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LETTER REGARDING SEACOAST ANTI-POLLUTION LEAGUE REVIEW COMMENTS ON
JANUARY 2002 DRAFT DATA QUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR SITE 32 NSY PORTSMOUTH ME
3/1/2002
LEPAGE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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March 1, 2002

Ms. Marty Raymond
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
Code 106.3 R, Building 44
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03804-5000

Subject: Review of January 2002 Draft *Data Quality Objective (DQO) Package, Site 32 (Topeka Pier)*

Dear Ms. Raymond:

We are transmitting the following comments on behalf of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League (SAPL) on the January 2002 Draft *Data Quality Objective (DQO) Package, Site 32 (Topeka Pier)*. Comments are as follows:

- 1. General Comment.** SAPL appreciates the opportunity to participate in the DQO development at the December 2001 technical meeting, and feels that the meeting discussions are accurately reflected in the DQO Package. However, there are numerous passages throughout the DQO Package that state that details or justification specific to a particular issue will be provided at a later date. It is likely that SAPL will have additional comments on these issues as more information is provided.
- 2. Page 2, Previous Investigations at/offshore of Site 32.** It would be helpful to have a list of all the references cited in the DQO Package. A map of the site that includes the locations of Buildings 154 and 158, outfall OF-63, and other significant features mentioned in the DQO Package should also be added.
- 3. Page 3, Previous Investigations at/offshore of Site 32.** What are the "utility tracks" mentioned in the third line on page 3? How do they differ from railroad tracks?
- 4. Page 5, December 6 Site Visit.** Given the likelihood that the slag is a source of elevated metals detected in the offshore, and the anticipated interim action to deal with the slag, a more thorough and detailed effort than the "site walk" proposed in this section is necessary to locate, map, and estimate the volume of slag.

5. Page 6, Risk Conceptual Site Model for Site 32. Our notes indicate that one of the action items identified at the December 2001 DQO technical meeting was that the ecological risk assessors needed to indicate if eelgrass and salt marsh are present in the area offshore of Site 32. The last sentence in the paragraph regarding "Offshore" gives the answer to the eelgrass question. Is salt marsh present in the Site 32 offshore area? In addition, the residential and recreational exposure scenarios described in this and subsequent sections should evaluate potential risks to children.

6. Page 7, Problem Statement. The text in the first paragraph should be revised to also state that adverse ecological effects could also result from shoreline erosion at Site 32.

7. Page 8, Potential Actions for Secondary Questions. The last bullet on the page should state that DQOs for collecting additional data to support an FS or Interim Action would be developed if additional information is necessary to support the FS or the Interim Action.

8. Page 9, Secondary Decisions. Item 4 under Secondary Decisions indicates that mitigating the slag is the only interim action being considered. However, the text on page 26 mentions an interim action for the stormwater system. The potential interim actions should be clearly identified in the decision statements at the beginning of the DQO Package and consistently presented throughout the rest of the DQO steps.

9. Page 10, Decision Inputs. The Navy proposes to use historical aerial photographs, if available, to better understand changes at Site 32 over time. The Navy should not limit itself to just aerial photographs, but should also consult maps, charts, plans, and other historical sources.

10. Page 11, Decision Statement 1. The second bullet states that inorganic chemicals that do not exceed background concentrations will not be selected as constituents of potential concern (COPCs), and quantitative risk estimates will not be developed for those chemicals. SAPL has expressed reservations in a number of earlier comment letters about how the Navy developed background data for the Shipyard and how the data is used to evaluate specific sites. Therefore, SAPL supports the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's (MEDEP's) concerns as expressed in Comment Number 18 in the MEDEP's March 1, 2002 letter, and may not agree with the Navy's determination to not consider an inorganic constituent.

11. Page 11, Decision Statement 2. The fifth bullet states that no chemistry data will need to be collected in the offshore area to support modeling. It may not be necessary to collect additional data to develop the model, but if the model will be used to predict future conditions, data must eventually be collected to test the prediction.

12. Page 12, Decision Statement 3. The fourth and ninth bullets at the top of page 12 focus on Outfall # 63. Are there any other locations previously or currently labeled as seeps that might actually be outfalls?

13. Page 12, Decision Statement 4. Just visual observation of what lies on the surface is insufficient to determine the extent of the slag. The amount of slag that is covered with sediment will also be important to know. In addition, if there may be an interim action involving the stormwater system, appropriate information must be added to this section (see Comment 8, above).

14. Page 12, Sampling and Measurement Methods. What is the Navy's rationale for emphasizing the installation of temporary wells and avoiding the installation of permanent monitoring wells? Also, see the last part of Comment 32, below.

15. Page 13, Analyses. The next to last sentence in the paragraph refers to Attachment 1 tables. We were unable to find the Attachment. With regard to field screening methods, unless the intent is to identify areas of gross contamination, detection limits for any method selected should be low enough that a non-detect result would be useful in drawing a meaningful conclusion.

16. Page 14, Decision Statement 1. The term "decision unit" should be clearly defined in the text.

17. Page 14, Decision Statement 1. The recreational exposure scenario of seven events per year is insufficient. Suggestions for a more appropriate scenario are identified in the MEDEP and SAPL letters dated February 8, 2002, regarding the child exposure scenario for OU6.

18. Page 16, Decision Statement 3. The text states that the Navy will evaluate whether deeper cores may be necessary. What is considered "deeper"?

19. Page 16, Decision Statement 4. As noted in Comment 14, above, visual observation alone will not be sufficient to determine if slag is present. Some excavation will be necessary to determine how much slag is covered by sediment and to more accurately estimate the extent (vertical and horizontal) of the slag.

20. Page 18, Principal Decision 1. Comment 10, above, concerning application of background data also applies to the footnote on this page.

21. Page 20, Secondary Decisions. The first box below "Start" indicates that weight of evidence will be used to determine if sufficient information exists to support an FS. SAPL cannot comment on this approach without additional information about how weight of evidence would be applied.

22. Page 22, Error Tolerance Specifications. It does not seem reasonable that there is only a difference in tolerance of 0.1 between the two error types. The Type I error is much more egregious. The consequences of not addressing contamination are potentially much worse than doing too much. What is the Navy's justification for such a small difference in tolerances?

23. Page 24, Sample Size Calculation. While it would not be practical to collect the large numbers of samples calculated for some of the parameters listed on page 24, the tabulated results and the Navy's subsequent discussion give the reader pause. On the one hand, the Navy approves of the low number of samples calculated for some of the parameters, but wants to disregard the large number calculated for others. Furthermore, it is not immediately clear to the reader why there is such a large jump (from 2 to 66 to as high as 308,619) in the number of samples calculated for the various parameters. What is the driver? Why such a big jump? Which prompts the bigger question: why is this an appropriate way to calculate the number of samples to collect?

24. Page 25, Data Quality Objectives Step 7: Select Sampling Design. Comment 15, above, also applies to the discussion of replacing laboratory methods with field screening methods.

25. Pages 25 & 26, Data Quality Objectives Step 7: Select Sampling Design. The discussion of sampling design seems biased toward random sampling. SAPL concurs with the MEDEP (Comments Number 9 & 10, dated February 22, 2002) that a blend of biased and unbiased sampling designed around site conditions would be preferred, and that grid sampling is very defensible if done on a reasonable scale.

26. Page 26, General Assumption. The general assumption states that sampling will be delayed if any plans made to alter the OF-63 outfall or related drain lines would affect site conditions. Please clarify if this means all sampling at Site 32 or just the sampling related to the outfall.

27. Page 27, Soil Sampling. What is the justification for not including buildings and storage areas as part of Site 32? The definition of subsurface soils also requires clarification. What about soils that lie below the high tide elevation or below 10 feet bgs?

28. Page 27, General Sampling Design for Surface and Subsurface Soil. Item 1 states that Site 32 will be gridded into 1-acre decision units. How many decision units will there be? The second item states that one of the three locations will be sampled during the first phase of the investigation. Then decisions will be made. SAPL does not consider a density of one sample per acre sufficient to determine if a parcel is "clean" and not in need of further investigation, or to determine the nature and extent of contamination. Additional discussion is needed.

29. Page 28, General Sampling Design for Surface and Subsurface Soil. Where will the background dioxin samples mentioned in item 6 be collected?

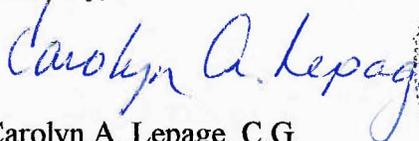
30. Page 28, Supplemental Sampling for Surface and Subsurface Soil... Item 1 is a bit confusing. Are the four samples to be collected distributed vertically or horizontally? If vertically, four samples at four-foot intervals below the high tide water level means some samples are collected as much as 12 to 16 feet below high tide. What is the rationale for collecting samples at those depths?

31. Page 29, Ground Water Investigation. As already determined in previous discussions regarding sampling at Site 10, the assumption that one round of sampling in tidally-influenced wells will be adequate is not acceptable. The sampling at Site 32 should include at least 2 rounds, as specified for Site 10.

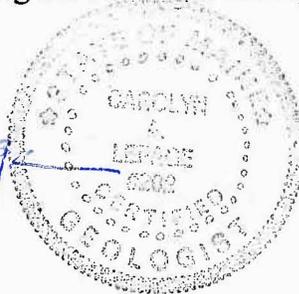
32. Page 29, Optional Groundwater Investigative Activities. This section states that the Navy may perform stormwater upgrades for Site 32, and if this interim action is performed, a number of other actions (such as outfall sampling, dye trace studies) would not need to be performed. Do the Navy's plans for upgrades include the entire stormwater network, including areas outside Site 32, that drains or discharges at Site 32? Does the Navy have sufficient information regarding the system to ensure that the entire drainage network is taken care of? It is likely that groundwater will continue to flow from fill materials into Back Channel. How will the Navy prove that the interim action is effective? In addition, the Navy states in this section that installation of temporary monitoring wells would not be necessary if the stormwater system upgrade is implemented. Does this mean all proposed temporary wells? Additional information regarding the temporary well installation is needed (see Comment 14, above).

If you have any questions regarding the comments above, please give me a call at 207-777-1049.

Sincerely,



Carolyn A. Lepage, C.G.
President



cc: James Horrigan, SAPL
Iver McLeod, MEDEP
Meghan Cassidy, USEPA