

CAG General Meeting, 9/22/26
Hybrid

1. EPA Updates, Victoria Sacks:

Bulkhead Update -

-bulkhead installation by the trust is 100% complete, the bulkheads and tiebacks are all in. EPA is working with third party bulkheads (property owners doing own bulkheads) to finish before dredging

-trust is still working to advance design for turning basin 1, anticipate 100% design by end of the year. Trust is happy to present update on the design for the CAG. Could present 90% now or wait for 100% design

-RTA2, head end mitigative action to address NAPL at head of the canal. Trust started mitigative action in July, but there were problems with pressure behind the bulkheads, working on alternative action to address this ASAP. Expecting new plan soon, no exact date yet. Mark is retiring at end of the month, Victoria will be taking over upland work

-Working on ISGS bench-scale study. National grid conducting feasibility study to see if it could work for the park. Then would do field-scale pilot before implementation at the park. Waiting for ISGS company for it to be scheduled

Questions-

-Celeste: bench-scale study has been in the works for a long time, supposed to be a year ago?

- Victoria, EPA: starting soon, moving forward, ISGS vendor is working on a project and they are a small company that can't do more than one at a time, we should be next on the docket so it should be within the month. There is only one ISGS vendor

-Joan: ISGS is almost like concrete, so can they not do it at some temperatures?

- Victoria, EPA: no, that's ISS. ISGS isn't affected by the temperature. ISS is like concrete. ISGS reacts with NAPL so instead of turning soil into a concrete mix, it creates a crust around the NAPL so it doesn't move around in the soils, targets the NAPL only. Should not be affected by rain or cold, but this will be considered in the pilot study

-Joan: if it found that ISGS is insufficient, can ISS be done?

- Victoria, EPA: if ISGS can't work here, other options are on the table

-Joan: ISS or digging it out?

- Victoria, EPA: yes, those would be the alternative options

-Brad: I would like to make a plea for every CAG to be in person, this is hyper local and specific to this geography so it is important for people to be in the room to talk through these things. I know behind the scenes that EPA is aware of the wooden construction fences at first street turning basin. I am worried that this fence will stay up and the area won't go back to the people

- Victoria, EPA: I have been in touch with the developer. They know we are planning the project for January, the trust has talked to them so it's okay that the fence is still up. The developer knows that they have 48 hours to take the fence down once EPA tells them to so it's fine for now. They have sent plans and we have evaluated to make sure no plans encroach

-Brad: as RTA2 work begins, I encourage the CAG to put up physical kiosks at the bridges. A lot of people in the community aren't plugged in to civic activities but may be curious about what's happening in the canal. Hope that CAG would make this happen to explain what's going on with the canal

-Joan: Are you donating for that?

-Celeste: The trust has volunteered to pay for that if we take it on

-Andrea: Outreach just needs to take this on

-Brad: with the help of the EPA, we are having the tenth annual Gowanus dawn poetry reading back at Carroll St bridge this Friday at 7:45am

-Joan: You said the bulkheads are done?

-Victoria, EPA: yes, the EPA ones are done, but the third party bulkheads still need to be completed

-Joan: So that would include public place?

-Celeste: There's not a finished bulkhead at Huntington St

-Victoria, EPA: those are in the works

-Walter, EPA: They all have to be completed before the dredging

-Linda: did you say that all the bulkheads were done, including public place?

-Victoria, EPA: Not the third party bulkheads, but the trust has finished theirs

-Linda: what about the big gas pipe, how does that play into this?

-Brian, EPA: The gas pipe bulkheads are done, there is a small spot that needs to be sealed, but that's the only thing left

-Linda: so there's a small space where it will leak into the canal?

-Brian, EPA: Yes, that still needs to be done

-Walter, EPA: It's not sealed yet

-Brian: As long as it's completed before the dredging it's okay

-Celeste: One bulkhead that I know isn't done yet crosses Bond St and interacts with the Bond Lorraine sewer. I know there's work to move and replace that. Will that affect RTA2 work?

-Victoria, EPA: The bulkheads on either side of Bond St are going to be replaced as part of RTA2 work

-Celeste: That won't cause a delay?

-Victoria, EPA: Correct, it is part of RTA2 work so they will replace those while completing the RTA2 work

-Brian, EPA: The dredging will start before they're all done. Consensus is that they can move forward while those are replaced. There will be updates in the future

-Steve: I think there's confusion because bulkhead hasn't been installed at Huntington St and I believe this is city property. So is NYC responsible? Or is a third party responsible?

-Brian, EPA: It's the entire group of responsible parties

-Steve: Is the PRP national grid?

-Brian, EPA: No, all of them. NYC has a big role because it is their street. Developers have a role because the city requires them to do things as part of their projects

-Steve: so can you clarify who is responsible and the timeline for the installation? My second question is about the tunnel, which we know is large thanks to Joseph providing historical documents

-Brian, EPA: It is below the canal, when we cap the canal, it will be below that. It took the better part of 2 years to figure out that cable could be removed to dredge there

-Joan: Celeste mentioned the Bond Lorraine sewer. We were provided preliminary plans by Alicia West at DEP that are being designed for Bond Lorraine. They are going to cut it off, have an outfall into the canal for surface water, and then CSOs will go uphill to the flushing tunnel. We are not understanding how that's going to work

-Andrea: yes the street is lower but the pipe will still be gravity-fed down to the main sewer. New sewer lines will drain to the combined sewer

-Joan: So they are now separating it and storm water will drain into the canal. Where will the new tunnel empty out?

-Andrea: it will be a similar path to the current path around Red Hook, but with a new big pipe that won't have storm water in it

-Joan: no, I thought it was going up towards Sackett

-Celeste: I thought it was going up to Smith

-Joan: is the EPA looking at the plan?

-Brian, EPA: the EPA required the two tanks and various other separation, but we didn't require the City to do anything with the Bond Lorraine sewer. The two tanks will take care of the superfund issues with the canal. After everything we do, there will still be CSO discharge, but that will be reduced so residual discharges will be minimal

-Joan: It's still a million gallons of discharge into the canal

-Brian: it's just not part of EPA's cleanup decision, but I am cheering you on

-Katia: I miss the EPA of the past, this seems unclear and contradictory. One of the first bulkheads was in RTA2. Are we to understand the bulkhead from ten years ago is leaking into the canal, and this issue hasn't been taken care of?

-Brian, EPA: that's true, it's a difficult spot to deal with, as long as it is done before dredging its going to be fine

-Katia: it is very different to tell the community that it's been bulkheaded when coal tar is squeezing through for the past 10-12 years. That's a lot of coal tar that has been allowed to go into the Gowanus from the most polluted site along the canal

-Brian, EPA: I agree with you, I believe we should be further ahead than we are

-Katia: that's for sure

-Brad: I have a question that goes back to the Huntington St end bulkhead. Will that allow safe egress? Right now, it allows people to get in and out of canal and it is a public street end and public water way. There are very few public street ends to the water because they have been taken over. It is a rare commodity so I hope the design allows safe egress. If not, I hope there is egress nearby as a replacement

-Brian, EPA: the elevation at Huntington St is not favorable. The TB1 design will have a new dock there and various other places. We will listen and hopefully the city and others will also listen

-Victoria, EPA: I agree, this is something that should be done, we can't require it but we can advocate for it, we can only make requirements for the purpose of cleaning up the canal

-Walter, EPA: we have spoken about this previously, we have raised the concern but it is not in our purview

-Celeste: the other part of this is the NRDA process, and access and egress are in the NRDA, and this has been lost in the cleanup, so there is an argument that EPA could fight for this more strongly

-Brian, EPA: I support your argument. The Bond Street end is probably a good place for emergency access

CSO Tanks Update-

-Red hook tank: at the head of the canal, below ground work, completed excavation that had encountered leak, leak has been repaired, production work has resumed, excavation of soil to slow and mitigate leak began yesterday. Started pouring concrete, roof about 88% complete, they finished walls and roof. For the above ground work, the contract was issued in late July, mobilization expected in October

-Owl's head tank: Below ground excavation continues, 38 cubic yards excavated so far. 50% done so far, 40-60 trucks a day. Above ground work in progress

Questions:

-Steve: Neighbors near the Citizens Site have reported smelling NAPL. Have there been any exceedances?

-Victoria, EPA: I'll follow up

-Brian: Next month is my last CAG meeting, I am retiring

- Steve: Who is responsible for enforcing the matrix?
- Victoria, EPA: If developers don't comply then EPA steps in

2. Riverkeeper Presentation:

-Mike: a few articles have come out. There was a Law passed in 2012 so that the owner or operator of a CSO has to notify the public when there is overflow or other discharge of raw sewages. We have challenged the NYC method of releasing these notifications. NYC has a DEP map to issue advisories. Different levels of bacteria that can be in the water based on classification. The current map doesn't show when it starts, and doesn't show multiple CSO discharge events that don't rise to the level of causing water quality violations. In places like the East River, discharge doesn't create an advisory because the water body is large, but people would still want to know this if they were going in the water. NYC could switch models to show when there's CSOs, not just water quality changes

Questions:

- Joan: if the city loses, would try to reargue?
- Mike: it could drag on some more. Once court of appeals rules, 30 days to comply, if we win
- Joan: think they have capacity to upgrade system in 30 days?
- Mike: I know for a fact that they do
- Celeste: isn't it more simple because it's not modeling, it just is based on if there is poop in the water?
- Mike: No, the law is not if there is discharge or not. DEP does know this they just aren't modeling that way so that they have to report less violations

- Steve: in your opinion, is NYC in violation of the clean water act?
- Mike: You could make a case that they are in violation of the clean water act because many violations. A NYC lawyer would say they are in compliance, it gets complicated
- Steve: we have been made aware that flushing tunnel is often off. We have asked to be alerted for when it is off. Has Riverkeeper had these conversations?
- Mike: We haven't
- Steve: would it be helpful for community to have this information?
- Mike: I think there'd be some benefit to know information about the canal and how pollutants are moving around

- Linda: It's been orchestrated so it doesn't look as polluted on paper as it is
- Koan: putting out information online isn't enough, there's more they should have to do, there are people who are not online
- Celeste: what kinds of notifications are you pushing for? Right now the modeling is if CSO volume cause violations of the clean water standard, but in other places they look at if the amount of rain is likely to cause CSO event. Why is that the standard instead of just is there a

CSO event? It seems more complex with modeling if have to account for climate change and other factors

-Hildegard: monitoring devices in CSO outfalls is hard to do so actually mathematical modeling is easier

-Mike: there is a way to measure, there are all kinds of reasons why it would be difficult but not impossible to measure and it would require significant investment, but that is not required by law so we are not asking for that

-Brian, EPA: The EPA has spent the better part of 15 years dealing with sampling with NYC and the outfalls. This will remain an issue because the output from the sampling and modeling will cost millions, the more that can be put into getting accurate information is the better result that everyone can have. Rainfall data issue has not been fully addressed. Trying to get the most important information from everyone

-Mike: NYC reports to NYS every discharge event that happens, but they say that it takes time for this data

-Brian, EPA: Gary Francis is someone we can thank here

3. Committee Updates:

-Archeology Committee, Joan: we had some zoom bombers trying to talk about the Epstein files. We had some conversation about naming commemorative sites, like the First St turning basin. Haven't written a resolution yet. According to Eymund there was a sewer pipe that was cut off in 1956, and that's when 4th Ave started to flood. Aaron Kaufman wasn't at the meeting, so we had some questions for him to follow up. We still want to do a show at the Dredgers boathouse, waiting for Celeste to look at the powerpoint.

-Brian, EPA: the trust has to support some archaeology related work.

-Water Quality Committee, Joan: We had a long discussion about the Bond Lorraine sewer. Sent an inquiry to DEP. Discussed CSOs and the long term control plan and when city will start testing. RTA1 done, so one year to start testing the sediment. Unclear how often they have to test. For the Hydrology study, DEC hoping to have their survey complete in first quarter of 2027. Will that study include a map, and is there a way to use the mapping tool that Jason created to combine that information?

-Jason: I will send the map over to Aaron Fischer

-Land Use Committee, Steve: Gowanus framework protection letter. Discussed the issues at PS 372's annex. Glad that classrooms temporarily relocated. We sent a letter. No written response yet. Also discussed EPA enforcement of matrix and the gas tunnel. The other topic that has been circulating is the track down study by the church and school. Would like outreach to be done to surrounding property owners.

-Facilitation Committee, Andrea: We have been discussing a soil vapor intrusion (SVI) townhall for DEC presentation on the SVI study so that more people get tested and mitigated. DEC has responded positively to this idea. Working with elected officials for a town hall to be held sometime late Oct or early Nov.

-Steve: can it just not be held in PS 372 annex building? We would all appreciate that

-Community Member Question: will there be an open Q&A?

-Allison, AM Simon rep: we want there to be an emphasis on Q&A and we want to bring in someone who has gone through the process to talk about what it was like

-Celeste: we got back the survey results for representativeness. 19/25 CAG members took the survey. We looked at the data to see where gaps are and compared them to priorities. Southern portions of the canal are more underrepresented. 0 members from portions along RTA2. No industrial businesses represented. Other professional areas that we don't have good representation include healthcare or senior care, or people who work outdoors. Small businesses also underrepresented and Spanish speakers. Could do more outreach for these groups. Good mix of owners and renters. Only one person in public or affordable housing. Newer to the neighborhood residents are also not well represented. We are doing well with people who work with children. Filling gaps could help fill some racial ethnic gaps as well.

-Admin Committee, Katia: Admin committee has been working with Outreach because Outreach is looking to fill the gaps to round out the diversity of the CAG. Our application online did not provide good information for Admin committee to review. New application is lengthier but will give us more information

-Jerry: The new application fills in the blanks for prospective members for a better understanding of people interest in joining. Long overdue so I support it

-We voted - it passed!

-Outreach Committee, Jason: We talked about the SVI town hall. Discussed creating an ongoing calendar so we can be better prepared to take advantage of opportunities in the community. The main agenda item was that Outreach is required to create a communication plan. Reviewed and left it that Outreach will revise and bring to facilitation. Will require a vote.

Questions-

-Em: I suggest hybrid meetings for all meetings.

-Katie: We could have it here next month.

-Andrea: we could have a party after for Brian