

# **Libby Community Meeting Summary**

## **January 10, 2008**

### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller, Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) facilitator, provided background for this meeting. He explained that at the September 13, 2007 CAG meeting, Paul Peronard requested advice regarding priorities for cleanup and investigation activities to assist his development of the work plan for FY 2008. In response, the CAG agreed that the best way for EPA to obtain the advice is through a CAG sponsored community meeting, separate from a CAG meeting. In October 2007, the CAG further agreed that a public meeting should be held on January 10, 2008 in the school district's Little Theater to provide information to the community about the ongoing sampling, investigations, and cleanup needs and to afford the public the opportunity to comment on the work plan choices orally and in writing. At its November 2007 meeting, the CAG confirmed this decision.

The members of the CAG present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

### **Fiscal Year 2008 Project Work Plan**

Paul Peronard summarized the cleanup and investigation projects in the 2008 fiscal year work plan and asked for advice on the priorities that they represent. The federal budget was only recently approved by Congress and Libby Superfund activities do not yet have a specific budget. If more money can be found, more work can be done. The construction season in Libby will begin the week of April 7, 2008. The summary of the work plan elements provided to meeting participants as a handout is included in Appendix 2 below. Mr. Peronard asked for comments on the work plan and if projects not now scheduled for 2008 should be a higher priority. A summary of questions and comments made by people attending the meeting follow.

*Question - Was W.R. Grace responsible for the contaminated material used to rip rap the creeks?*

*Answer - During 1995-1996, the creeks in Libby flooded. The US Army Corp of Engineers (USCE) responded by rip rapping the creek banks. One of the three quarries used as a source of the rip rap material was located up Rainy Creek and contained vermiculite ore contaminated with asbestos. The contaminated quarry was owned by the Kootenai Development Corporation (KDC) which had a permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to supply 50,000 cubic yards of material.*

*Comment - The state, county, and individuals also used material from this quarry.*

*Comment - The fact that the contaminated material from this quarry was used for various projects such as creek rip rap came up at a public meeting in 1999.*

*Response - When EPA first came to Libby in 1999, we looked at the wrong source and missed the creek bank contamination. If we had been aware of it, we would have removed the contamination as we did at the W.R. Grace processing plants.*

*Question - You said you conducted activity based sampling at the golf course and the creeks. What were the results of the sampling?*

Answer - Sampling activities typical of those carried out by workers at the golf course such as mowing the grass on the greens resulted in 0.001-009 fibers per cubic centimeter of Libby amphibole. These levels are similar to that from gardens with vermiculite in Libby. However, exposure is the product of dose times duration. A worker cutting grass everyday from April through October would experience two orders of magnitude more risk than from typical garden work. Contamination was not found in the fairways and sand traps. Sampling when moving the rocks on the bank of Flower Creek, i.e., activities similar to those of children playing, measured 3-4 fibers per cubic centimeter.

*Question - How many rounds of golf are played each year?*

Answer - About 15,000 rounds of golf are played a year. All age groups use the course.

*Question - You talked about exposure for golf course workers. Have you measured the exposure of people while playing golf?*

Answer - No.

*Question - Does EPA consider the contamination of the creek banks to be a higher priority for cleanup than the golf course?*

Answer - Yes.

*Question - You said you found contamination at Flower, Granite and Callahan Creeks. Are those the only contaminated creeks?*

Answer - We did a visual examination and saw vermiculite ore at these three. We will conduct additional assessments at all eight creeks that run through Libby and the four in Troy.

*Question - What about Parmenter Creek?*

Answer - Our initial focus was on the creeks near the populated areas. We have not yet looked at Parmenter Creek.

*Question - Shouldn't KDC share the cost of the creek cleanups?*

Answer - We have not assessed Libby businesses for cleanup costs if they were not aware of the contamination and were not selling vermiculite.

*Question - How safe is it to haul contaminated material to the mine?*

Answer - We are hauling contaminated soils to the mine and contaminated building materials to a special cell at the county landfill for disposal. Relative to leaving the contaminated materials in place in Libby buildings and yards, it is safer to haul it away for disposal.

*Question - Why haul the material to the mine?*

Answer - The concentration of contaminants is far higher at the mine than in town. We are using the contaminated soils to grow a vegetation cover to cap the mine.

*Question - We can argue about past activities. I am concerned about this time forward. Some of the contaminated rip rap rock has probably flowed downstream. How can this community be assured that EPA will adequately cleanup the creeks?*

Answer - I can answer how we will approach cleanup on a conceptual basis now. We will design the project in detail and make the plans public by late February. We will conduct a large

scale excavation of the contaminated creek banks, and we will have to divert the water in the creeks to do so. The contamination along Granite and Callahan Creeks appears to be less friable, and therefore less hazardous than at Flower Creek. However, USACE called this week to tell me that they plan remediation work on Callahan Creek, so we will have to factor this into our planning.

*Question - Will you please designate safe areas along the creeks for the kids to play?*

Answer - You can assume that rocks have washed down Flower Creek. I would stay away from Flower Creek for sure. I would not want my kids playing on the creek banks.

*Question - Since the exposure risk comes from inhaling the asbestos, are the rocks still dangerous if they are wet?*

Answer - Yes, they are still dangerous even if wet. The activity sampling in which people wore pumps when moving rocks much like the kids would do when playing on the creek banks measured concentrations of Libby amphibole similar to that found at the screening plant.

*Comment - To protect the kids we should build an outdoor swimming pool so they have a safe alternative to the creeks.*

*Question - Back in 2005 at a meeting of the Technical Advisory Group we discussed the fact that EPA had analyzed 16,000 samples using the wrong microscopes. EPA was aware of the correct analytical technique but declined to use it. Why should we trust you now?*

Answer - We use different microscopes for different circumstances. We have used the correct analytical technique for different tests.

*Comment - Initially, EPA used polarized light microscopy (PLM) to analyze samples. Beginning in 2003-2004, you switched to a different technique, polarized light microscopy visual evaluation (PLMVE). How do we know that levels determined to be non-detect for Libby amphibole using PLM are the same as using PLMVE?*

Answer - We are comparing the results determined using the two techniques. We are also conducting activity based sampling to test if the previous screening to identify properties that need cleaning was correct and to ensure that properties cleaned remain clean. Also, in 2004, we decided not to remove and replace carpets and not to remove vermiculite insulation from walls and some crawl spaces. If the activity based sampling indicates that this decision was wrong, we may have to do additional cleanups. The decisions about whether additional cleanup is necessary will be made based on science. If we need to go back and take additional action, the total cleanup costs may triple. Also in 2009 we will be assessing the exposure to tradesmen and fireman due to present and past cleanup decisions.

*Question - How much longer will it take to complete the toxicological and epidemiological studies so that we know that the work EPA is making the right decisions?*

Answer - Completing the studies and the activity based sampling will take another three years.

*Question - How does the EPA budgets for the cleanups in New York City and Libby compare?*

Answer - I do not know what the New York City cleanup budget is.

*Comment - Cleanup of the mine contamination should have been done first. This contamination is moving off site and will recontaminate the town. Research by University of Montana has*

*demonstrated that the bark of trees around the mine contain high levels of asbestos. The trees need to be cut down and the mine capped.*

Answer - The mine does need to be addressed and we will do so. However, we made the decision to cleanup the asbestos contamination where people live first and to isolate the mine until we determine the nature and extent of the contamination there and the appropriate methods for addressing it. We have reached agreement with W.R. Grace to pay for and conduct the mine cleanup pursuant to an EPA design. EPA will also conduct the mine related laboratory sampling.

*Question - Has this building (the Little Theater) been sampled for contamination? I watched W.R. Grace dump truck loads of material behind this building for ten years.*

Answer - We have done sampling and cleanups at Libby's schools. We are scheduled to recheck the ambient air at the schools this year. I will check to see if soil was removed at this building.

*Question - Where are we regarding the golf course?*

Answer - We have met with the golf course board of directors. We will design a cleanup for the golf course this year and revisit the cleanup decision next year. If additional funds become available, we may clean it this year.

*Question - Who is cleaning the railroad track?*

Answer - Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad (BNSF) will be making its second attempt to cleanup the tracks. In 2004-2005, BNSF attempted to vacuum the asbestos contamination from the ballast beneath the tracks without affecting the tracks themselves. This attempt did not work.

*Question - Given that BN wasn't successful, shouldn't EPA conduct the cleanup?*

Answer - The vacuuming approach, which had been approved by EPA, had advantages from a risk perspective. Next year, the tracks will be examined through town and in and out of the rail yard. BNSF will excavate the contamination.

*Comment - The decisions about which cleanups and investigations occur now are all about money. They should be about eliminating risk. Cleanup decisions based budget limitations are in effect decisions about who should get the next dose of risk of asbestos-related disease. At a recent meeting in Libby, Senator Baucus challenged EPA to find the needed funds. Give us the money necessary to avoid the additional risk.*

*Comment - EPA should provide the money to cleanup the houses, creeks, and the golf course. Libby has had the same budget since the cleanup began.*

Response - An additional \$6.5 million over the \$17 million was provided the last two years to conduct the toxicology and epidemiology studies. EPA does not have a budget yet.

*Question - Has any other superfund site experienced more deaths from contamination than Libby?*

Answer - No.

*Comment - We know that Paul Peronard is not deciding how much money is allocated to Libby cleanup and investigation projects. The EPA bosses who are deciding are putting this community at risk. Secretary Johnson came here and told us that he is 100% behind this project. Both of our United State Senators have told us that they will fight for the money needed here.*

*The budget decision makers in EPA should come here next month and negotiate with this community the amount of money for the Libby cleanups and investigations.*

*Comment - I watched the Libby Dam get built. The money was provided to do so. Back in September, Paul Peronard told the CAG that he could effectively spend \$38-39 million next year, versus the \$24 million level supporting projects in the 2008 work plan. EPA has an \$8 billion budget. I agree with the previous request for EPA decision makers come here and negotiate next year's budget with us.*

*Question - What is the timeline for the toxicological and epidemiological studies?*

Answer - The animal studies are about six months behind. We expect these studies to take three years to complete. The epidemiological studies will take two years. Dr. Aubrey Miller plans to come to Libby to discuss these studies at the TAG meeting on February 12th.

*Comment - After eight years, we still don't know if the cleanups being conducted are adequate. We need to get the science in place to decide.*

Response - We focused initially on removing the major sources of contamination from Libby. The last two years we have concentrated more on the science. The trick remains getting the balance between risk reduction and science. We are closer to the right balance now.

## **Next Meeting**

The next regular CAG meeting is scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on February 14, 2008 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall. DPHHS Director Joan Miles intends to attend this meeting and it will focus on asbestos-disease related issues.

### **Appendix 1 CAG Member Attendance List January 10, 2008**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Group/Organization Represented</b>
David F. Latham	<i>The Montanian</i>
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools
Eileen Carney	Board of Respiratory Care Therapists
DC Orr	Libby Community
Bill Patten	St. John's Lutheran Hospital
Rita Windom	Lincoln County Commissioner
Phillip Erquiaga	Libby Community/Eagles Voice
Mike Giesey	CARD
Dr. Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer

## Appendix 2



### Libby Asbestos Superfund Site Libby, Montana

## Project Work Plan Outline – Fiscal Year 2008

### Targeted Cleanups

1. **Troy Priority Properties:** The full scale assessment of properties in Troy began in May 2007, with assessments being completed at 550 of the 1,198 properties targeted. As a result of the property screenings, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified fifteen properties that required some immediate intervention to mitigate exposures to Libby Amphibole Asbestos (LA). Of these properties, six warranted prioritized, full-scale cleanup. EPA is not yet ready to begin the wholesale remediation of properties in Troy. However, at these six properties, the LA exposures, combined with the condition of the properties themselves, present clear risks above properties currently being cleaned in Libby. Therefore, these properties will be added to the FY 2008 clean up project.
2. **Libby Property Cleanups:** EPA will continue the cleanup of residential and commercial properties in the existing queue of properties meeting our current Removal Action Criteria. In 2007, there was a substantial increase in the average size of the properties being cleaned. Thus, the total number of properties cleaned in the year dropped from 216 in 2006 to 160 in 2007. EPA expects this trend to continue. Therefore, we are targeting 160 properties to be cleaned in 2008: 6 in Troy, and 154 in Libby.
3. **Flower Creek:** EPA investigations have delineated six sections of Flower Creek, all upstream of the Balsam Avenue crossing, that contain significant deposits of LA-bearing rip-rap. EPA intends to remove this material and restore the Creek. This work will begin later in summer to allow the action to happen when stream flow is at its lowest level.

### Pending Cleanups

1. **Additional Residential/Commercial Properties:** If our resources allow, EPA will have designs ready to add 10 to 20 properties to the FY 2008 cleanup.
2. **Additional Creeks:** EPA has identified LA-bearing materials in Granite and Callahan Creeks. Initial investigations indicate the presence of this material is not as extensive as is found along Flower Creek. Warning signs have been posted along the creeks, and EPA will complete more thorough investigations of the creeks in summer of 2008. Once these investigations are complete, EPA will reassess the prioritization of the cleanup of Granite and Callahan Creek.
3. **CVCC Golf Course:** EPA has found contamination on the original nine holes of the CVCC Golf Course. The contamination appears to result from the use of vermiculite in the construction of the greens and tee boxes. The contamination at CVCC, like those at other commercial properties in Libby, meets the current Site Removal Criteria. However, the CVCC golf course will be a much larger project, with a more exacting set of restoration requirements. Based on input from the community over the last few months, this project was deemed a lower priority than the on-going residential cleanups. EPA will complete a design and restoration plan for this property this year, and revisit its prioritization in FY-2009.

## Investigation Projects

1. **Ambient Air Sampling:** Now that we have over a year of ambient air sampling data, EPA will begin phasing out the stationary air samplers in and around downtown Libby. However, we will continue monitoring around the former processing areas and the mine, the rail line, and the Highway 37 and 2 corridors.
2. **Indoor/Outdoor Activity Based Sampling:** This work began in July 2007. It is designed to assess the exposure to LA during routine activities in and around various Libby properties. The properties include those that need no cleanup (based on our current Removal Criteria), those with a cleanup pending, and those that have already received an EPA cleanup. The sampling covers a full year (to capture seasonal variations) and is on schedule to be completed by summer 2008.
3. **Mine:** Work to delineate the nature and extent of contamination at the former vermiculite mine began last year and will continue throughout 2008. The work is being funded by W.R. Grace under an Administrative Order with EPA.
4. **Former Processing Areas:** EPA has completed sampling work at the former Export Plant and investigations at the former Stimson Mill will be completed in spring of 2008. EPA also anticipates delineating the contamination along the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line and any remaining contamination along the Kootenai Bluffs, which is associated with the former Screening Plant.
5. **Troy:** DEQ, through a cooperative agreement with EPA, initiated the screening of properties in Troy for LA in May 2007. It is anticipated that this planned two-year effort will be completed on schedule in the summer of 2008.
6. **Libby:** EPA screened all of the area creeks for LA-bearing materials in 2007. However, only Flower Creek (based on the initial screening) received an extensive inspection. EPA plans to conduct a more thorough investigation of all of the creeks in the area, looking for potential LA-bearing rip-rap. EPA also plans to conduct some follow up sampling in the Libby-area schools.