

Coordination & Engagement on Issues Related to the JH Baxter Facility

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CORE TEAM

Meeting 25

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Facilitator's Summary

Participants for All or Part of the Meeting: Arjorie Arberry-Baribeault (BT), Lisa Arkin (BT), Robin Bloomgarden (BT/ABC), Mary Camarata (DEQ), Nicole Caveny (EPA), Annie Christopher (EPA), Alice Corcoran (EPA), Bonnie Criss (EPA), Dylan Darling (DEQ), Sarah Eagle (DEQ), David Farrer (OHA), Don Hanson (DEQ), Justin Hodgson (EPA), Todd Hudson (OHA), Travis Knudsen (LRAPA), Kaley Major (DEQ), Randy Nattis (EPA), Brandon Perkins (EPA), Teresa Roark (Lane County), Diana Rohlman (OSU), Brad Shultz (DEQ), Matt Sorenson (LRAPA), Raevyn Thompson (BT), Jon Wilson (CoE), Lin Woodrich (ABC); Facilitation Team: Donna Silverberg and Emily Stranz (DSC)

Welcome and Introductions: Donna Silverberg, DS Consulting Facilitator, welcomed the group with a round of introductions. Donna noted that the purpose of the session was to reconnect and hear updates from EPA about clean-up, sampling, and the National Priorities Listing (NPL) process, to provide an opportunity for questions, and to hear updates from community, OHA, LRAPA, City of Eugene, Lane County, and DEQ representatives.

EPA Work Updates: EPA representatives provided updates on the JH Baxter clean-up efforts and the NPL process.

Clean-up Efforts to Date: Randy Nattis (EPA) shared the publicly available EPA website specific to JHB, noting that EPA is posting weekly operational updates and photos. This site is a good resource for sharing updated information within the community. https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=15559

Randy provided an overview of the last couple of months of EPA actions onsite, noting that the goal of the Time Critical Removal Action (TCRA) process was to remove the tank farm and retorts completely, and to leave clean dirt/fill behind for an easy transfer to the Superfund (NPL) remedial team (assuming that the site is listed).

The crew has been working to remove the retorts which had asbestos insulation that had to be properly removed. EPA worked closely with LRAPA to do so and appreciated LRAPA's help with the effort. Once the asbestos insulation was removed, EPA cleaned out the retorts from the inside, then cut the retorts into pieces for disposal.

While EPA is removing the secondary, and sometimes tertiary containment areas, rain that falls onsite is hazardous waste and requires processing. To treat the water, EPA stores the water onsite then processes it through an evaporator to remove the solids. This has been a rainy year, so EPA is working hard to remove the containment areas to limit the amount of hazardous wastewater. EPA is bringing in another evaporator to support water processing; Randy noted that it is likely that people will see more water vapor coming from the evaporator starting in May.

After removing the concrete from the secondary containment areas, EPA used plastic sheeting to demarcate the clean backfill from what could be dirty soil underneath. This will help with future clean-up efforts.

About a month ago, when EPA removed the secondary containment for the Marley evaporator, an oily product 'daylighted' out of the excavated area. EPA dug deeper to try to find the extent of the substance and found more. EPA has sent the liquid for testing as it appears to be a penta-type liquid. EPA covered the material for safety and marked it for later removal. EPA dug test holes to establish the extent of the liquid and were able to find the borders of the plume. The area of the penta-type liquid plume is likely an old spill and seems to be contained underneath via a layer of clay.

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After 34 weeks onsite so far, Randy shared that all the tanks from the tank farm are gone! There are only 3 retorts left onsite to remove. At this point, EPA is anticipating that the TCRA phase will be complete in June 2025.

Multiple Core Team community representatives expressed appreciation for the work - “much appreciated”, “tremendous gratitude!”, “This is amazing to see. This is such difficult, hazardous work. I am so thankful to the people doing this work!”, “I am SO impressed with what you all have done!”, and hearts from all.

Questions/Comments:

- *Question:* Can information on the new evaporator and increased water vapor be shared with the neighbors?
 - *Response:* Yes, through the ABC newsletter and the EPA JHB website link.
- *Comment:* The photos on the EPA website are great; the BT team has been using them to share information with the neighborhood to keep them informed about what is happening with the clean-up effort. It has been meaningful to people.
 - *Response:* The daily onsite safety talks always include a reminder that there is a community of people that care very much about this clean-up. Randy noted that he would like to bring the Idaho-based clean-up crew to the ‘We Are Bethel’ community celebration on May 31st.
 - *Comment:* It would be great to have a celebration to thank all the folks helping with the clean-up! Yes, bring them!
- *Question:* What about the tree border along the site? If the roots took in the contaminants, should they be removed?
 - *Response:* If EPA deems the trees to be contaminated, or if they need to be removed to get contaminated soil underneath them as part of future clean-up efforts, they will be. Otherwise, EPA can’t take down the trees without landowner approval.

National Priorities List Update: Annie Christopher and Justin Hodgson (EPA) updated the Core Team on the NPL listing process.

- Currently, Regional EPA management is working with EPA Headquarters to review information about the JH Baxter site and needs. EPA looks forward to when they can provide more certainty to the Core Team, however, the timeline is not yet known.
- The NPL listing process includes several other proposed sites throughout the nation. The new administration is putting an emphasis on the NPL listings being the ‘last resort’. The JHB site is a good example of this given that the State has already done what they could and there is strong support from the community, local, state, and federal congressional representatives.
- If listed, the Remedial program will take over the next steps in assessing and cleaning up the soil and water contamination.

Questions/Comments:

- *Question:* What will the site be like after a potential NPL cleanup process?
 - *Response:* It depends on the extent of the contamination – everything will be evaluated and removed if it is contaminated.
- *Question:* If there is more offsite contamination evaluation needed, will EPA or DEQ conduct additional sampling?
 - *Response:* If listed, the NPL or CERCLA program will include an evaluation of the extent of contamination and wherever contamination has “come to be located” will be included in clean-up. If contamination has migrated offsite, those areas will also be included as the ‘site’. A human health risk assessment would also be conducted, and those results also would be incorporated into the design of the clean-up.

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Community Involvement Plan (CIP) Update: Alice Corcoran (EPA) shared that EPA is working on the CIP which they started last fall. It is undergoing internal review and then will be shared with the Core team and community. The timeline for release is not yet known.

Other Updates from Community and Agency Partners

- ABC – Lin reminded the group that the annual “We Are Bethel” celebration will take place on May 31st at the Peterson Barn in Eugene.
- Beyond Toxics – Arjorie shared that BT and ABC will be attending the April 22nd sentencing of Georgia Baxter at the U.S. District Court, Courtroom 2, 405 East Eighth Ave, Eugene OR 97401.
- City of Eugene – Jon continues to conduct weekly site visits to assess and check the outfall pipes.
- Lane County Public Health – Teresa reported that the Lane County Resilience Hub grant funding through EPA has been suspended, however, no termination notice has been received to date. This effort is a priority for Lane County, so they continue to advocate for fulfillment of the contract and will continue implementing their work to fulfill the EPA contract.
- DEQ – Sarah noted that DEQ is planning to do more soil sampling at residential properties that were above 40 ppt. They do not have a timeline for the soil sampling yet. DEQ is continuing to work with Georgia and JHB to ensure that the groundwater pump system is still running, and that the groundwater plume is not expanding. In response to inquiry, it was noted that the agencies test ground water wells in the neighborhood for contamination. The wells are monitored 2x/year and they are not seeing movement of the plume, it is stable.
- Brad reported that Keith Anderson, DEQ’s Western Region Administrator, retired and Ruth Hyde has been selected to the position.
- In response to an inquiry, DEQ noted that they anticipate maintaining site security, likely through coordination with JHB when the TCRA are complete.
- LRAPA – Travis noted that the EPA asbestos abatement was a huge project, and the contractors did a really good job. Additionally, LRAPA’s office remodel is done, and they are back in the building. LRAPA will have an open house on May 8th following Board meeting to which all Core Team members are invited.
- OHA – Todd noted there are no new updates, but OHA is still supporting the process and will provide technical assistance to DEQ as needed in the next phase of residential soil sampling.

Next Steps & Action Items

The meeting concluded with expressions of gratitude and appreciation for the collaborative efforts and hard work of all participants. Donna thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

This summary was prepared by the DS Consulting facilitation team. Comments or suggested edits should be sent to emily@dsconsult.co