

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **April 12, 2007**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

The CAG agreed to the following agenda for this meeting:

- § Alan Reinstein Memorial Award
- § Karmanos Cancer Center Presentation
- § Report on the CAG membership survey
- § Agency reports
- § Public Comment
- § Next Meeting Agenda

#### **Alan Reinstein Memorial Award**

The Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, an organization dedicated to serving as the voice of asbestos victims, posthumously honored Les Skramstad with the Alan Reinstein Memorial Award on March 31, 2007 at the 3rd Annual Asbestos Awareness Day Conference in Philadelphia. Dr. Black attended the conference and received the award on behalf of the Skramstad family. Because Dr. Black was unable to attend tonight's meeting, Tanis Hernandez read and presented the award to Norita Skramstad. Les was honored for his unwavering commitment to justice and asbestos disease awareness.

#### **Karmanos Cancer Center Presentation**

Dr. Rebecca Cline, Senior Scientist, Communications and Behavioral Oncology, with the Karmanos Cancer Institute introduced her colleague, Lisa Berry-Bobovski. The Karmanos Center in partnership with CARD has conducted research into the psychosocial impacts of the asbestos exposure on the Libby community. Dr. Cline stated that this is the third trip that she and Ms. Berry-Bobovski have made to Libby. The first was in January 2006 to get acquainted with the community. The second, in March 2006, was for the Libby focus groups. She thanked the participants in the focus groups and the CAG for encouraging people to participate in asbestos-related research projects. She then gave a Power Point presentation on the preliminary results of the focus groups entitled, "In Your Own Words: A Preliminary Report of a Focus Group Study of Psychosocial Processes Associated with a Slow-Motion Environmental Disaster." An outline of the presentation is included below in Appendix 2.

*CAG Member Question - One of your slides stated that 270 people have died from Libby asbestos-related disease. What was the source of that number?*

Answer - The number came from information provided by the CARD Clinic. We believe it to be conservative. An exact number may not be possible because the specific cause listed on a death certificate may be something such as heart disease, although the asbestos-related disease caused the heart disease.

Answer by Tanis Hernandez - Everyone wants numbers. We provided the 270 number based on

the 255 white crosses erected on Memorial Day for asbestos-related disease victims plus CARD records.

*CAG Member Comment - The number of crosses does not represent a scientifically valid number of deaths from asbestos-related disease. One of the persons represented by a cross had asbestos disease but died from an accident.*

*Audience Member Comment - Your presentation about the division in the community appears accurate to me. I am a businessman and I talk to people everyday. I believe the community is split 50-50 about the significance of the disease. About half of the people either deny its significance or lack information about it.*

Response - While we appreciate hearing confirmation of our focus group results, we will be conducting a scientifically designed survey to get accurate figures about community views.

Response by Tanis Hernandez - The focus groups provided the foundation for the survey by identifying questions it should contain. The survey will provide evidence of the need for grants for psycho-social services.

### **Report on the CAG Membership Survey**

Mel Parker reported that the committee assigned by the CAG to organize an effort to survey community groups and solicit their participation on the CAG met after the last CAG meeting. The committee includes Bill Patten, LeRoy Thom, Gordon Sullivan, and Lerah Parker. Mr. Parker stated that we had hoped to have a draft report ready for this meeting, but it is not ready.

### **EPA Report**

Mike Cirian reported on behalf of EPA on the following topics.

Cleanups - Property cleanup resumed on April 2. Eight cleanups are underway; two are in final the stages. We had previously told the CAG that we were not going to move now to clean alleys because they tested less than 1% for asbestos. However, visible vermiculite is present in the alleys, and in some cases people drive through them to access properties that have already been cleaned. To prevent recontamination, we are considering adding alleys to the cleanup task orders.

Three property owners requested that EPA clean only a portion of their properties. The EPA has decided not to perform "partial cleanups" because of the possibility of cross contamination issues and because of the potential cost increases such as re-mobilization and set up costs. We do not want to clean a property more than once. Two of the property owners then declined to participate in the cleanup. The other decided to go ahead with cleanup of the entire property.

*CAG Member Question - Why do these people want only a portion of their property cleaned?*

Answer - They have not said. Cleanups are voluntary. We will ask why. We try and save particular plants or other objects that are especially important to property owners.

Disposal Pilot - We are conducting a pilot program for disposing contaminated vermiculite in the landfill.

Ambient Air Sampling - We have finished round 17 of the ambient air sampling, and round 18 ends on this coming Sunday.

Toxicity Analysis - Activity-based sampling is underway for the toxicity analysis. Draft plans for the analysis should be available by the end of April or sometime in May.

Minamata Visit - A researcher from Minamata working with US universities will visit Libby from April 30 - May 2. He is interested in possible asbestos-related disease research. He will tour the mine and cleanup job sites and will visit with Dr. Black and others.

*CAG Member Question - Will you see that this person also meets with Gene Reckin and Jeff Gruber, who visited Minamata?*

Answer - Yes.

OSHA Visit - Mr. Cirian introduced two officials from the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Ross Yeager and Julie Gentile, are currently visiting Libby and observing the asbestos cleanups. Mr. Yeager, the Montana Area Director, stated that EPA and CDM's Shawn Oliveira provided Ms. Gentile and him tours of the mine, landfill, residential cleanup projects, and the Libby analytical lab. He said that he was impressed that the labs had two transmission electron microscopes that provide quick turnaround of sampling results. Mr. Yeager stated that the people of Libby can rest comfortably that the people conducting the cleanups are being adequately protected. EPA, OSHA, and the cleanup contractors are working together to use the best safety systems.

*CAG Member Question - Did OSHA come to Libby because of a complaint?*

Answer by Mr. Yeager - No. We asked EPA for a visit to see if we could lend a hand.

*CAG Member Question - You stated that people doing the cleanups are safe. What toxicity model are you using to make this claim?*

Answer by Mr. Yeager - My statement is not based on modeling but on my years of experience with work practices. While we cannot keep workers completely clean, I am confident that we are providing the respirators and clothing necessary to keep exposures to the lowest levels possible and to prevent workers from taking asbestos fibers home with them.

*CAG Member Question - What procedures are being used to keep fibers from migrating off of cleanup sites?*

Answer by Mr. Yeager - OSHA is not involved with off-site, non-worker issues. I have looked at ambient air sampling results and talked with CDM, and I haven't seen evidence of off-site migration.

Answer by Mike Cirian - OSHA's job is to protect workers, not the community.

*Audience Member Question - Could you please give us more details about the landfill program?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - When CDM conducts a cleanup, contaminated materials are sucked into a big blue canister. The canister is emptied at the landfill using a water misting system. The contamination is covered each evening. We are testing putting a large poly bag inside the canister so that the contamination fills the bag. At the landfill, we then dispose of the bag. With the bag, we can forgo the mist and the nightly covering. The downside to the bags is their cost. Through this pilot program we can see if the cost savings from the revised disposal process cover the bag costs.

*Audience Member Question - So the material remains in the bag and the bag is buried?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - Yes. The bag is a heavy poly material.

*Audience Member Question - You are presently cleaning a building at the corner of Mineral and Highway 2. Many of us have been in that building. How extensive was the contamination problem in this building?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - This building had a false ceiling below the ceiling which enclosed vermiculite insulation in the attic. The vermiculite had leaked through ceiling to the false ceiling. We have lined the ceiling with poly and are removing the contamination.

*Audience Member Question - What is the nature of the cleanup at the Town Pump?*

Answer by DC Orr - I have worked on that project. We have removed soil contaminated with petroleum products, not asbestos.

*Audience Member Question - What is happening at the mine? In 2004, supposedly \$1 million was allocated to start the mine assessment. Have you found out what happened to that money?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - Bonnie Lavelle, the manager for this operable area, has been working on the remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) of the mine, and has begun meeting with stakeholders. The RI serves as the mechanism for collecting data to:

- \$ characterize site conditions;
- \$ determine the nature of the waste;
- \$ assess risk to human health and the environment; and
- \$ conduct treatability testing to evaluate the potential performance and cost of the treatment technologies that are being considered.

The FS is the mechanism for the development, screening, and detailed evaluation of alternative remedial actions.

Ms. Lavelle will be meeting next week in Missoula with the US Forest Service, University of Montana researchers and W.R. Grace to discuss the Mine RI/FS. W.R. Grace has installed a meteorological tower at the mine. EPA has bladed the roads leading to the mine.

*Comment by Mr. Mueller - Paul Peronard was asked at the last CAG meeting about what happened to the \$1 million budgeted in 2004 for mine related work. He said he would find out and report back to the CAG.*

*Audience Member Question - Who is a stakeholder in the mine cleanup?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - By this word, I mean W.R. Grace, the mine owner, and owners of nearby lands, including the state, Plum Creek, and the US Forest Service. These entities will likely be involved in the design and implementation of the mine cleanup.

*Audience Member Question - What about homeowners below the mine?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - We have not yet involved them, but we will do so.

*Audience Member Question - A homeowner that has been on the list for cleanup for two years was recently pushed off the list. When will this property be cleaned?*

Answer by Mike Cirian - We schedule properties for cleanup six months in advance. Please come and talk with me, and I can identify and talk with the property owner.

*Audience Member Question - A Troy homeowner with young children would like to have his or her house prioritized for sampling and cleanup. Is that possible?*

Answer by Catherine LeCours - Yes, a prioritization is possible. We are looking at various ways to schedule and prioritize work in Troy. Cleanup will not occur this year, however.

## **State Report**

Catherine LeCours reported on behalf of the state. The Montana Department of Environmental Science and its contractor, Tetra Tech, Inc., have opened an office in Troy at 303 N. Third St.

The contact information is as follows:

§ Local telephone - 406-295-9238

§ Toll free telephone - 800-246-8198

§ Fax - 406-295-9261

§ email address - [info@degtroyinfo.com](mailto:info@degtroyinfo.com).

§ mailing address - P.O. Box 1170, Troy, MT 59935-1170

Michelle Carlson is the office manager.

Some 800 letters are being mailed to the owners of 1,200 parcels of land explaining the investigation process. The letters request access to conduct the investigation to determine where cleanup is needed and the extent of the cleanup, if warranted. The investigations will begin on April 30, 2007.

*Audience Member Question - What is the boundary for Troy cleanup?*

Answer - I will provide a narrative description and a map to Mr. Mueller for inclusion in the summary of this meeting. See the attached map. The boundary begins at Hwy 56 and continues 5.2 miles west of town on Highway 2. The Kootenai River serves as the boundary as well as the high cliffs along either side of Hwy 2. The boundary runs along Iron Creek to Cox Lane and back down Freeman Ridge Road. The boundary also goes one mile up Callahan Creek and Lake Creek roads.

*Audience Member Question - After you begin the investigation, will changes in the boundary be possible?*

Answer - Changes are possible, but I cannot promise them now. The boundary was based on population centers. I am aware, for example, of buildings originally in Troy that were moved to Bull Lake. These individual buildings are eligible for the investigation and potential cleanup. I was visited today by a gentleman located outside of the boundary. I told him, that while we cannot clean his property, we will provide him the information needed so he can get the cleanup done correctly.

*Audience Member Question - What about people at Bull Lake?*

Answer – There is a potential for the boundaries to change. I know that the Bull Lake area has specifically been a point of discussion.

*CAG Member Question - You stated that the boundary extends one mile up Lake Creek. There are lots of people on Lake Creek above the 1 mile distance. Their homes are older and likely to have vermiculite insulation in their attic and walls.*

Answer - I believe the area you are referring to is called Wilderness Plateau, and it is included.

### **CARD Report**

Mike Giesey reported on behalf of the CARD Clinic. The third in the series of three staff presentation will be on April 17 and will address understanding specific research projects. Presentations by Board members to civic and community groups continue. Please contact us if you know of a group that needs one. A hearing was held in Senate Finance and Claims on HB 407 which would appropriate funding to help people in Libby pay asbestos disease related medical bills. Those testifying requested that the amount of funding be restored from the \$2 million included by the House to the \$3 million requested originally.

### **TAG Report**

Mike Noble reported that the TAG does not have a substantive report tonight. Alan Benitz is a new TAG board member.

### **Public Comment**

*Audience Member Question - What is happening with the Operation and Maintenance Working Group (O&M Working Group) ?*

Answer by Cathleen LeCours - This group meets on the Wednesday morning before for the monthly CAG meeting. Summaries of these meetings are available to anyone wanting them. The O&M Working Group includes representatives of the CAG, TAG, EPA, state, city, county, the fire department and the building inspector. This group is piloting the Environmental Response Specialist (ERS) position and has written fact sheets. I will make a report each month at these meetings on the O&M Working Group activities.

*Audience Member Question - According to a May 2006 meeting summary, this group is looking at institutional controls. What has happened regarding them?*

Answer - We have not decided anything regarding institutional controls and will not do so until after EPA issues the Record of Decision (ROD) for the remediation cleanup.

*Audience Member Question - We have heard that the post-remediation operation and maintenance will require \$25 - 30 million. Where will this money come from?*

Answer - We don't know yet.

### **Next Meeting Agenda Topics**

The CAG agreed to the following topics for its next meeting:

- \$ DC Orr presentation
- \$ Report on the CAG membership survey; and
- \$ Agency reports.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on May 12, 2007 in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall.

**Appendix 1**  
**CAG Member & Guest Attendance List**  
**February 12, 2007**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Group/Organization Represented</b>
David F. Latham	<i>The Montanian</i>
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim
Mike Gieseey	CARD
DC Orr	City of Libby
Ted Linnert	EPA
Mike Cirian	EPA
Gary Swenson	Libby Volunteer Fire Department
Catherine LeCours	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Eileen Carney	Board of Respiratory Therapists
<b>Guests</b>	
Dr. Rebecca Cline	Karmanos Cancer Institute
Lisa Berry-Bobovski	Karmanos Cancer Institute
Ross Yeager	OSHA
Julie Gentile	OSHA

**Appendix 2**  
**In Your Own Words:**  
**A Preliminary Report of a Focus Group Study of Psychosocial Processes Associated with a**  
**Slow-Motion Environmental Disaster\***

**Libby Community Advisory Group**  
**Libby, MT**  
**April, 2007**

**Rebecca J. W. Cline, PhD**  
**Lisa Berry-Bobovski, BA**

**Communication and Behavioral Oncology**  
**Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute**  
**Detroit, MI**

**In Partnership with:**  
**Center for Asbestos Related Disease**  
**Libby, MT**

\*Conducted as part of a larger investigation, National Center for Vermiculite and Asbestos-Related Cancers, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (H75/CCH524709-01), John C. Ruckdeschel, PI.

**Summary of Key Points**

**BACKGROUND:**

**What Are Focus Groups?**

- A powerful qualitative research tool.
- Data related to feelings, motivations, opinions and subjective reactions.
- Attempt to “experience the experience” of population being investigated.
- Used in early stages of research program; point to concepts and hypotheses for future investigation.
- Cannot claim representativeness.
- One- to three-hour discussion.
- Small group of participants.
- Guided by a trained moderator.
- Moderator follows protocol (discussion guide) of topics and questions.
- Groups formed to enhance openness, ability to explore sensitive topics.

**Significance of research.**

- Substantial research addresses psychosocial consequences of rapidly-striking natural disasters and individuals in personal crises.
- Little is known about psychosocial consequences of slow-motion disasters.

- Previous research has not addressed how people understand and respond to risk associated with asbestos-contaminated vermiculite.

Road to Libby: What we tell others about the problem.

- Population 2800; 12,000 in 10-mile radius.
- Epicenter of “worst environmental disaster in U.S.”
- Source: Vermiculite mine (until 1990).
- Medical consequences: mesothelioma (30+), asbestosis, pleural disease, lung cancer, and more.
- Latency period for diagnosis up to 40 years.
- Exposure may be: short-term, non-occupational.
- More than 270 deaths; 1800 CARD patients.
- Within families, multiple generations with ARD.

Background: From Libby to Us/U.S.

- Source of 80% of world’s vermiculite products.
- Products still available.
- 240+ processing plants in 40+ states, 8 in Michigan.
- EPA estimates: up to 35 million homes in U.S. contain potentially contaminated vermiculite-based insulation products.

Key Concepts:

- Communication:
  - Messages: Planned/unplanned, formal/informal.
  - Meanings: Identity, relational, instrumental.
  - People behave according to meanings.
  - Potential for doing harm.
  - Requires understanding “audiences” experiences.
  - Credibility: Authoritative and trustworthy sources.
- Social Support:
  - Verbal and nonverbal messages that function to help others manage uncertainty and thereby enhance perceived control and reduce stress (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003).
  - Emotional, informational, instrumental.
- Stigma:
  - An “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963).
  - A type of relationship between people defined as “normal” and people “marked” as deficient.
  - Discredited versus discreditable (visibility).
  - Courtesy stigma (by association).
- Culture: Culture and Cultural Values
  - A symbolic meaning system (Casson, 1981).
  - Means by which people know how to enact and interpret “appropriate” social behavior.
  - May be positive, negative, or existential in influencing health behavior (Airhihenbuwa, 1995).

## METHODS:

### Principles of Our Research:

- Community as partner.
- Protecting and respecting participants.
- Attempting to gain all points of view.
- Avoiding bias.
- Grounded theory: Following the data.
- Employing rigorous methodology.
- “Getting it ‘right.’”
- Bringing results back to Libby.

### Key Components of Focus Groups:

- Sample: Adults who have lived and/or worked in the vicinity of Libby, Montana for the past five years.
- 9 focus groups, relatively homogeneous; 5 individual interviews.
- Moderator: clinical social worker.
- Discussion guide.

### Sample (n = 71)

- 17 ARD: Mine-Related (2 Groups, 1 Interview).
- 14 ARD: Non-Mine Related (2 Groups, 1 Interview).
- 17 Family (2 Groups, 3 Interviews).
- 23 No ARD in Self or Family (3 Groups).

### Discussion Topics

- Ground Rules.
- Libby, MT: Hometown Image.
- Experiencing the Asbestos Problem. Effects on Community, Family, Personally.
- Social Support Processes.
- Diffusion of the Problem and Process of Understanding (Views, How Changed).
- Beyond Libby: Messages for Others.
- Libby, MT: Hopes for the Future.

## RESULTS:

### Summary:

- Results take the form of themes, patterns in transcripts.
- Reflected wide ranging points of views.
- Substantial evidence supports each theme presented below.

### Cultural values are woven into both shared and divergent points of view:

- Cultural values.
- Areas of convergence.
- Areas of divergence.

### Shared cultural values observed:

- Rugged individualism: Independence, self-sufficiency, resiliency, honesty.

- Relational values of caring: Pride in “taking care of our own,” family- and community-centered.
- Love of nature, outdoors, natural beauty.

Shared views: Views that emerged across groups and interviews.

- “I love Libby.”
- Libby is a supportive community.
- Courtesy stigma: The community has been stigmatized by the asbestos issues.
- The asbestos issue has hurt everyone in some way (community image, economic impact, family impact, health and medical consequences).
- Conflict surrounds asbestos issues (among friends, family, and in community).

Implications of cultural values for social support:

- Libby is a caring community: Creates expectations for ARD-related social support.
- Independence, self-sufficiency: Encourages value of self-help; fuels self-help behaviors and philosophy.
- Independence, self-sufficiency: Contributes to reluctance to accept social support.

Barriers to Social Support for People with ARD;

- Losses of sources of social support (family members, friends w/ ARD).
- Geographic barriers (children and other family members live/moved elsewhere; inability to travel and leave institutional/medical support available in Libby).
- Stigma: ARD is a stigmatizing disease, results in “us-them” relationships.
- Social dynamics surrounding asbestos issue and ARD create uncertainty regarding social support (fear of disclosing ARD).

Divergent views: Areas of widely differing points of view.

- Risk perceptions range from “everyone is at risk” to “lack of perceived risk, danger associated with vermiculite.”
- The cause of health problems: Asbestos in vermiculite versus various alternative explanations (e.g., old age, smoking, radon, lifestyle, any dust; includes physicians’ explanations).
- The nature of the “disaster” or “problem” in Libby varied in nature and included individuals focusing on only one or a combination of the following: Health/medical problem; a family problem; an economic problem.

ARD as a disease as an assault on cultural values: Challenges people’s abilities to:

- Be independent.
- Care for others.
- Engage in valued family activities and experiences.
- Participate in and enjoy outdoor activities (e.g., hunting, fishing).

Uncertainty regarding who to believe:

Everyone has some uncertainty regarding who to believe about asbestos-related issues and ARD; wide differences occur in judging the credibility of the whole array of potential informational sources (federal, state, and local institutions, individuals, advocates).

#### Impact of social dynamics on health and medical behavior:

- Reluctance/unwillingness to be screened.
- Reluctance/unwillingness to seek follow-up after initial screening.
- Reluctance/unwillingness to seek medical care after ARD diagnosis.
- Reluctance/unwillingness to go on oxygen when needed.

## DISCUSSION

### Summary

- Roles of cultural values in responding to the disaster/problem are both positive and negative.
- Social support processes: Community care creates expectations for social support related to ARD - versus – anxieties about how people will respond knowing “I have ARD.”
- Significant consequences at all levels: Individuals, families, community.
- Potential for conflict and stigma to influence risk perceptions, health and medical behavior.

### Future Research

- Population-based survey in Libby area within the next year.
- Quantify variables associated with types of responses to the disaster identified in present investigation.
- Test hypotheses generated by qualitative data in present study.
- Identify areas for community, family, and individual action.
- Transport what we learn in Libby to other communities.