

Great Salt Lake Water Quality Steering Committee Conference Call Summary Draft

June 5, 2007, 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Department of Environmental Quality, Room 101, 168 North 1950 West, Salt Lake City, Utah

Attendance

Steering Committee Members and

Alternates in Attendance:

Clay Perschon
Nathan Darnall
Robert Baskin
Jim Huizingh
Kelly Payne
Richard Bay
Leland Myers
Maunsel Pearce
Bruce Waddell (sitting in for Richard West)
Delane McGarvey
Walt Baker

Others Present:

Jill Houston, Central Davis Sewer District
Mark Atencio, Jordan Valley WCD
Florence Reynolds, Salt Lake City
Jeff DenBleyker, CH2MHill
Mary Ellen Schulle, CDS
Ying-Ying Macauley, DWQ
Monique Rodriquez, DWQ
Mary Fugate, DWQ
Renette Anderson, DWQ
Theron Miller, DWQ

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Walt Baker who then had members of the Steering Committee and of the audience introduce themselves.

Approval of the March 23 Meeting Summary

Walt identified the following changes made to the draft of the March 23 meeting summary and asked for any other changes:

Page 2, Threshold Values section, last sentence: Change the phrase “tolerably toxic” to “a standard of higher EC value”

Page 4, end of third paragraph: Add: “Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District agreed to include mercury measurement in the suite of groundwater tests.”

Page 4, fourth paragraph, third bullet: Strike “Science Panel” from the first line and change to read: “The Steering Committee will meet with the public. . .”

The summary was approved with those changes.

Financial Status Report

The Committee’s attention was drawn to the handout, “Great Salt Lake Selenium Studies Disbursement Journal as of 6/1/2007.”

Walt Baker reported that he had received a letter from Kennecott letter indicating the company was advancing the Division \$50,000 from the promised FY08 monies. He had also received a letter from Nature Conservancy letter offering \$24,000. Finally, the Division will receive \$100,000 from Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (FFS) in July.

Currently, the following projects are being held in abeyance until money is received:

- The Farmington Bay bird juvenile survival contract (\$29,797);
- The WEST project contribution (\$10,000);
- Additional lab analysis (\$30,125); and
- CH2MHill management of new projects (\$80,000).

Contracts for the first two projects will be executed when the Kennecott monies are received; the second two when additional FFS 2008 fund (\$100,000) are received.

Kelly Payne indicated that Kennecott was very aware of the perception that might be out that the company was trying to influence the outcome of the studies. Kennecott does not want to do that and is fully committed to support the selenium studies financially and technically. He said the company was interested in assuring transparency to help mitigate any misperceptions that might be out there.

Great Salt Lake Studies and Contract Update

Jeff DenBleyker presented the progress and status of various projects, as well as how each project fits in the overall Great Salt Lake selenium studies. Jeff's PowerPoint presentation is available on the DEQ Great Salt Lake website.

After the presentation, Bruce Waddell asked about the Neponset Reservoir site for the gull study and whether or not the PI would be looking at stomach contents. Jeff DenBleyker indicated he thought the PI would. There were fewer variables at that site so it would be easier to isolate the selenium.

Mr. Waddell also raised an issue about the discrepancy seen in the results of tests ran on the blood and the eggs from gulls at the Great Salt Lake. He wondered if this was due to the semi-fasting conditions, as opposed to looking at the whole diet. Theron Miller said that was one of the factors the Science Panel had discussed and was looking at closely to see if it could be sifted out. A semi-fasting diet was not something that jumped out as important as the parameters of the study were being set. The Panel is now looking more closely at it and the impact it may have had.

Mr. Baker reviewed the schedule for upcoming Science Panel meetings:

- June 12 – Science Panel conference call
- July 31 and August 1 – Science Panel Meeting
- August 22 – Science Panel conference Call
- November 28 and 29 – Science Panel meeting

Other key dates:

- December 11 – Steering committee and the public meeting.
- January 18 – Selenium recommendation presented to the Water Quality Board

Mr. Baker asked Mr. Miller and Mr. DenBleyker if these dates were still reasonable. They both indicated that they were.

General Discussion

List of Panel Members and Alternates: The official roster has some gaps on its list of alternates. Mr. Baker explained that it was important to fill those in. He would be sending out a letter asking for a formal designation of an alternate by each group at the table.

EPA Water Directors were recently in Utah and were taken out to the Great Salt Lake. The group is becoming more engaged on this issue.

Great Salt Lake Commission: There is an interest in forming a Great Salt Lake Commission, similar to what was recently formed for Utah Lake. Mr. Baker has had discussions with key people on this issue and there appears to be support. It has been placed on the interim study list for the legislature. Issues which the Commission could take up include mercury, selenium, nutrient pollution, and protection of the Great Salt Lake. Mr. Baker noted that Commission membership could potentially be drawn from members of this Steering Committee.

Nathan Darnall noted that the Utah Lake Commission is primarily made up of cities. He wondered if there were other agencies which should be involved. Mr. Baker explained that the Utah Lake Commission was staffed by all the communities around that Lake as well as county commissioners and representatives from the Legislature, DEQ, FFS, Department of Natural Resources, and the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. The makeup of the Great Salt Lake Commission remains to be decided, however, he would envision representatives from the general public, the mineral extraction industry, environmental groups, and others.

Maunsel Pierce said the conservation community is concerned that the management of the Great Salt Lake is so fragmented. When issues come up, not all the agencies who should be involved help make decisions. He welcomed the idea of a commission and advised that its composition broad-based, addressing the long-term functioning and health of the Great Salt Lake.

Leland Myers said that, based on his study, he would like to see a concept similar to that of the Watershed Council and a commission formation similar to that of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. That commission seems to have a diverse make-up. As he looked at what others had done, he noticed that some commissions include agencies while others don't. Diversity, however, was a similarity for all. He offered to talk about what he had found out at the next meeting.

Richard Bay said he agreed that a Commission would be useful, especially if it was made up of expertise the group could draw on. He advocated for a good coverage of various stakeholders.

Groundwater Remediation Project: Richard Bay reported on the groundwater remediation project in southwest Salt Lake County. The first reverse osmosis (RO) water treatment plant was built by Kennecott and is currently operating at the mouth of Bingham Canyon. The second RO plant will be built in West Jordan. The project will include collection wells and a pipeline to the Kennecott tailings impoundment in Magna.

A Consent Decree mandates a completion date and the deadlines required to meet that date have been difficult. Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District (JVWCD) has been working under two contingency plans – one (integrated design) assumed that this Committee would recommend a selenium standard by late summer of 2007, and the other (separate design) assumed that it would not. A limiting factor has been that the water in the shallow aquifer cannot be accepted in Kennecott's tailings pond. JVWCD has been working on the design of the treatment plant pipeline and at purchasing properties and rights of way. Things can no longer be delayed and JVWCD must proceed if it is to meet the Consent Decree date. JVWCD will be proceeding with the separate design option, complete the design this summer and start the bidding process immediately thereafter. This option has limitations and is more expensive than the integrated design.

Mr. Bay clarified that the only water that would be treated through the RO membranes is the deep groundwater, not the shallow groundwater. The shallow groundwater will go through a limited traditional treatment and be blended with the RO treated water.

Mr. Bay said he was still anxious for this Committee to reach its conclusion. In response to a question, Mr. Bay indicated that construction design closed the door on the integrated project unless a standard can be reached before the contractor orders and installs equipment. His district would realize higher initial construction costs but the long-term operational opportunities would still be available.

Mr. Baker asked about the difference in water made available to the public under each design. Mr. Bay replied that for the separate design option it was 7,700 acre feet per year; for the integrated design it was initially 8,235 acre feet per year and that number could raise to between 9,000 and 10,000 acre feet per year.

Mr. Waddell asked, under the separate design option, whether the discharge water would be taken to the tailings pile or to the Great Salt Lake. Mr. Bay explained that, by design, initially it could only be taken to the Kennecott tailings impoundment in Magna. Ultimately, JVWCD hopes the standard would allow JVWCD to extend the pipeline to allow a discharge to the open waters of the Great Salt Lake.

Farmington Bay: Mr. Miller reported that the Farmington Bay report was being internally reviewed. The Division was soliciting technical experts to review the report. A technical advisory committee is (TAC) being assembled and will meet for the first time on June 19. The TAC will take a couple of months to review the report. Mr. Miller said he was also looking for a national team of nutrient experts to help with the study. The goal is to present phosphorus criteria for the wetlands by next year. He noted that the Chesapeake Bay had a suite of conditions, rather than a standard, which had to be met. Mr. Baker mentioned that this was cutting edge, ground breaking work.

Next Meeting

The Steering Committee's next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 11 at 3 p.m. at DEQ Building #2, Room 101.