

Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative (SBCI) Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) Workgroup

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Call To Order:

The workgroup was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

Those present were:

Laura Ogar, Bay County Environmental Affairs & Community Development; Thomas McDowell, DEQ; Robert Hill, Environmental Health; Mike Kelly, TCF/WIN; Pete Ostlund, MDEQ; Jon Bloemker, MDEQ; Terry Walkington, DEQ/WHMD; Bill Washabaugh, Shoreline Resident; Tom Weiler, Bay City Yacht Club (BCYC); Rich Fenner, DNR; Ernie Krygier, Bay County Commissioner; Greg Rankin, BCYC; Jeanette Best, Saginaw WWTP; and Cyndi Gaul, Bay County Environmental Affairs & Community Development.

Brief introductions were made as there were new people present.

SBCI CSO Workgroup Overview:

Laura gave an overview of the SBCI CSO Workgroup and explained that the group was formed in response to the loud concern expressed by the public about COS's through letters to the Editor and emails and phone calls to Tom Hickner's office and Bay County Environmental Affairs following each rain event. This is an issue that unites the different groups throughout Saginaw Bay including Realtors, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and environmental groups. The public is concerned with preventing and eliminating CSO events. This group was created to review and explore CSOs along the Saginaw River, look at what's been done to prevent them, identify what more needs to be done and options other communities have done and review how much the various options would cost. The MDEQ has been putting together information to share with this group and the public. The goal of the CSO group is to help identify and compile the information needed for a public meeting or series of public meetings in order to inform the community on the options available and the costs of preventing CSO's and then to get public input on how much we/the community is willing to pay to prevent them.

CSO and SSO:

Thomas gave a brief overview and explained that Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) differ from Sanitary Sewage Overflows (SSOs). CSOs are overflows from sewer systems designed to carry both household sanitary wastewater and storm water. CSO events discharge waste water that has not received all of the treatment that is available and utilized under ordinary conditions. However, it does receive some treatment. Jeanette felt that it was important to let people know that all CSOs are tested for E.Coli and that waste water treatment plants have to test upstream and downstream of each CSO event to ensure that the water discharged from a WWTP is within acceptable perimeters set by the State of Michigan. SSOs are discharges of raw or inadequately treated sewage from separate sanitary sewer systems that carry household sewage. SSOs are usually discharged without any treatment.

Handouts:

MDEQ staff provided everyone with handouts of a chart of the Comparison of the SPARROW, LTHIA & NOAAP Loads and a pie chart of the Phosphorus Loads to Saginaw Bay: SPARROW Model Results – Percent of Total Load. Discussion ensued.

Public Education:

The group was in agreement that there needed to be some public education with regards to CSOs. There is a need to define the problem and educate the public about the various things everyone can do to alleviate CSO Events. It's important to look at the good and the bad in order to educate. We need to set some new goals for the future, short term and long term, and determine how these goals will be achieved.

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Weblink:

Pete will provide the weblink to the DEQ website that shows a variety of information, including where we've been and how far we've come with regards to CSOs. The website outlines what has been done and how it was done. This website has some good information for the group.

Newspaper Notices:

Comments were made regarding the last meeting and about looking into how the CSO notices will be affected with the Bay City Times going down to only publishing three days a week. Pete described that the last meeting notes had incorrectly described the conversation regarding notification to the newspaper. Pete pointed out that the law currently requires CSO and SSO discharge information to be submitted to a local, daily newspaper and that is what MDEQ fully expects to happen. The local newspaper will remain on-line and provide news and any notification.

Upcoming SBCI Meeting:

One of the goals of the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative is to host informational meetings for the public on updates and status of the various workgroups on coastal issues. The SBCI hasn't met as a whole for a year so is planning a Regional update meeting on June (June 5th). Most of the Workgroups will be giving updates and this might be a good opportunity to have the CSO workgroup at least let people know we've formed and what our goal is. Pete said MDEQ could present some the info they've compiled- it won't be everything that they would have at the future CSO public meeting, but will present a brief summary of water quality information.

Greg Rankin provided handouts of newspaper articles he brought describing the Chicago diversion and how at the turn of the century so many people got ill and some died and it still took so many years before anything was done to fix it – where they changed the direction of the channel to stop flowing/dumping into Lake Michigan and sent in the other way. Greg mentioned that while he was new to the CSO workgroup he wanted to make sure we got something accomplished. That these problems weren't new and many of the solutions weren't going to be new, but we needed to do something.

Future Public Meeting:

We will need to continue (the monthly CSO meetings) to identify what data needs to be shown as we plan for the actual CSO workgroup public meeting(s) or a single Townhall meeting to be held at some point later in the year where actual public input will be solicited. Community perceptions dictate that CSOs are a problem and a concern. If the public is well informed they will be better able to determine how much they are willing to pay for what level of water quality improvement.

Laura felt that it would be interesting if we opened the townhall meeting with the estimated design cost to eliminate all CSOs in Bay County all the time. It would be a powerful educational tool to begin presenting other options from there, with residential unit per month costs broken out.

Pete felt that it would be important to have some visual information such as pie charts to show the public the larger picture. Pete believes that in the end, the data will show that CSO discharge will only make up about a small percentage of the discharges that are affecting our river. Jon felt it was important for the public to know that point source locations have permits and are well below the acceptable discharge requirements. Laura noticed that upon a quick review for the CSO discharge permits that the actual water samples show the water being discharged from these events are very low for contaminants. If this is correct, it would be a vital piece of information to get out to the public. Jeanette said that the goal of the WWTP was to kill all of the contaminants so that they weren't discharged into the river while keeping

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the chlorine level low so that chemicals aren't being discharged in unacceptable amounts. The WWTP aims for zero colonies (of fecal bacteria). Jeanette further explained that there isn't a CSO Event every time it rains and that needs to be brought to people's attention. Now that the (Saginaw) plant is back up to full capacity after getting an upgrade over the last two years the storage capacity has increased, so CSO's should happen even less frequently.

Bill Washabaugh wanted people to know that while he is a shoreline resident, he is also a business owner of Northern Concrete Pipe, as such he said he has pretty good handle on what's going on in the industry. Bill said what he sees is that while municipal wastewater treatment plants continue to discharge and have these CSO's, he doesn't think industry would be allowed the same leniency if they had a continuous problem that wasn't being addressed. Bill made the point that he is interested in attending the CSO meetings but that he wants to see something result from them, not just meet to talk about the problem.

Laura felt that it would be an important educational tool to be able to explain what exactly happens during a CSO Event, including maps of where CSO's occur, where water/effluent sampling takes place, the safety protocol to ensure good sample quality, and actual water sample results. But this needs to be done in an easy to understand manner, not technical. This information will help open up a dialogue with the public. Laura said that for the Public Meeting she would like to see the following:

- An explanation of what happens during a CSO Event (complete with maps)
- What gets sampled during a CSO Event (water sampling protocol and locations)
- What are the water sample results before and after a CSO Event (upstream and downstream from a CSO Event)
- Discussion and agreement that the other contributing factors for river contamination besides CSO events should be identified and some info on what's being done to change these other factors

Pete said he had a pie chart showing various contamination sources and what portion is caused by CSO Events (while the public may understand that CSO Events are a factor, we need to show how much of a factor)

Laura thought it might be a good idea to invite the Bay Area Storm Water Authority and the Saginaw County Storm Water Authority to speak at the Public Meeting. It would also be good to have the Muck Group talk at the public meeting, along with other viable workgroups that can give updates about what they are currently working on with regards to CSOs. The group should draft up some questions. It will be important at the Public Meeting to talk about CSOs and to have other groups talk about CSOs and show their findings.

The Regional SBCI Meeting:

The SBCI Regional Update Meeting taking place on Friday, June 5, 2009. This all day meeting will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Bay County Community Center, 800 J.F. Kennedy Drive, Bay City, Michigan. The CSO Workgroup will be introduced during the meeting and give a brief overview of the group and their goals. Pete suggested we use the next regular CSO meeting to give a dry run of what is to be presented.

Adjournment:

The April 23, 2009 meeting of the SBCI CSO Workgroup was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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Next Meeting:

SBCI CSO Workgroup Meetings take place on the 4th Thursday of the month.

The next meeting is Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. in the MDEQ Office located at 401 Ketchum Street, Bay City, Michigan 48708.

Transcribed by C. Gaul