

# TAG Steering Committee Meeting

September 22, 2003

## MINUTES

**Present:** Nonny Ferriday, Bagaduce Watershed Association (BWA), Kel House, Harborside resident, Kathy Lirakis, Harborside resident, Michael Maynard, Harborside resident, Mike McGagh, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Margaret Quinn, Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI), Jennifer Traub, Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI)

Margaret opened the meeting at 7:10 pm and welcomed the group. The Committee welcomed Mike McGagh, Contracts Management Administrator for the New England TAG Program, and Kathy Lirakis, Harborside resident and new member of the Steering Committee.

### **Updates: Grant Award & Community Meeting Information**

Jennifer announced that MERI had received the official TAG award on Thursday, September 18. The public kick-off meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Brooksville Community Center.

Jennifer reported on MERI's efforts to-date to disseminate information about the upcoming meeting, including the creation of flyers and a press release, mailings to the Brooksville/Harborside communities and other interested people, and the development of materials to be posted on MERI's website.

Jennifer distributed copies of the press release, which has been submitted to the Penobscot Bay Press papers, *The Ellsworth American*, and *The Bangor Daily News*. Michael mentioned that, in reviewing archived articles about the mine, he felt that *The Ellsworth American* refrained from considering the mine as potentially harmful, while *The Weekly Packet* appeared to look at the issue more objectively. Kel suggested also submitting the press release to *The Ellsworth Weekly* and *The Working Waterfront*. He also recommended asking WERU to publicize the meeting information. Committee members asked that MERI appropriate TAG funds to run an ad announcing the meeting in the Penobscot Bay Press papers in case they do not pick up the press release [Note: this has been done, and the ad will appear in these papers on 9/25].

Committee members each took a stack of flyers and agreed to post them throughout their communities. Michael said he would post flyers at recycling stations that have been established as part of a recent community effort. Kathy offered to bring the flyer and press release to the Brooksville school to be copied and sent home with each student. Nonny will do the same for the Castine/Penobscot schools. Jennifer said she would get the information to Steve West, a Bar Harbor teacher who has been interested in the site. Kel suggested to Margaret that MERI consider developing educational programs to teach students about the mine.

Jennifer reported that MERI sent out a saturation mailing of 500 flyers to be inserted into all Brooksville P.O. boxes and distributed along the Brooksville and Harborside rural routes. She also mentioned that MERI's database can code and automatically print labels for those interested in receiving mailings about the TAG. Michael suggested that Committee members provide MERI with the addresses of anyone they know who would like to receive TAG updates but cannot attend the upcoming meeting – they will be added to the database to receive future announcements and TAG newsletters.

MERI is also in the process of posting TAG information on its website, [www.meriresearch.org](http://www.meriresearch.org). Kathy suggested that the website include an interactive component so that people can submit concerns via the internet.

### **Mike McGagh: TAG process**

Mike McGagh stated that the official date of the TAG award was September 8, 2003 (with a mailing date of September 15, 2003). Only expenses incurred subsequent to September 8 are reimbursable through the TAG. Mike explained why the EPA award process moves slowly. His office does not receive its budget for the year until July. It then has 2 months in which to spend that money before the end of its fiscal year (September 30). This year, his office sent out 300 grant awards in September. Now that MERI's TAG award is official, the EPA will send out its own press release to local newspapers.

Mike confirmed that the TAG Steering Committee is on track with the first step in the process: soliciting concerns from everyone in the community who feels impacted by the site. He emphasized that there could be as many concerns as there are people involved, and that it will be the job of the Committee to compile and prioritize the community feedback.

Once the community concerns have been identified, MERI will need to put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for technical advisers with the appropriate area(s) of expertise (a boilerplate RFP can be found in the TAG handbook). MERI and the Committee may under no circumstances pre-select an adviser.

Depending on the community's area(s) of concern, the Committee may advise MERI to procure one adviser or multiple advisers. If there is a need for more than one adviser, MERI can either enter into separate contracts with each adviser or hire one primary engineering firm that can subcontract out to additional advisers as needed. The latter arrangement facilitates review of time-sensitive documents – rather than parceling out report pages to each adviser, MERI can use one firm that will guarantee that the report is reviewed by all appropriate experts in the required time frame.

Technically, MERI has 120 days from the official award date (September 8) to enter into a contract with a technical adviser. However, if more time is needed, MERI may send Mike an email requesting an extension as long as the process is underway.

The EPA approval process for hiring a Technical Adviser works as follows:

- If a single concern is being addressed that will cost under \$1,000, no EPA approval is required, and MERI retains all records pertaining to the contract.
- If expenses are anticipated in the range of \$1,000-\$25,000, MERI and the Steering Committee must review at least 2 telephonic proposals from willing and able contractors.
- If the technical expenses will likely cost more than \$25,000, the full RFP process is required, including interviews with several potential contractors. The TAG Committee may invite Mike to the interviews as an observer, although the EPA is not a party to the contract. MERI submits its RFP and narrative to Mike, and his office responds with a letter stating that MERI has abided by the rules and confirming that the contractor selected has not been barred or suspended.

The Committee asked if Mike could provide references for potential contractors. He responded that he can provide a list of Technical Advisers currently working in New England but can neither recommend nor advise against a particular contractor.

Mike clarified that the Technical Adviser may not undertake new studies on behalf of the community. Rather, he/she can (1) interpret existing data based on community concerns and (2) identify to the EPA areas of concern for which no data currently exists. In the latter case, the Adviser may use community information to make a case to the EPA for specific additional testing.

Kel asked if any money has been appropriated to the EPA to fund further studies or cleanup activities. According to Mike, no new funds have been allocated to EPA for the cleanup; however, if Leslie McVickar (Project Manager for the Callahan site) has any unused funds previously allocated to the site, these funds will roll over into the next fiscal year. There has been no discussion of cuts in TAG funding, so it is likely that money will be available if MERI needs to apply for further funding for the TAG process.

### **Public Meeting: Draft Agenda**

Margaret and Jennifer directed the Committee's attention to the draft agenda for the October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, pointing out that Leslie will be present to address the project funding status. Michael Maynard commented that the lack of cleanup funds may discourage community members from taking an interest in the TAG. He has observed that "some people don't see the sense of the TAG if something concrete is not being done." Mike McGagh responded that, in his experience, some groups have used information gathered through the TAG to make their state and congressional representatives aware of the funding needs for specific sites. TAG money cannot be used to lobby representatives, but TAG recipients can send newsletters to educate representatives about their community concerns and needs. Also, community members may choose individually to lobby as long as they do not use TAG money for this purpose.

Michael Maynard emphasized the importance of public awareness education through the TAG – regardless of the status of Superfund funding, it is important for people to raise their concerns and know the problems associated with the site. Kathy suggested pointing out how the TAG makes a difference: in the past, meetings were held to inform the public of the status of the site; with the TAG, the community can now take part in the process.

All Committee members agreed that it will be important to clarify to the public that the TAG process is separate from the EPA Superfund process. Kathy suggested that Carol state in her welcome that this is not an EPA meeting; rather, it is the **first** meeting being held by MERI and the Steering Committee. She should identify herself as a volunteer in the process and encourage everyone in the audience to sign the sign-up sheet (stressing how this sign-up is different from the one circulated by the EPA at their meetings). Each speaker should make it clear that this is "our meeting" and should encourage community participation.

Mike McGagh will focus his presentation on the benefits of the TAG to the community. In his statement on behalf of the Steering Committee, Michael Maynard will acknowledge that everyone looks at the Callahan Mine differently and, therefore, everyone's participation is important in defining what the impact is. He spoke of the TAG as a boon to the historical record of the community surrounding the site. Community information and concerns need to be recorded now so that they are available in the future whenever action is taken on the site.

Committee members emphasized the need to give the community as many opportunities as possible to send in comments and to become involved in the process. Some suggestions included:

- Passing out self-addressed, stamped postcards at the meeting so that individuals can send in their concerns anonymously if desired;

- Identifying individuals to assist community members who have special communications needs (and announcing that this help is available if needed);
- Informing the community that there are opportunities to become involved with working groups to investigate specific concerns or help with certain administrative needs;
- Letting people know that they can commit as much or as little time as they would like to their involvement (e.g., they can join a working group for a few months or for over a year);
- Having people indicate on the sign-up sheet their interest in getting involved and assuring them that someone will contact them to follow up;
- Mentioning that general Steering Committee meetings are open to the public;
- Distributing a handout with MERI contact information and websites/locations where information to-date about the Callahan mine and Superfund process can be found;
- Announcing a deadline for the compilation of initial comments/concerns and letting the community know what's next.

The Committee approved the agenda within the general context mentioned above and with the following suggestions/amendments:

- Presentations should be limited to 5 minutes each and address updated information (not summaries of what has been presented before – people can be directed to websites and the library for these details). The Committee would like to move quickly through presentations to focus on the community segment.
- Presenters should not use PowerPoint or other high-tech equipment, which would result in longer presentations and possibly alienate the audience.
- Instead of providing a history of the mine, Margaret should introduce herself and focus on where people can go to find this information [as such, her presentation has been renamed “Introduction” to the history and status of the site].
- EPA/DEP reps should leave before the community input segment takes place.
- During the community input segment, a Committee member should record community concerns using a flip chart/large post-it pad set up in the front of the room on an easel. This should be a dynamic, interactive process.
- As moderator, Carol should be prepared to repeat people's comments if not voiced loudly enough.

### **Assignment of Responsibilities**

All members agreed to post flyers in their towns and to assist with set-up and take-down of chairs, etc. at the meeting. Kathy and Michael offered to purchase cups/coffee necessities and to prepare coffee for the community input part of the meeting (to help encourage people to stay until the end of the meeting). MERI staff will provide snacks. Kathy agreed to provide and set up a microphone and speaker prior to the meeting. She also volunteered to open the Center. Committee members were asked to arrive by 6:30 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.