

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
FOR THE PG&E TOPOCK COMPRESSOR STATION
NOTICE OF PREPARATION
FOR THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

City of Palm Desert
City Council Chamber
Palm Desert, CA 92260

<p>Transcribed by Statewide Transcription Services On Behalf of EDAW</p>
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REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

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KATHIE SCHIEVELBEIN - DTSC
WILLIAM BECKMAN - DTSC
AARON YUE - DTSC
JEANNE MATSUMOTO - DTSC
BOBBETTE BIDDULPH - EDAW
LESLIE REDFORD - EDAW
LEAHA MURPHY - EDAW
NANCY GRAHAM - EDAW

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** Welcome. First of all, thank you for being
3 here and I guess we owe a thanks to the Chamber for
4 letting us use their beautiful room. My name is
5 Jeanne Matsumoto. I work for the Department of Toxic
6 Substances Control, the State of California, and I'm a
7 Public Participation Specialist. The Department of
8 Toxic Substances Control is a department within the
9 California Environmental Protection Agency and it is
10 the lead regulatory agency for the environmental
11 investigation and clean-up of the PG&E Topock
12 Compressor Station. Why are we here? DTSC is
13 conducting public scoping meetings as part of the
14 preparation for the Environmental Impact Report for
15 the Topock Compressor Station and it's our intention
16 to gather input from agencies, tribal representatives
17 and members, stakeholders, and the public. Let's see.
18 The information provided in your comments will be used
19 to develop the EIR. We will not be responding to your
20 comments today. The comments are used to determine
21 what information will be included in the EIR. Because
22 this goes along with the California Environmental
23 Quality Act, this has a very specific protocol for the
24 comments and we're looking for comments and input in
25 specific subjects. Let's see. Good thing there's

1 only two people here.

2 **FEMALE:** Are you missing some pages?

3 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** No, I'm missing a little bit of rehearsal.

4 Well, we want input regarding environmental issues to
5 be analyzed and possible clean-up alternatives. Now,
6 the process we're going to go through with comments,
7 we're going to skip today. We won't have cards. We
8 will need you to state your name for conversational
9 purposes, if you plan to give a comment, a verbal
10 comment, today. Your name will not be recorded. It
11 won't be entered into the actual administrative
12 record. If you are uncomfortable standing up and
13 giving a comment, we welcome you to provide a written
14 comment to us. You can leave it here or you can send
15 it to the contact information that will be up on the
16 screen in a little bit. We are making a digital
17 recording of comments and we will also do a graphic
18 reporting of comments on the wall. Agenda, if you
19 picked up a packet out front, you should have an
20 agenda, a copy of the presentation. There's also a
21 green paper which is a meeting evaluation form. This
22 helps me. If you fill this out and leave it on the
23 table as you leave, this will help me perfect the
24 meetings and I need help. I appreciate input. So, we
25 start with the introductions. We'll have a project

1 background. There will be someone discussing the EIR
2 process, then we will actually take formal comments.
3 There will be conclusion of the formal comments and
4 then we'll all be here for question and answers.
5 There's several people to introduce. We have a DTSC
6 Project Team which is headed by Watson, he's not here
7 today, and Karen, she's not here today. Our Project
8 Manager, Aaron Yue, is here today and I'm here. From
9 our office of environmental planning and environmental
10 analysis, we have Kathie and Bill at the back of the
11 room. Now, EDAW is an independent consulting firm
12 that's helping to prepare the EIR and we have
13 Bobbette, Jamie -- I haven't seen Jamie --

14 **MS. MURPHY:** Jamie's not here today.

15 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** -- Leaha, Leslie, and Nancy --

16 **MS. GRAHAM:** At the table.

17 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** -- at the table. All right. And Stev, I
18 haven't seen Steve either. And now I'd like to turn
19 the meeting over to Aaron Yue, the project manager
20 from DTSC. He will be discussing project background.

21 **MR. YUE:** Thank you, Jeanne. Okay. I'm going to just
22 stand behind the table here. Again, my name is Aaron
23 Yue. My title is actually the Senior Hazardous
24 Substances Engineer. I am the Project Manager for the
25 PG&E Topock site. You have my contact information in

1 this particular slide as well on the fact sheet and
2 also in any of the mail-outs that you've received.
3 Today what I wanted to do is to go over the project
4 background, just so I do be informed of what's been
5 happening out at the site and also where we've been in
6 terms of investigation, as well as talk a little bit
7 about the clean-up process. The project background,
8 PG&E Topock Compression Station is actually located
9 about 15 miles southeast of Needles, California.
10 You'll see an aerial photo which is displayed on that
11 table to the left-hand side there, the aerial really
12 has a lot of significant cultural and spiritual
13 importance to the Native American people. The station
14 is also surrounded by federally owned lands and that
15 includes also land owned by the Bureau of Reclamation
16 and managed by the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge.
17 And here is a general map. You can see the station
18 right up here and this is I-40 coming down. This is a
19 little hard to see but you should have that in your
20 handout. Operational history, what does PG&E do at
21 the site? PG&E essentially has owned and operated the
22 compression station since 1951 and the main purpose
23 for the station is to compress natural gas for
24 delivery to its customers in the Northern and Central
25 California areas. The gas that is being compressed is

1 basically your standard household gas that you use for
2 cooking and heating. This is an older aerial photo of
3 the PG&E compressor station. Essentially gas comes in
4 and PG&E add pressure to the line and shoots the gas
5 off to its customers in Northern and Central
6 California. In the process of doing that, heat's
7 generated when you compress gas. And so, what PG&E
8 needs to do is to use cooling power, such as this new
9 cooling power that they've replaced. They've
10 basically put water into heater parts of the station,
11 the compressor engine, and cool it down. If you can
12 think of the analogy of an automobile engine, you have
13 coolant that cools down the engine as it runs, and
14 likewise PG&E is doing the same thing out at the
15 compressor station. Hexavalent chromium has actually
16 been used since 1951 to 1985 and that is the subject,
17 or at least that as the predominant chemical concern,
18 at this particular site. Between 1951 and all the way
19 to 1976, PG&E had used Cr6 as a chemical to prohibit
20 corrosion. And as part of the process, they put that
21 chromium into the cooling water and when it's spent
22 they discharge it to a dry wash and it's called Bat
23 Cave Wash and we'll see that in the next slide. And
24 eventually, the chromium actually seeped through the
25 soil and entered the ground water. And as part of

1 that process, unfortunately, it created a Cr6 ground
2 water plume extending towards the Colorado River.
3 Here is an overhead projection of what the current
4 plume boundary looks like, that we know of. Again,
5 this is the compressor station and here's the dry
6 wash, the Bat Cave Wash that leads out. And at
7 present, this is the chromium plume. Now, one thing
8 to note is that this projection, it's a vertical
9 projection, and what we've done is essentially looked
10 at the site where many wells, groundwater monitoring
11 wells should be picked as the plumes three dimensional
12 nature underground. What you see in green represents
13 the hexavalent chromium, that's within groundwater,
14 and the blue is clean groundwater actually, and this
15 dark blue is really where the Colorado River is at.
16 So, if you'd note, the plume, even though in the
17 previous slide suggests that there is chromium
18 potentially in the river, actually what is happening
19 is that there is a little bit of the plume, what we
20 can ascertain is that it's beneath the river and about
21 80 feet beneath the river itself. Okay. The
22 investigation and clean-up process; where we're at in
23 terms of the site. First of all, in order for me to
24 elaborate of where we've been or where we're going,
25 you have to understand how the clean-up process works.

1 Essentially, there are three major steps. The first
2 step is clearly to figure out how bad is the
3 situation. The second step is how should we clean it
4 up. And then, finally, clean up the plume. There are
5 regulatory terms for step one. Step one is being done
6 under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The
7 document that supports that is the RCRA facility
8 investigation report. The second step, how should we
9 clean it up, is evaluated under the corrective measure
10 study itself, or the feasibility study. And in the
11 final step, cleaning it up, is the implementation of
12 the final remedy after it's selected. So, how bad is
13 the site? What we've done substantial amount plume
14 investigation, specifically for groundwater, because
15 it is due to the close proximity of the plume to the
16 Colorado River, that is given priority over the soil
17 investigation. Nevertheless, we will do both soil and
18 groundwater investigation to determine the full extent
19 of contamination. PG&E, since signing a consent
20 agreement with the Department of Toxic Substances
21 Control in 1996, has installed and actively monitoring
22 over 150 groundwater wells at the site. The Colorado
23 River is also sampled. The river water itself is also
24 sampled at a quarterly interval as well. It's monthly
25 intervals when the river water level drops and the

1 river water level actually is predominately controlled
2 by the release of water up at the Davis Dam. At this
3 point, the groundwater investigation is almost
4 complete. We do know the extent of the chromium
5 groundwater contamination at the site and what we do
6 know is that the Colorado River, at the present, is
7 not impacted by the Cr6. In 2004, there was
8 contamination discovered near the river from a new
9 well that was put in by PG&E. As a result, the
10 Department required PG&E to begin immediate extraction
11 of some of the groundwater plume and they've also
12 constructed a treatment system to handle the water
13 that's being extracted from the ground. Today they've
14 extracted approximately 200 million gallons of
15 contaminated groundwater and recovered over 4,700
16 pounds of chromium since 2004. Again, we place the
17 emphasis on the groundwater, or the priority is to the
18 groundwater, but then there's still the soil
19 component. PG&E has actually identified 29 areas to
20 investigate for contamination. That investigation is
21 to come. PG&E has also drafted the soil sampling work
22 plans to guide in the investigation and those
23 particular work plans are still pending regulatory
24 approval and implementation. So, finally, how should
25 we clean it up? The final groundwater and soil clean-

1 up technologies will really evaluated in one large
2 document that's going to be coming up and it's called
3 Correct Measure Study or the Feasibility Study, that's
4 used by the federal regulators, and also some of the
5 evaluations will be done under the Environmental
6 Impact Report and under the Environmental Impact
7 Report, it will evaluate potential impacts of the
8 technology to the project area. Finally, once we've
9 selected a remedy and we anticipate a selecting of
10 remedy only after we get public input and evaluate all
11 the alternatives, then the remedy will be implemented.
12 I think the timeline as to when the Corrective Measure
13 Study and the final remedy implementation is going to
14 take place that we've talked about by Bobbette. Right
15 now, I'll turn the floor over to Bobbette.

16 **MS. BIDDULPH:** Thanks, Aaron. So, before I jump into my
17 presentation, I guess the thing that I'd really like
18 to emphasize tonight is that this is really the
19 beginning of the environmental review process under
20 the California Environmental Quality Act and the real
21 purpose of this meeting is to get public input, to get
22 your ideas and thoughts and concerns so that we can do
23 the best job possible in addressing those comments and
24 issues in that environmental analysis. We're just
25 beginning. We're just starting to develop our

1 analysis and gather information and so we're not going
2 to have all the answers tonight. We're really looking
3 to get input on those answers so that we can answer
4 them later on as we do our work. A little bit of
5 definition of what an Environmental Impact Report is,
6 an Environmental Impact Report is required for this
7 remediation project, for the clean-up project and that
8 is a requirement under the California Environmental
9 Quality Act. DTSC, as a public agency, must prepare
10 an EIR for any project that it purposes to carry out
11 that could potentially have a significant impact on
12 the environment. Now, our project under review in
13 this particular case is the clean-up of both the
14 contamination of the groundwater, as well as Aaron
15 mentioned that there is some contamination of the
16 soils. There's clearly more focus on the groundwater
17 because of the concern of it being close to the
18 Colorado River and so there's going to be more focus
19 on that as a priority for clean-up. As Aaron also
20 described, the different approaches to cleaning up
21 this groundwater and the different technologies that
22 would be available to do that, are going to be
23 described in this document called the Corrective
24 Measure Study, Feasibility Study. So, the
25 Environmental Impact Report, or the EIR, for this

1 project will be what we call a Program EIR and that's
2 because of these two levels of analysis for both the
3 ground water and the soils contamination. The EIR is
4 going to have more detail about the groundwater clean-
5 up because of the prioritization on that clean-up and
6 then a broader approach is going to be used for the
7 soils clean-up. As more information is developed
8 about the exact location and parameters of the soil
9 impacts, future environmental analysis will basically
10 tier, is the technical term, off of this Program EIR
11 and study that soil clean-up in more detail. This is
12 just really a laundry list of the different topics
13 that are going to be addressed in the Environmental
14 Impact Report. This Environmental Impact Report is
15 going to be what we call a Full Scope Environmental
16 Impact Report. We're basically going to be looking at
17 all of the different environmental issue areas. So,
18 we already know that we're going to have a chapter or
19 a section in our document on each of these independent
20 issue areas, but it might trigger some thoughts in
21 your mind for air quality, let's particularly think
22 about this issue. So, those are the kinds of comments
23 that we'd like to hear from you. In addition, in the
24 EIR, the California Environmental Quality Act requires
25 that we look at some others types of analysis. One

1 will be alternatives to the proposed projects, so
2 we're going to be looking at different approaches to
3 clean-up and what are the comparative environmental
4 impacts or effects related to those different
5 approaches, which one would result in less
6 environmental impact or which one results in the most
7 environmental impacts and weighing that against the
8 objectives of the project. As well, the document will
9 talk about impacts that have been found to not be
10 significant and provide the substantiation or the
11 information that shows clearly why those impacts were
12 concluded to not be significant. As well, if there
13 are unavoidable impacts that would result from
14 cleaning up this property that can't be avoided with
15 any type of mitigation measure or alternative
16 approach, the document will summarize those, as well
17 as significant irreversible changes. Growth-inducing
18 impacts probably won't be an issue in this one but we
19 still need to address it. The growth-inducing impacts
20 are questions of whether or not a project would cause
21 additional population growth or additional housing
22 demands. So, we'll take a look at that. And then, as
23 well, the document will include a discussion of
24 cumulative impacts and what cumulative impacts are is
25 a consideration of what the actions related to our

1 project would cause in combination with other projects
2 that might be happening in the area. One of the
3 issues that is becoming more and more prevalent in
4 this section is climate change and global warming.
5 So, we will be taking a look at that. Now, throughout
6 our environmental review process, as I mentioned,
7 we're just in the beginning but as we kick this off,
8 we're going to be gathering information from a variety
9 of sources that will include published reports, the
10 monitoring efforts that Aaron talked about. We'll be
11 outreaching to agencies and getting input from the
12 agencies about what might be of concern, as well as
13 conducting tribal outreach and communication which
14 will have confidentiality associated with it but
15 trying to get input from the tribes because of the
16 cultural importance of this area to the tribes. And
17 as well, where necessary, we'll be doing site specific
18 resource studies. For instance, we might need to go
19 out and do some additional biological resource studies
20 at the property. Now, this is a little washed out but
21 it is in your handouts and we have a graphic over
22 posted in the entryway, this gives a generalized
23 schedule of what we're looking at for the
24 environmental analysis and basically the top row there
25 are when we'll have fact sheets. We'll have

1 additional public meetings just like this one tonight,
2 as well as providing information in our information
3 repositories. We're basically in this first column
4 where we're releasing the Notice of Preparation that
5 says we're starting this environmental review process.
6 Then we'll be doing those environmental analyses I
7 talked about and we will likely complete the draft EIR
8 in the Fall of 2009 or Winter of 2010 and at that time
9 we'll have public meetings and fact sheets again
10 similar to how we've provided information at this go-
11 round. Now, after we gather comments on that draft
12 EIR, what happens is we circulate the draft EIR that
13 includes all of the analysis and it's going to be
14 circulated for 60 days and during that 60 day period
15 anybody can comment on the contents of that
16 environmental analysis, and that's another opportunity
17 for the public to, and for you, to review our analysis
18 and provide additional input. At the end of that 60
19 days, we're basically in that Winter/Spring 2010
20 preparation of response to comments. Once we receive
21 the public's comments and agency comments on that
22 draft environmental analysis, we actually then go
23 through the process of responding to any of those
24 comments and those responses to comments will actually
25 be published in the final EIR, at which time we will

1 have another public meeting and that process is
2 looking to be concluded in the Spring of 2010. Now,
3 as Jeanne mentioned, and I just want to reiterate, the
4 purpose of this meeting is to gather input on the
5 environmental analysis. Some questions to think about
6 when thinking about what input to provide, if you have
7 such input, is what environmental effects should be
8 addressed in the environmental analysis, in the EIR.
9 Do you have ideas for potential alternatives or
10 mitigation measures that might create the least impact
11 or might be creative approaches to the clean-up at the
12 site? Or in addition, if you have project related
13 questions, because obviously DTSC and PG&E are still
14 working on the details of how to clean-up the
15 property, if there are project related questions we
16 can take that in too and make sure that those
17 questions are addressed in the environmental analysis.
18 So, tonight's meeting is the first in a series of five
19 scoping meetings. We'll also be in Yuma, Arizona;
20 Needles, California; Lake Havasu City and Big River,
21 California. So, those are some other opportunities
22 for input and there are a varieties ways to also
23 provide your input. Verbally if you're comfortable,
24 it's great to hear your input that way. You can also
25 provide your comments in writing. We have comment

1 forms which you can just fill out in hand or if you're
2 more comfortable going home and typing a letter on
3 your computer then you can do that also and send it to
4 the mailing address that's in the information we've
5 handing out tonight. Also, email works, but just a
6 note that it would be really helpful and we'd really
7 need you to get your input to us before July 1st in
8 order for us to make sure that we have it in time to
9 basically kick off that environmental process. Okay.
10 So, Jeanne, turn it over to you.

11 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** Okay. Just a few more slides. For more
12 information about the project, we have DTSC contacts,
13 of course, Aaron, the project manager, myself, and
14 media inquiries, you will find these listed in your
15 packet today, and our information repositories.
16 Repositories are files and they're located near people
17 and the project. So, this project, because of the
18 river and the way it travels, we have several
19 repositories. We have one at the Needles Public
20 Library, one in the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation,
21 Golden Shores, the Topock Library, Lake Havasu City
22 Library, the Colorado River Indian Tribes Public
23 Library, and the Parker Public Library. In addition
24 to that, the administrative record is at the DTSC
25 Cypress Office and people can visit and access the

1 files there. And we have a website for the project,
2 which I highly recommend, that's kept up to date and
3 it's very informative. Okay. At this time, we would
4 like to formally accept verbal comments, if there are
5 any.

6 **FEMALE:** I do have one. In fact, I didn't know about this
7 meeting today. I am so glad. I feel very strongly
8 that everything happens for a reason. For the
9 visitors that are here, open this up,
10 www.cleargold.org. I just have a crew coming back
11 from Germany for the financing of this water
12 desalinization and in fact I didn't even know I had
13 this. I'm really glad I brought this. This is a
14 little bit about the website, Aaron, where they take
15 sewage water, any kind of water, break it down. In
16 fact, they're looking at the Salton Sea for the water
17 desalinization to clean up the salt water. They have
18 orders from all over the country, not just in the
19 United States but we're talking about Iraq. This is
20 bigger than you can possible imagine, and that's about
21 to open the door any day now. It will give you the
22 names of the people involved with this clean-up. They
23 will take bath water, sewage water, (inaudible) water,
24 and turn it out into drinking water five years on the
25 shelf. Here is a little bit of information on it.

1 This is a home unit that they're talking about but
2 they are going to be working with the environmental
3 clean-ups too with the Navy Corps of Engineers,
4 they're working with them on oil spills. They'll be
5 able to take and use everything (inaudible) where they
6 electronically take it in and clean it up, and within
7 just a week, they'll take an oil spill and have it all
8 gone. Now, that's going to be a real asset for the
9 environment. My name is --, if you have any questions
10 after you pull this up and you need to get in touch
11 with one of these guys. They'll real busy right now,
12 so emailing them would probably be the way to go.
13 David Jones is the CEO. He is the head of this. We
14 have two Canadians that are scientists that have been
15 working on this for a long time that just now got this
16 where they've got the financing from the Germans for
17 this project. The factory will be in Port Roberts,
18 Washington, and once they start making the units it
19 will be out to the public too for housing units so
20 that in the event of any disaster they'll be able to
21 sell that drinking water. Thank you.

22 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** Thank you for sharing.

23 **FEMALE:** And I forgot to give you my phone number, 760-578-
24 7274.

25 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** And are there any other comments regarding

1 the EIR for the Topock Compressor Station? This will
2 conclude the formal comment portion of the meeting and
3 we will be here to answer questions about the project
4 so you are welcome to stay --

5 **FEMALE:** It's dot org, not dot com. Did I say dot com?
6 It's dot org, O-R-G. I'm sorry. I did not mean to
7 interrupt you.

8 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** Okay. Thank you. That adjourns this
9 meeting. We are here to answer questions, though.

10 **MR. YUE:** Thank you.

11 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** Thank you.

12 --oOo--

13 - MEETING ADJOURNED -
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TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I, Kelli Wells,
transcribed the digitally-recorded public meeting of the
California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of
Toxic Substances Control, dated May 27, 2008; that the
pages numbered 1 through 22 constitute said transcript;
that the same is a complete and accurate transcription of
the aforesaid to the best of my ability.

Dated June 25, 2008.



Kelli Wells, Transcriber
Statewide Transcription Services