

# Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force Zoom Meeting

September 22, 2021, Meeting Notes

Facilitated by White Bluffs Consulting

Meeting Documents: <http://srrttf.org/?p=12104>

## Attendees:

### ***Voting Members and Alternates***

Tom Agnew, BiJay Adams – Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District

Doug Krapas – Inland Empire Paper

Elena Wolf – Kaiser Aluminum

Craig Borrenpohl, Alyssa Gersdorf – City of Post Falls

Rob Lindsay, Mike Hermanson – Spokane County

Jeff Donovan, Mike Coster – City of Spokane

Vikki Barthels – Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD)

Ken Windram – Hayden Area Regional Sewer Board

Chelsea Updegrove – Lands Council

Chris Donley – Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

Mike Anderson, Ben Martin – City of Coeur d’Alene

Galen Buterbaugh – Lake Spokane Association

Holly Davies – WA State Department of Health

### ***Advisors***

Karl Rains, Adriane Borgias, Jeremy Schmidt, Cheryl Niemi, Brandee Era- Miller, Diana

Washington, Curtis Johnson, Sandy Treccani – Washington State Department of

Brian Nickel – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Monica Ott – Avista

### ***Interested Parties***

Dave Dilks – LimnoTech

Ben and Lara Floyd – White Bluffs Consulting (WBC)

Bruce Williams – SRHD

Dave Darling – American Coatings Association

Gary Jones – United Printing Alliance

Lauren Heine, Amelia Nestler – Northwest Green Chemistry

Doug Austin – Chesapeake Bay

Amy Ziff –

Kyle Zimabuku – Gonzaga University

Dr. Lisa Rodenburg – Rutgers University

Jay West – American Chemistry Council

Kris Holm

**Introductions and Agenda Review:** After introductions, Ben Floyd reviewed the agenda.

**Meeting Summary Action:** The Task Force (TF) approved the July 28 meeting summary and Lara Floyd will post the final notes to the website.

**ACE Update** – Jeff said they received the final reimbursement from Ecology and are getting close on the next biennium contract. Karl said it has been submitted to their contracting team and is

going through the review process. ACE has quite a few contracts they have put out with a few pending such as LimnoTech and extending the Lands Council and contract with Dr. Rodenburg. There is \$200,000 in the bank and \$900,000 of committed funds from scopes of work approved in June. ACE has about 1.3 million in uncommitted funds. Doug commented on the need to try and use the funds. Ben said the ad hoc work planning team will reconvene to plan out next steps. WBC will send out a doodle poll with dates.

**Data Management** – Nothing new to report

**PMF** – Mike H. said currently they have two things being worked on – evaluation and analysis of biofilm, fish and SPMD results is one. They have received a draft report and Dr. Rodenburg is adding in second and third rounds of SPMD analysis. The other project is holistic analysis and on August 18 the work group had a brainstorming session to give Dr. Rodenburg direction and she is working on the draft soon. Once the work is done, they will have the next work group meeting. The scope has established a December 31 deadline. They hope to have some deliverables for the TF to review by the December 15 TF meeting and hope to approve by end of year.

**Environmental Justice** – Chelsea U. said the next plan for the work group is to define the scope and create a committee inviting community members and ask for proposals for projects. If any other TF members would like to participate, please email Chelsea or Karl. The next meeting will be the first week in October.

**Funding/MOA** – Karl reported nothing new since last meeting. There are three members who need to sign revised MOA (City of Spokane, Spokane County and WA State Dept of Health). Holly Davies from WA DOH will be temporarily replacing Dave McBride as he retired this summer. She is a toxicologist at WA State DOH and she attended the TF meetings when she was with Ecology. The TF will also invite their EJ person to participate.

**Tech Track** – Dave Dilks said they met on August 30 and talked about all the projects divided into two things: already approved and ongoing sampling, PCB sniffing dog, and sub bottom object detection. They talked about PCB mass balance assessment and will meet again in October to look at Comprehensive Plan project recommendations. The water column sampling, sediment, artesian well, pizometer, and PCB dog sniffing projects have taken place. The only one not done is sub bottom object detection and Gravity could not get boats out as the river was so low but they will do it when they can.

They saw some high-level results from PCB sniffing dog, Jasper, who found some hot spots. Brandee said in Julie's report Jasper found a lot of strong signals of PCBs around the whole western side of the river near No Live Brewery and SR3A and a lot of the buildings with paint and building materials. He pawed at the water at a submerged outfall just upstream of SR3A where stormwater goes into the river from buildings. At the next TF meeting there will be more information after having Tech Track meeting.

Doug mentioned how the TF has collected a lot of information over the last several years and is it time to think about a technical workshop to evaluate all of the information? Ben mentioned talking about it more when discussing comments from the TF interview summary. Dave said they can discuss it at the TT level.

Adriane said that area was identified in the Urban Waters investigation 10 years ago and a lot of work with storm drains was done by the City to clean it up.

**iPCB/TSCA** – Doug said two items will be presented today – PCB 11 and TiO<sub>2</sub> study. Think about next steps from what we hear and provide input and guidance on where to go from here based on what they say.

- iPCB national campaign by Lands Council - webpage and good portion of strategy developed and will present at October meeting.
- Department of Ecology working on safer products of WA and had presentation on August 31 on printing inks and encouraged people to look at their website. It would be valuable to get a summary of work they have ongoing.
- EPA letter - Decided to develop a new letter to EPA regarding work they have ongoing on toxicity of various congeners and Aroclors and hope to get approval of it at October TF meeting.
- They have two iPCB TSCA projects (*Develop Industry List of Pigments: Chlorinated vs. Non-Chlorinated and Evaluate the success of PCB procurement policies*) and have sent out RFPs to different companies and looks like there will be some proposals provided. Unfortunately funding for Northwest Green Chemistry has been pulled but some individual members may still be able to participate in those RFPs. They are evaluating the RFPs and will bring a recommendation to the TF of who should be funded.

**Education and Outreach work group** – Ben said the fish sampling work is folded into Tech Track work so felt like the TF does not need a separate fish sampling group and propose to sunset it. For Education and Outreach, Vikki is no longer leading it and tried to get a replacement, but no one volunteered. Maybe making this part of the TF meeting is one option.

Vikki said they have so much good work going on and hate to see it go away. She is willing to stay on as chair and schedule meetings but needs a co-chair to help take notes and provide the minutes or lead the meeting if she is unavailable. Rob mentioned Toni Taylor as a possibility, and he will talk to her. Rob said he talked to Toni yesterday and she suggested meeting less frequently due to not a lot on the agenda. Vikki agreed and it would help alleviate things to meet less frequently.

**TiO<sub>2</sub> Study Update Presentation** – Jay West from American Chemistry Council (ACC) gave the presentation, and he manages Titanium Dioxide Stewardship Council (TDSC) which is a self-funded group managed by ACC. Doug said this was a product of IPCB TSCA and based on findings from Dr. Rodenburg of Rutgers and potential of TiO<sub>2</sub> to contain inadvertently generated PCBs. The work group developed a project to evaluate products that may have a pathway to the Spokane River. TDSC volunteered to do the study at their cost and direction, and this is culmination of that work.

Jay mentioned that this study found much lower numbers in all TiO<sub>2</sub> samples done over the 85 parts/billion in the Ecology report. They found low levels of PCBs in TiO<sub>2</sub> products in all three categories. He mentioned Ecology studied more samples though.

**Comments/Questions: (answers in italics by Jay West)**

- Is it the intent to provide a final report? *Jay said we have our project report that's really detailed. This pretty much is it.* What about the congeners that were identified? The Rodenburg report had 206, 208 and 209 associated with TiO<sub>2</sub>. *Jay said he needs to take it back to the members and tell them the TF is interested in it.*
- Can you explain why the results are so far apart as to what Ecology found? *If you look at all these things we studied, you all looked at the entire product and every substance in there. You may have purchased them at retail places? We were looking at the partial contribution from TiO<sub>2</sub> that may be present in those products and came right off the production line. The lens Ecology is taking is what is sitting on a shelf somewhere? We can only speak to potential contribution from TiO<sub>2</sub>.*
- Alex Stone specifically looked for red and yellow products and other pigments when he did the report for Ecology.
- Can you give us a feel for the highs and lows of samples? *Jay said the members did not give individual results or minimums and maximums.* It would be interesting see the variability. He will take it back to the group.
- You can see when the average is much higher than median there is a higher outlier. Once in a while you get a batch that's high. Were these TiO<sub>2</sub> samples produced in the US? *Almost all of them but a few were from a plant in Canada.* Is North America the main producer of TiO<sub>2</sub>? I know China is a significant factor and they have ramped up TiO<sub>2</sub> production significantly. *Jay will go back and look.*
- Lauren Heine said when they did research a couple of years ago China uses the sulfate process.
- Lisa Rodenburg said many years ago wrote paper about Delaware River and had a big problem with PCBs. Do you know whether there have been controls put in place to reduce levels over time? I think some of this was being produced in 50s, 60s before we had water quality act. I assume there may be a process control put in place or to remove them before product is sold? *Jay said he doesn't know. He will ask the members.*
- Doug suggested getting all questions to him and will talk about at work group level and compile to give to Jay to take back to his membership.

**Sources and Pathways of PCB 11: Initial Investigations Presentation:** Dave Dilks gave the presentation.

**Comments/Questions: (answers in italics by Dave Dilks)**

- As far as the river locations for sampling, is it fair to say the increase of PCB 11 in water column is more associated with urban areas? *Yes, you do start seeing that at Greene St and further down where USGS Gage comes in.* Doug asked Lisa R. if there are more concentrated PCBs associated with urban areas? Lisa said all waste water has similar amounts in it whether it's urban or city and it's a mystery. Doug said PCB 11 is not as bioaccumulative in fish tissue which is a silver lining but any suggestions as to how we go about identifying? *It's a discussion for the next TT work group meeting.*
- Can you remind me what products would have PCB 11 as a primary contributor to total PCBs? Doug said they are usually associated with yellow inks and pigments (diarylide

pigments). Do we know if those pigments and dyes are in cleaning products that would be disposed of since there are septic systems in that area?

- I have heard it shows up high in plastics (PCB11) such as on boats, kayaks, etc.
- In the Greene Street to USGS Gage there may be a high amount of sewer systems instead of septic systems.
- Adriane said Ecology has done a study on this and some work on identifying if septic systems are impacting Lake Spokane. Most of the area is sewer.
- The City sewer system goes up to Nine Mile road and there are a few small areas that are on septic.
- Spokane found PCB-11 in cleaning products: Simply Green, laundry detergent, and shampoo.

<https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/publicworks/wastewater/pcbs/pcbs-in-municipal-products-report-revised-2015-07-21.pdf>

**Task Force Interviews Summary presentation** – Ben shared that it felt like it was time to check in with individual TF members since it had not been done since 2018 when White Bluffs came on as facilitator. A lot of information was learned and wanted to share it with the TF. Five questions were asked:

- How effective is TF at finding and reducing PCBs?
- Are we focused on the right activities?
- Any input on guidance on TF meetings and how to make them more effective?
- How to increase TF participation?
- Thoughts on Tech Track facilitation and process

#### **Comments/Questions:**

- How do we get a technology sub-group off the ground? Does it need to be proposed by an entity not on the SRSP? *Ben said that was a common theme during the interviews. A broader Technology work group may be needed.* Rob mentioned it before and targeting technologies for the treatment of PCBs. Ben proposed discussing it at the next TF meeting.
- The SRSP has discussed it a couple of times and there may not be support for moving it forward right now.
- It is not an SRSP decision, but a TF decision.
- The County would support this but do not want to push it forward.
- *Ben said it wasn't just the dischargers mentioning this in the interviews and it was a broader support for looking at additional technologies.*
- I don't agree we aren't cleaning up anything as we have been doing things like eliminating yellow road paint in state and this watershed has the most advanced water treatment technologies in the country also. The TF doesn't have the authority in many cases to do the cleaning up but can help identify.
- With the road paint, the state has already been using low PCB road paints for a long time.
- There has been hesitancy in past about identifying TF spokesperson but a lot of what we are seeing could be resolved by improved web design and messaging and maybe a

summary in simpler terms. Maybe some money should be allocated to help distill some talking points and/or video which would be easily digestible by members of the public.

- Short YouTube videos about what the TF is doing and post on the website. Easy to share if there are media requests.
- Is it due time for another technical workshop to review everything? We have the funding for it. Ben suggested the Tech Track consider it at their next meeting.

WBC will refer to these interviews and will have follow up going forward.

**Information Update:** Karl said nothing new to report but continuing to work on development of permits. We will be moving along our process as far as entity review and putting it out for public review. Still looking into getting it out for review late this year or early next year.

**Upcoming Task Force Meeting Topics to add:**

- Discuss Technology work group idea
- Approval of SPMD report for December agenda
- Two PMF reports in December?

Adriane gave appreciation for TF interviews. Some of it is conflicting with different opinions but shows how we can work together anyway. It was helpful for us also to see how we can do our job better.

Karl said TCP group will be releasing a report of the Upriver Dam (5 year check in on remediation behind Upriver Dam) and it will be released for a 30-day comment period. If there any questions you can send them to Jeremy, Bill or Sandy (TCP staff), or they can do a brief presentation at the TT meeting and will send to WBC to send out.

**The next SRRTTF meeting will be held on October 27, 2021, at 8:30 am**