

The August 1, 2024 Special Meeting of the Greater Hazleton Joint Sewer Authority was called to order by Chairman Sullivan at 6:30 PM. All participating in the meeting gave a pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call:

Eyerly – Present  
George – Present  
Sherrock – Present

Formica – Present  
Grink – Present  
Sullivan – Present

Gallagher – Present  
Sharkey – Present  
Zola – Present

Also in Attendance:

Gregory Olander – Director of Administration  
Attorney Joseph D. Ustynoski – Solicitor  
Gene Zynel – Plant Operations Manager  
Nick Sahd – Olde Forge Environmental  
Steve Delman – GHJSA Union Secretary  
Frank Klanchar – USEPA Remedial Project Manager  
Ryan Shuart – USEPA Pretreatment Coordinator

Andy Nowak – Field Operations Manager  
Laura Motel – Environmental Manager  
Shane Boyer – Asst. Plant Operations Manager  
William Corra – GHJSA Union President  
Joseph Smith – MAHT General Manager  
Leslie Everett – USEPA Remedial Project Manager  
Ken Champagne – USEPA Remedial Project Manager

*' via phone or videoconference*

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment received prior to the meeting to be presented.

Chairman Sullivan acknowledged the invited guests in attendance and asked that the USEPA representatives introduce themselves prior to their presentation on the remedial action at the Valmont TCE Site.

Frank Klanchar of USEPA began a PowerPoint presentation to brief the GHJSA Board on remediation efforts at the Valmont TCE Site in West Hazleton, PA. Mr. Klanchar noted that the USEPA recently received additional funding through the bipartisan infrastructure law to continue with cleanup efforts at the Valmont site, which originally began several years ago. He reviewed an agenda and viewed an aerial map of the affected site in the industrial park including the neighborhood adjacent to the industrial site. He gave a brief history of site operations by Chromatex where they treated fabrics with fluorocarbon stain repellents. He said the contaminants at the site are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), TCE, 1,1,1-TCA, Cis-1,2-DCE, vinyl chloride, 1,1-DCE, and PFOA/PFOS; however, the main contaminants are TCE and PFOA/PFOS. He showed a map of the contaminant plume at a depth of 60 feet under the warehouse building migrating under homes in the adjacent neighborhood. He said the highest concentrations at >2,500 parts per million, which is very high since the Maximum Concentration Limit (MCL) is 5 parts per billion. He said the objectives of this phase of the interim remediation is to address the high source areas to reduce mass of the contaminants and minimize potential further migration down-gradient. He said by mitigating the source of contamination it will also reduce vapor intrusion pathways up through the soil and hopefully, over time, some of the vapor reduction systems in residences above the plume will be able to be turned off. He outlined the cleanup plan, which is a Record of Decision and an interim remedy to clean up most of the groundwater, but not all of it. He said there are two components, Thermal Treatment and Groundwater Treatment. He said for the In-Situ Thermal Treatment, heating probes will be placed into the ground to heat the source area to 100° C so it will volatilize and the vapors/condensate from the heating process will be captured and treated. He said the groundwater treatment system will be down-gradient of the thermal treatment system with a number of wells

installed to remove groundwater, so contaminants are contained and do not continue to travel further offsite. He said the plan is to discharge the treated groundwater through the sanitary sewer system in Hazle Township for disposal at the GHJSA treatment plant. He said, while the decision document was being developed, installation of a conveyance pipe for discharge of the treated water directly to the Black Creek was investigated but determined not to be cost effective; particularly since it is an interim remedy. He said that is why discharge to the sanitary sewer is being requested. He also noted that the business operated by the owner of the property must be relocated during the remediation process.

Mr. Klanchar then stated that a design contract was awarded in May 2022 and pre-design investigations were conducted in 2022 and 2023. He restated that the two design components are In-Situ Thermal Remediation (ISTR) and a Groundwater Extraction and Treatment System (GWETS). Board Member Sullivan asked if these processes were being used at other locations. Mr. Klanchar responded that this is the state-of-the-art treatment for this type of remediation and there are two (2) other locations in EPA Region 3 where these systems are being used. Board Member Zola asked if this was a fairly new technology and Leslie Everett responded that she had worked on a similar project using this technology in 2014. Mr. Klanchar said according to the project design that was completed in April 2024, the treated discharge would be conveyed to the GHJSA treatment plant through the Municipal Authority of Hazle Township (MAHT) sanitary sewer main on Bent Pine Road. He then gave a detailed explanation of the ISTR process using activated carbon for treatment of liquid and vapor phase, which is expected to be online for about six (6) to twelve (12) months. Board Member Eyerly asked what happens to the spent carbon when it is changed. Mr. Klanchar responded that it will probably go to an appropriate offsite facility for regeneration of the carbon using heat with an approximate changeout of one to two times during operation. He said there will be air monitoring of the whole site during operation and groundwater monitoring wells will be sampled and tested frequently down-gradient to determine performance. Charman Sullivan asked if there are guidelines for sampling and Mr. Klanchar responded that the contractor would submit a sampling plan for EPA approval. Board Member Gallagher asked why the building was still allowed to be occupied if this is a superfund cleanup site and he asked if it was in fact a superfund site. Mr. Klanchar confirmed that the Valmont TCE Site is a superfund site, and the current building owner is not who contaminated the site. Board Member Gallagher asked what happens if in three (3) years the funding has been spent and the cleanup is not complete. Mr. Klanchar responded that there will be funds made available through EPA to finish the project. There was a discussion of costs associated with a remediation project if it were a private entity responsible for the cleanup effort versus EPA being responsible. Mr. Klanchar stated that when a decision document is written to come up with a remedy, cost effectiveness is one of the issues considered.

Board Member Sullivan asked who would be responsible for monitoring the process. Mr. Klanchar responded that there would be a contractor responsible for construction and daily operations and EPA would be getting another contractor responsible for oversight of the job. Joseph Smith asked if the monitoring results would be made available during operation of the system. Mr. Klanchar responded that since the discharge would be sent to the GHJSA, results would be submitted to verify treatment is within compliance of specified limits. Board Member Zola then asked if this exact treatment process has been done in the past to remediate these exact pollutants and has it been monitored long term to determine if there were problems associated with the cleanup. Mr. Champagne responded that this same process is being used at the Jackson Ceramics Superfund site in the City of Dubois, Falls

Creek. He said there is a long-term monitoring plan for all sites. He noted that ISTR remediation effort has been determined to be very successful versus the old pump and treat systems that had been used for many sites and still cannot meet cleanup goals. Board Member Zola asked if the sites had been monitored for 5 years or 10+ years after the cleanup to make sure there were no adverse impacts. Mr. Champagne responded that he does not have that information on-hand but could provide case studies on these remediation projects. Board Member Zola then asked if EPA had a permit to discharge directly into the creek in the event the GHJSA declines to accept the wastewater. Mr. Shuart responded that in order to discharge directly into the creek, the PADEP would need to approve the discharge and issue a permit. Board Member Zola then asked if the waste could be hauled away in tanker trucks for offsite disposal at an alternate location. Mr. Klanchar responded that offsite hauling would not be cost effective for the project. Board Member Zola then asked if the GHJSA decided to accept the waste and if something goes wrong with the treatment, can the GHJSA be held responsible for the downstream pollution. Mr. Klanchar responded that there are checks in place the entire way through the treatment train to prevent breakthrough contamination. Mr. Shuart added that all the GHJSA rules and regulations, federal pretreatment standards, and Local Limits established by the GHJSA for all industrial dischargers must be met in order to discharge.

Board Member Gallagher asked if the discharge is safe for someone working in the manhole where it is being discharge since it is proposed to be treated down to drinking water standards. Mr. Klanchar responded that there should be no volatiles in the water so there should not be a problem. He said the water temperature should be low since it is being pumped from 60 feet below ground. Board Member Gallagher asked if the discharge could be entirely evaporated rather than discharged into the sewer system. Mr. Klanchar responded that evaporating the water would require a high amount of energy and would not be cost effective. Board Member Sherrock then asked if the GHJSA had to treat the water again once it gets to the treatment plant. Mr. Klanchar responded that he does not believe the water needs to be treated again rather it is just a method to get the treated water to the creek. Board Member Zola asked what the distance was from the site to the Black Creek. Mr. Klanchar responded that it is about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. Board Member Eyerly asked if there is a concentration goal to get down to in this phase since it is most likely an interim remediation project and some additional will be needed in the future. Mr. Klanchar said in theory under the building there should be zero pollutants remaining; however, it is likely that on the periphery less concentrated pollutants may make their way back under the building. Mr. Klanchar then gave a detailed explanation of the GWETS operation proposed for this site noting that there will be eighteen (18) open borehole extraction wells down to 100 feet in depth located downgradient of the ISTR. He said the discharge flow rate is expected to be 12.5 gallons per minute (gpm) and the system will be designed to treat down to the federal maximum contaminant levels (MCL). He said the GWETS is a temporary system expected to run for up to 36 months. He then reviewed the contaminants and clean up goal for the project noting that they will be treated down to the groundwater MCL. He said the PFOA /PFOS treatment down to 4 ng/L would be at a lower level than the other water entering the treatment plant. Board Member Gallagher stated that since the water is so clean it could be discharged into the nearby storm sewer, which would convey it to the Black Creek without the need for installing a new pipe. Mr. Klanchar said he wasn't sure if that option had been looked at, but typically they prefer discharging to a POTW as a "belt and suspenders" approach.

After a discussion on the cost of the project, which was estimated at \$23 million, Board Member Sullivan asked if the contractor who will be chosen has sufficient experience with other remediation

projects of this exact type. Mr. Klanchar responded that the ISTR is a very specialized remedy with only a few specialized contractors capable of installing and operating these systems. He then referenced a slide showing the extraction well network and the location of the treatment system in a corner inside the warehouse with the discharge manhole at the end of Bent Pine Road. He then reviewed the operational components of the GWETS before reviewing the tentative project schedule. He said the contract must be awarded before the end of September 2024 or funding for the project would be lost. He said since EPA is doing the project and funding it, the normal 10% contribution at the state level will be funded with federal funds through the bipartisan infrastructure bill. He said under the tentative schedule, discharge from the system would begin in October 2025. Board Member Gallagher asked if the schedule could be met given the long lead times to get equipment. Mr. Klanchar responded that some of these specialized contractors own their own equipment so it would be readily available. Board Member Sharkey asked when a decision would be needed from the Board on whether the discharge will be accepted. Mr. Klanchar responded that they would need approval by October 2025 given the tentative schedule presented. Board Member Zola then asked if the Board did not give its approval how confident is EPA that approval will be granted by the State for direct discharge into the creek. An EPA representative responded that all discharge limits will be met so he is fairly certain the State will approve the discharge since they are onboard with the project. Board Member Zola stated that the only reason for requesting discharge into the GHJSA system is to save money. Mr. Klanchar responded that it is to save money, but it is also for convenience. An EPA representative noted that there may be delays in the project because additional permitting would be required from the State. Board Member Eyerly and Attorney Ustynoski commented that use of the storm sewer system to convey the treated water to the creek needs to be investigated as an option before this Board makes a decision on whether to accept the discharge. Mr. Klanchar responded that the decision was made before he was on the project, so he is not sure whether direct discharge was considered.

Following a discussion of the improved condition of the Black Creek from a dead stream to a stream that now supports naturally reproducing trout, Joseph Smith noted that the municipalities contributing flow to the GHJSA plant are under a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), which limits EDU allocations. He noted that given the temporary nature of the project a mechanism would be needed to get the roughly 75 EDUs returned to the MAHT once the project is completed.

*Board Member Zola exited the meeting at this time.*

Mr. Klanchar stated that he would go back and look at the feasibility study in the decision documents to see if conveyance and discharge to the Black Creek were looked at as an option. He then reiterated that EPA would really like assistance from GHJSA to accept the treated remediation water for this phase of the overall remediation for this site. He said the Board does have some time to consider this request and the EPA representatives offered to answer any questions that may arise. Nick Sahd stated that if EPA comes back to the Board with a formal request for accepting the waste, it is his understanding that a discharge authorization would be issued outlining the conditions of the discharge including VOC and PFOA/PFOS limits, Local Limits parameters, all standard pretreatment regulations, agreement term, maximum volume of discharge and monitoring requirements. The EPA representatives agreed with Mr. Sahd's assessment of how an authorization would be structured. Attorney Ustynoski asked if EPA would consider a waiver of liability given the Board's concerns accepting the remediation water that has a potential to open the GHJSA to liability by accepting the discharge. Mr. Shuart stated that EPA cannot enforce against itself being the oversight authority and is also managing the federal remediation facility. He said EPA must adhere to its own pretreatment

standards. Gene Zynel asked what would be done to dispose of the backwash water generated from the filter system. He said it is expected to have high levels of Iron and Manganese, which poses a problem for the GHJSA treatment plant. He said most likely, this waste would need to be hauled to an alternate facility for disposal. Mr. Klanchar responded that he believes the backwash will be taken offsite for disposal.

The EPA presenters thanked the Board for setting the Special Meeting for their presentation.

**Sherrock & Gallagher** moved to adjourn.

Passed: Aye-8, Nay-0, Absent-1

The Special Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 PM

Respectfully submitted,

**Greater Hazleton Joint Sewer Authority**



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Gregory Olander, Assistant Secretary