will develop presentation using committee's notes (or draft presentation) on Wednesday/Thursday 4/29 and 4/30.
  - CSTAG will provide official recommendations to the EPA Regional office; EPA has to respond to CSTAG. At other sites, followups have been years later, such as at the Housatonic River in MA and CT; Gowanus is still a relatively new site; therefore followup may be forthcoming.
  - Ideas for subcommittee to consider:
    - Including uplands in the site definition and the sampling plans. New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP)'s pipes are allowing solids from land areas into the Creek; therefore they should keep those solids from entering the water.
    - Chemicals enter the Creek from wastewater and CSO events. EPA has limited authority to address CSO discharges but can address chemical contaminants under Superfund. Chemicals getting into the creek by way of CSO discharges should be addressed by someone. Exxon and Newtown Creek Group are looking at this.
    - Cleanup actions relevant to federal Superfund and also other cleanup processes on/around the Creek. There are many environmental concerns. CSO discharges are relevant. There are also other contaminated sites near the Creek that may be affecting the waterway.
    - The Superfund seems so narrow – it does not seem to be looking at plants as a mechanism or a part of the situation in the Creek. Not testing plants because they are such a small amount of material seems so short sighted. We should ask more about the focus and the long-term goal; the long-term view has not been present in the materials thus far. This week's swimmer in the Gowanus (with [NYTimes article](#)) shows us that we have to be thinking holistically and long-term, not piecemeal.

## 2. Next CAG meeting:

- Brief discussion of prior proposed topics:
  - Mayor's Office

- Brownfield Opportunity Area
  - CSOs
  - EPA's Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program
  - Education about other contaminated waterway cleanups and/or Lessons learned from other CAGs
- Location: TBD in Brooklyn.
  - Decision made to save the continued vision statement discussion for a future meeting.
  - Steering committee members suggested that the CAG request EPA's presence at all meetings – if EPA staff were present to answer quick questions during the meetings, this may facilitate communication.
  - Agenda to be arranged by importance/timeliness, in case discussion/presentations go long:
    1. CSTAG and EPA Phase II update: 15 min
    2. DEP Habitat Restoration 10 min
    3. OneNYC and its effects on development, stormwater, etc.
    4. Oil Spill Response (Sarah) and Update from Willis on Randy Austin's course on how to identify an oil spill.

**Next steps:**

1. Hold Wed. June 3 or Wed. June 10 for next full CAG meeting.
  - a. Sarah to reach out to DEP (Eileen Mahoney) re: 10 min presentation about restoration project.
  - b. Mike to reach out to EPA re: CSTAG update and Phase II questions
  - c. Sean to reach out to Mayor's Office re: One NYC
  - d. Sarah to cover oil spill.
2. Steering committee to hold another call prior to May 20 CSTAG meeting
  - a. Walker to send out Doodle for week of May 11.
  - b. Agenda to include: next step for vision statement development; EPA letter; final prep for CSTAG meeting.
3. Refine visioning discussion notes – Willis.
4. Re-open technical assistance discussion (via EPA's Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program): Mike will develop a request based on past conversations.