

LMRLAC – January 28, 2010

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

January 28, 2010

Members:

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- ✓ Bob Robbins (Chair) – Hudson
- ✓ Kathryn Nelson (Vice Chair) -- Nashua
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) -- Nashua
- ✓ Jim Barnes (Treasurer) – Hudson
- Glenn McKibben – Litchfield
- George May - Merrimack
- ✓ David Scaer - Hudson

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

- Geoff Daly, corridor resident and potential member, Nashua
- Richard Fixler, P.E., Assistant Airport Director, Engineering and Planning, Manchester-Boston Regional Airport
- Nicole Kowalski, Environmental Engineer, EPA
- Lucy St. John, Deputy Planning Manager, City of Nashua
- David Webster, Chief of Industrial Permits Region 1 (New England), EPA

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm in the media wing downstairs at the Nashua Public Library.

Membership

Members welcomed David Scaer in his new role as a member of LMRLAC, representing Hudson.

Manchester-Boston Regional Airport – Discussion on Stormwater

Mr. Webster and Ms. Kowalski from the EPA introduced themselves, as did Mr. Fixler from the airport. Ms. Kowalski handed out a summary sheet on the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport Multi-Sector Permit Requirements pertaining to the water quality monitoring that had been discussed with Mr. Fixler and Mr. Hagopian at the December 2009 LMRLAC meeting.

Monitoring started in August 2009 and continues for 12 months. Quarterly status reports are submitted to the EPA. In addition, a water quality modeling program will be developed to model how the water receives deicing fluid, and, from that, to determine its effect on water quality. A final report is due in October 2010.

Kath asked whether the test results or the modeling results will be what determine the conclusions drawn by the study. Ms. Kowalski responded that she has been looking at the quarterly monitoring reports as they are submitted.

Mr. Webster stated that the sampling started before deicing season in order to get a fix on other contaminants present. Sampling will continue through the deicing season, and then the collected data will be used in a model to determine dissolved oxygen (DO) units. Possible outcomes from the study could be further monitoring or further controls on discharge.

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Kath asked about the applicability of the model to the conditions at the airport (for example, compared to a tidal or ocean location such as Logan Airport in Boston). Mr. Webster indicated the model is calibrated to the specific environment.

Mr. Webster pointed out that the sample gathers data under specific conditions, from which they hope that the model can extrapolate to any scenario.

Kath asked whether the model will demonstrate whether the dissolved oxygen sag goes below the standard of 5 milligrams per liter (5 mg/l). Mr. Webster indicated that 5 mg/l is the limit for a warm water fishery.

Mr. Webster indicated that traditionally DO is the primary concern. Glycol's impact is intense but it breaks down quickly (by absorbing oxygen from the water).

Kath mentioned foaming and odor as aesthetic impacts on the river. Geoff mentioned odor originating from the Beazer site and said he's seen foam upriver from the Beazer site, but that it could have come from anywhere.

Geoff asked about using hydrogen peroxide in the detention pond to add oxygen. Mr. Webster stated his focus is to determine whether additional limits are needed on the outfall and thus in the permit; the EPA leaves it to the airport to determine how to meet the terms of the permit.

Ms. Kowalski brought up the Effluent Limitation Guidelines (ELG) and stated she is on the workgroup for the update. She stated the guidelines are in review and approval is expected in 2011. Public comment has either closed for the update or is soon to close. Manchester would fall into the 20 percent category (that is, required to collect 20 percent of the deicing fluid applied).

Kath summarized the situation with the Boott Hydropower Dam in Lowell (as discussed at the October 2009 LMRLAC meeting), and how the section of the Merrimack River covered by LMRLAC falls between that dam and the Amoskeag Dam in Manchester. Kath mentioned the level changes seen along this stretch of the river, and asked how the model would account for that. Mr. Webster responded that the plan is to first understand the dynamics of the discharge, and then they can pick a flow rate to model, and a concentration of glycol, to see the expected DO as determined by the model.

A brief discussion followed of existing flow monitors in the river, and how to access data from them. Geoff pointed out that the data for the monitor at the Taylor's Falls Bridge in Nashua is available on-line. David indicated the monitor at Goffs Falls is a USGS monitor.

Members briefly discussed combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the region. Mr. Webster indicated that, from the EPA perspective, concern about CSOs applied to bacteria as opposed to DO.

Ms. Kowalski indicated the multi-sector permit is due to expire in 2013 and that the ELG may happen in 2011. Kath asked about the timing of the ELG vs. the airport permit renewal. Mr. Webster indicated that a water quality-based limit could be added to the multi-sector permit. The limit could be specified at a pipe, or it could be a practice. He further described that the ELG uses the practice approach, but the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) could use either a limit or a practice. He further stated that a water quality standard is always site specific, while a technical standard is less so.

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Kath asked about the effect from the Manchester Waste Water Treatment Plant, which has its discharge pipe a bit upriver from the airport. Mr. Fixler stated the discharge is about a mile and a half upriver of the airport.

Kath asked if LMRLAC could receive a copy of the report when it's issued.

Mr. Webster asked what the LAC's areas of concern were. Kath replied that DO is a concern, as is toxicity, and aesthetics, since LMRLAC likes to promote the river as a recreational resource.

Mr. Webster stated that the use of the same river for both waste discharge and for drinking, as the Merrimack is used, is less common in New England, but more common elsewhere, such as on the Mississippi.

Bob asked whether EPA was looking at non point source (NPS) pollution. He pointed out the increase in NPS pollution after rain storms, and how LMRLAC recommends use of low impact development (LID) approaches to help address NPS pollution. Mr. Webster responded that he has jurisdiction over discharge from pipes, but has no jurisdiction over NPS pollution. He stated there is a program with grants, incentives, and studies. He further stated he is confident all the airport discharge comes out of pipes and is thus regulated.

Members briefly discussed illicit connections. Mr. Webster stated that the simplest model is that a storm drain should have no discharge if it's not raining.

Kath stated it would be helpful if EPA could provide information on any pipe surveys that have been done. Mr. Webster pointed out that this is an ongoing process. Mr. Webster also stated that citizen groups are very valuable in this area, and gave the example of citizen monitors along the Charles River identifying evidence of illicit connections, and still finding evidence of illicit discharge, 10 years into the program.

Members thanked Mr. Fixler, Mr. Webster, and Ms. Kowalski for coming to speak with the LAC.

Other Business

Hippo Article on Merrimack River

Kath pointed out the latest issue of the Hippo includes an extensive article about the Merrimack River, but did not mention LMRLAC as a resource. She called the reporter, and the LAC will be included in a subsequent article. Kath also asked how members felt about sending draft minutes of the January meeting to the Hippo to inform them on the business of the meeting in a timely manner and members agreed that was acceptable.

NH DOT I-93 Bridge Work

LMRLAC had received notification that NH DOT is replacing four decks and bridges on I-93 in Manchester and Hooksett. Members discussed, since the project is above the Amoskeag Dam, it is well beyond LMRLAC's focus area. Kath will send a response, thanking NH DOT for keeping us informed.

Bob asked whether LMRLAC should pursue expanding its jurisdiction to include Manchester. He mentioned a presentation he saw at the Manchester Chamber of Commerce at which he learned of a development project near the Eliot Hospital. Geoff mentioned the development taking place near the airport access road. Members discussed the process for doing this, which would require reapplying for Designated River status to cover the additional region.

Nashua – Beazer Property

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Kath mentioned that LMRLAC had received correspondence regarding the Beazer property. The current controls which are in place to contain the contaminated groundwater are being overtopped, and the DES correspondence informed Beazer that overtopping with contaminated groundwater is an unpermitted discharge. DES is requesting a revised proposal to address the problem, due February 15, 2010. DES further indicated that the proposal for disposal should not necessarily be limited to onsite options. Geoff mentioned recently kayaking on the river and that his kayak became coated in creosote. Kath will put together a response to DES, thanking them for keeping the LAC informed and indicating that, with on-river contacts reporting a sheen and odor, it is imperative that this problem be addressed quickly.

River Temperature

Geoff briefly described seeing steam coming off the river on more than one occasion recently, and expressed concerns about the temperature of the river. He speculated whether there could be a connection between the steam and discharge from the power plant in Bow. Members briefly discussed several conditions that could cause steam on the river.

Kath indicated temperature may be a good indication of illicit discharges and suggested Geoff and David could take some temperature readings.

Hudson – Prime Wetlands Study

Jim summarized the process the Hudson Conservation Commission had followed to date in working to get its prime wetlands study approved by the town. He stated the study did not make it to the March ballot for Hudson Town Meeting this year. He stated the Conservation Commission will continue working the issue.

Minutes

The minutes from the October 22, 2009 and December 4, 2009 minutes were approved with minor changes.

Next Meeting Agenda

Bob mentioned that a representative of Enel North America will be at the next meeting. Members briefly discussed expectations that were listed in the minutes of the October 22, 2009 LMRLAC meeting. The invitation to Enel to attend the next meeting will include the list of expectations discussed in that meeting.

Since several members expressed possible conflicts with the date of the February meeting, the next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 25, 2010 at 7pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Meeting adjourned 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary