

To: West Valley Citizen Task Force
From: Nancy Raca and Tanya Zwahlen, Highland Planning
Date: June 28, 2023
Subject: **Summary of June 28, 2023, Meeting**

Next Meeting

Date & Time: Wednesday, September 27, 2023
Location: Ashford Office Complex and Zoom (register at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3sBMdIo8Rt68s6aVMDkVDw)

CTF Members and Alternates Attending (in person or via Zoom)

Kevin Boyle, Anna Carr, Heidi Hartley, John Hood, Joe Patti, Kathy McGoldrick, Tony Memmo, Mary Reid, Shannon Seneca, Pat Townsend, Ray Vaughan

Facilitator and Notetakers: Nancy Raca, Julia Hayden, Tanya Zwahlen

Agency Participants and Observers

Department of Energy (DOE): Steve Bousquet, Bryan Bower, Jeff D’Agostino, Josh Desmarais

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA): Paul Bembia, Brad Frank, Lee Gordon, Andrea Mellon

CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, LLC (CHBWV): Joe Pillittere, John Rendall, John Rizzo, Kelly Wooley

New York State Department of Health: Nathaniel Kishbaugh, David O’Hehir

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation: Patrick Concannon

Observers: Kyle Altadonna, Karen Banzer, Wayne Barber, Charlie Bowman, Jason Corwin, Diane D’Arrigo, Todd Gates, Joanne Hameister, Bill Logue, Kylie Martin, Maria Maybee, Sean McCandless, Elissa Parker, Victoria Ross, Charlotte Salmon, Kelsey Shank, Barbara Warren, Christine Zinni

Welcome, Announcements, Administrative Business

CTF Facilitator Nancy Raca welcomed all present and reviewed the meeting agenda.¹ Paul Bembia announced that in response to the CTF’s request to meet with NYSERDA’s president, Doreen Harris, an October meeting is being planned. Details are under development. Bryan Bower announced that the Department of Energy has selected two new assistant directors for West Valley: Steve Bousquet, Assistant Director for Project Management, and Jennifer Dundas, Assistant Director for Technical Support.

¹ Each meeting material is listed at the end of this summary and may be found at www.westvalleyctf.org

CHBWV West Valley Demonstration Project Update

Kelly Wooley of CHBWV presented a project update.

Safety: As of May 2023, the Total Recordable Case Rate is at 0.60, with the last recordable case in December 2022. Mr. Wooley noted that the Days Away Restricted or Transferred (DART) is 0.60. The last recordable injury was in April 2023.

Main Plant Process Building Deconstruction: Mr. Wooley showed photos from the deconstruction of the west side of the Main Plant Process Building (MPPB) and Chemical Process Cell (CPC) since May, including recent work on the Process Chemical Room, the Acid Recovery Cell, Off Gas Cell, and the Ventilation Exhaust Cell. Racks in the CPC that are uncovered as work progresses are being removed. On the south side, CHBWV is prepping for removal of the stack by removing the south wall of the CPC so that the stack can be laid down. Photos show debris being loaded into the intermodal.

Mr. Wooley showed a 3-D model indicating areas of the building that have been removed to date. The next big area is the remaining section of the MPPB's ventilation stack.

In early May, CHBWV got an initial sample of liquid from tank 8D-4 and sent it to Southwest Research Institute for analysis. Results will be back later this year. CHBWV also has developed a prototype sludge core sampler, which they will test with sludge simulant.

Mr. Wooley gave an update on work with the community's support. They met with Mercy Flight, Fire Hose District #1, and Bertrand Chaffee Hospital and gave them donation checks.

John Rizzo, Waste Planning and Disposition Manager at CHBWV reported on a waste shipment containing indeterminant items. On April 25, 2023, WVDP was informed that a shipment sent to a disposal site in Mercury, Nevada, which contained low-level waste from previous demolition of the Main Plant Process Building as well as boxes from the site's deactivation period, was surveyed with Real Time Radiography (RTR) and found to contain indeterminant items. Based on x-ray images, these items appeared to be two unpunctured aerosol cans, which are prohibited items.

A review of WVDP records for that container did not identify or document placement of aerosol cans, punctured or otherwise, in the container. Due to the lack of documentation, WVDP staff asked the disposal site to return the container to WVDP for inspection. The container was returned, opened, inspected, and two unpunctured aerosol cans were discovered. These cans contained 3M spray adhesive.

On June 7, 2023, CHBWV notified the disposal site that the items were two unpunctured, partially full aerosol cans. On June 8, CHBWV notified the disposal facility and held a call to discuss the incident. WVDP completed an incident report (IR) and an Occurrence Report notification and is investigating how the incident occurred. This will lead to corrective actions, some of which are already in progress.

In response to a question about the frequency of train trips, Mr. Wooley said that shipments take place on most Mondays.

A CTF member commented that the technology used to track the waste loads is making great strides.

Discussion: CTF Ground Rules

Lee Gordon of NYSERDA presented proposed changes to the CTF ground rules. These changes are being proposed by NYSERDA and U.S. DOE to clarify some areas of the ground rules that are currently unclear, particularly regarding CTF workgroups. Key proposed revisions include:

- Regarding the workgroup process, defining that a workgroup is meant to address a specific item in the CTF purview that does not get addressed in regular meetings – e.g., CTF input on a topic or generation of a work product such as a letter from the CTF. The proposed language also details that the facilitator will notify CTF members and agency representatives and post on the website when there is a workgroup meeting. It also specifies that workgroup meetings are open by default, unless the CTF decides they want a closed workgroup, which they would identify when the workgroup is formed. The CTF Facilitator will take notes on the workgroup. The workgroup makes reports to the CTF as a whole.
- Clarifying the role of NYSERDA and DOE representatives to the CTF. Previously, there was confusion regarding how representatives were listed on the website. This has been cleared up by stating that NYSERDA and DOE reps are not CTF members and agency presence at the meeting does not express or imply consent. Bryan Bower (DOE) and Paul Bembia (NYSERDA) are now listed on the website as agency representatives to the CTF.
- Clarifying that the role of the CTF Facilitator is logistical in nature and does not include advising the CTF on substantive issues or contributing to CTF work products.
- A “sidebar” would be defined as an opportunity for the CTF to have a conversation without agency or observers present, or for the agencies to have a discussion without CTF members or observers present. This language would replace the language about a “caucus” in the existing ground rules.
- In section C, revising the ground rules to better reflect actual NEPA and SEQR decision-making processes. Specifically, the proposed language reflects that the CTF will submit comments during the SEIS public review period. Discussion was had about the fact that DOE and NYSERDA have regular meetings with the CTF and through discussion at these meetings and other communications (emails, letters, etc.) the CTF provides their thoughts, ideas, concerns, etc. to the agencies. Mr. Gordon clarified that the proposed language is not meant to limit the input of the CTF and offered to revise the proposed language to capture regular communication between the CTF and the agencies. Ray Vaughan noted that the existing ground rules authorize a dialog between the CTF and the agencies, as does the first sentence of the Mission and Ground Rules document. Providing advice is really the whole function of the CTF.

Shannon Seneca Presentation

Dr. Shannon Seneca gave a presentation on the health implications of radiation and the West Valley site. She was assisted by Dr. Mary Reid in her research. Shannon's interest in this topic started when she was young and, as a member of the Haudenosaunee people, attended the first recital of the Great Law of Six Nations, which outlined how their governments were going to work together, share the land, practice environmental stewardship, and work towards long-term visions. With those values, Shannon wanted to find a solution for radioactive waste. Shannon reminded the group that there is power in coming together and finding strength there. In 2011, Shannon was introduced to the West Valley site while working on her dissertation.

Shannon explained that we have radioactivity everywhere in our environment, but that different radionuclides have different half-lives, which is one of the reasons different radioactive materials affect us in different ways.

Damage from radiation depends on the radiation dose. Genetic mutations can occur when exposed to radiation, which can lead to cancer or abnormal growths. However, DNA may also correct itself after an exposure. Based on our knowledge of the contaminants at West Valley as well as offsite contamination, we can look at potential actual doses to a person and the potential biological impact of that dose to each person.

Shannon explained the difference between alpha, beta, and gamma radiation and the risks associated with each, and an intern at the University at Buffalo, Kyle Altadonna, gave an overview of specific radionuclides found at West Valley, including Americium-241, Strontium-90, Technetium-99, and Cesium-137. Details of this discussion are available in the presentation at www.westvalleyctf.org.

One slide in the presentation (slide 17) noted that "Cancer incidence and mortality highest in state and country" when referring to the 8 Western New York Counties in the Roswell Park "catchment area."²

The leading three cancers for Western New York are breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung cancer. There are 540 cases of cancer per 100,000 people. Shannon offered to come back and present more statistics and do a full Western New York snapshot of cancer incidences.

² Following the meeting, Shannon clarified this statement to read "Where there is a pink/red color indication on the cancer burden report: The cancer incidence rate and cancer mortality rate in the eight-county catchment area are higher than average New York State rates and/or U.S. rates." A corrected version of the presentation accompanies this summary and will be posted to the CTF website.

Questions and Observer Comments

A CTF member added that some of the health problems the community faces could be from other things in the area, such as waste disposal from other industries.

Dr. Mary Reid responded that from a health perspective (not just cancer) the Southern Tier has many health disparities and disadvantages, and they are initiating a general health assessment of poverty in these counties. There are health access issues such as access to cancer screening and to providers as well as factors like diabetes and obesity.

An observer noted that the effects of pollution are long-lasting, and that the West Valley development is just one of many sources.

A CTF member stated that you cannot develop an action plan until you know what the problems are and where they come from.

Another CTF member asked if an agency representative could summarize any studies that DOE and NYSERDA have done on the employees working at the West Valley site. Paul Bembia said the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICPA) has brought together experts on dose reconstruction to look at records of individuals who worked in plants. This program produced a plan for compensating workers based on the presence of certain illnesses and dose records. West Valley is a part of that program, and the information is on the website. A CTF member asked about the current workers and if their health status is being followed in the coming decades. Paul said the program extends to current workers and Bryan Bower said WVDP monitors the radiation dose of site workers.

An observer pointed out that “the worst in the country” for cancer rates and mortality is as significant as you can get.³ Dr. Reid replied that Roswell is working to get a better idea of the rates in tribal territories. Most cancers in each county are diagnosed at later stages, which makes mortality rates even higher. Efforts right now are geared towards providing education, expanding screening access across the Southern Tier, and getting people treated earlier.

A CTF member said it would be helpful if the state health department would participate in these efforts and shed light on the other things that could cause cancer, such as boiler work, asbestos, firefighting, and dust control on county roads. There seem to be high rates of people with thyroid problems in the area. These other factors are not meant to give the West Valley site a free pass, but it is important to know about the other toxins that exist in the area.

³ Note the correction described in Footnote 2.

An observer highlighted that there are many more radionuclides present at West Valley than were discussed in the presentation, and she would like to understand how they chose the ones they did. She asked about the levels seen on the continuous air monitors during the demolition and if the numbers are higher as the demolition moves into the more radioactive areas.

Kelly replied that they have already worked through a number of the higher contamination areas including the acid recovery room and cell and the chemical process cell. He said there are arrays of monitoring around the site and contamination is being controlled within the High Contamination Area (HCA). The area closest to the building has contamination on the surfaces and the soil, so they work hard to keep it contained to those areas by aggressively applying the controls. Kelly said that they have seen some interference on the ECAMs from natural background radon and have had some level 1 (the lowest) and level 2 detections (Level 3 is take cover). The smoke from the Canadian forest fires in May also caused some issues with the detectors. Whenever there is a detection, it is always treated as real and verify it. There is data from the 16 monitoring locations on the site perimeter and that data is available at www.CHBWV.com under the quarterly air data and water data monitoring results.⁴

An observer reported that there are high rates of cancer among neighbors and communities along Cattaraugus Creek and that she thinks about the impact seven generations ahead. If the DNA can be changed in one generation, those individuals can pass that mutation down to future generations.

Another observer suggested adding enclosures and monitoring during the demolition to reduce future cancer incidences. Kelly responded that they have given several presentations on the monitoring and have extensive data available for any studies people are interested in doing in the future.

One observer thanked everyone in the area who is bringing these issues to light, helping to monitor the site, and working on the demolition. She highlighted that too often perceptions of cancer lead to individuals thinking it is their fault when it is often out of their control and due to environmental factors.

Shannon agreed that their focus is on being proactive and looking towards the future. Radioactivity will affect people differently so instead of delineating past exposures and dose reconstruction they want to use the information to inform how we deal with future plumes and how to minimize negative impact in the future.

⁴ Following the meeting, DOE clarified that only the data from the Maximally Exposed Off-Site Individual (MEOSI) is included on www.CHBWV.com. This data, in its entirety, is included in the WVDP Annual Site Environmental Report (ASER).

Next Steps

The CTF agreed to skip the July 26th meeting. The next meeting will be on September 27th. Storage and maintenance of transuranic and high-level waste was an agenda item that was proposed for a future meeting. An additional unspecified presentation on topics such as health statistics was suggested as a future meeting topic.

Meeting Documents Available on the CTF Website

Description	Generated by; Date
Meeting Agenda	Raca; 06/28/23
CHBWV Project Update	CHBWV; 06/28/23
Waste Shipment Indeterminant Items Presentation	CHBWV; 06/28/23
CTF proposed ground rules revisions	NYSERDA; 06/28/23
Health Impacts of West Valley Site	Shannon Seneca; 06/28/23