

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

Gila Ridge High School Auditorium
7150 E. 24th Street
Yuma, AZ 85365

Wednesday, May 28, 2008
1:30-4:30 p.m.

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REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

- 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:** Thank you for being here and I'm really
3 appreciative for this beautiful auditorium, so thank
4 you, Gila Ridge High School. My name is Jeanne
5 Matsumoto and I'm a Public Participation Specialist
6 with DTSC, the Department of Toxic Substances Control
7 for the State of California. The Department is one of
8 the departments under California Environmental
9 Protection Agency. It's also the lead regulatory
10 agency for the PG&E Topock Compressor Station,
11 environmental investigation meeting. We have a packet
12 of information with the agenda, a copy of the
13 presentation, an evaluation form, in green, and please
14 fill one out, I welcome suggestions. I always need to
15 improve. We also have additional comment forms
16 because not everyone wants to stand up and speak at a
17 meeting, a large meeting, and we encourage you to turn
18 in a comment. You can leave it with us if it's
19 written, if you chose not to do a verbal one today, or
20 you can mail it. We'll have contact information up on
21 the screen in a little bit. The purpose of the
22 meeting or why we're here, DTSC is gathering input on
23 what should be in the Environmental Impact Report.
24 That's what this scoping meeting is all about. We're
25 specifically looking for environmental issues to be

1 analyzed and possible alternatives or mitigation
2 members. It's our intention to gather input from
3 agencies, tribal reps and tribal members,
4 stakeholders, and the public. We will not be
5 responding directly to comments received today and we
6 will stay after to answer any questions. Once we've
7 completed the formal scoping process, then we would
8 love to have questions so we'll be around for all of
9 you to answer questions. The process that we're going
10 to go through for a Notice of Preparation comment is
11 if you have a comment, stand and state your name for
12 conversation purposes. We won't be recording your
13 name and it won't go into the administrative record,
14 we just would like to be able to converse with anyone
15 who comments. There's two ways we'll be recording
16 comments today. One is a digital recorder and the
17 other will be a graphic recording, which is really
18 fun. The agenda, we'll start with introductions then
19 Aaron, the Project Manager, will give you a project
20 background overview. We'll have the EIR process then
21 we'll take formal comments and we'll stick around or
22 we will stay after for questions and answers. The
23 DTSC Team includes Watson Gin, Karen Baker, Aaron Yue,
24 the Project Manager, and myself. The office of
25 planning and environmental analysis includes Kathie,

1 Bill, who's sneaking away, and Susan Wilcox. The EDAW
2 Team, and EDAW is an independent consulting firm
3 helping prepare the EIR. The EDAW Team includes
4 Bobbette, who will be discussing the EIR in a few
5 minutes, Jamie, Leaha, who is busy and working
6 probably out at the front table, Leslie, who's busy
7 out at the front table, Nancy, graphic recorder, and
8 Stev. And at this time, I'd like to turn the big
9 clicker over to Aaron Yue, the Project Manager.

10 **MR. YUE:** Thank you, Jeanne. Good afternoon. What I'm
11 going to do is basically give you a quick overview of
12 the project and what has transpired in the past.
13 Again, my name is Aaron Yue, that information is in
14 your packet and it's also in the fact sheet and any
15 information you've received. My official title is the
16 Senior Hazardous Substances Engineer, but I am the
17 lead Project Manager for the site. What I'll be
18 covering today, I'll be covering basically the project
19 background, what the project is about, and also a
20 brief history of the investigation and the clean-up
21 process. The project background, PG&E Topock
22 Compression Station, Pacific Gas and Electric Company,
23 is located about 15 miles southeast of Needles,
24 California, approximately an hour and a half from
25 here, I think. The area does have cultural and

1 spiritual importance to the Native tribal people. The
2 station is also surrounded by land that's managed by
3 the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the Havasu
4 National Wildlife Refuge. And this is a big map of
5 where the site is at. Needles is right there, the
6 Topock Compressor Station is right over here. And I
7 know this map is a little harder to see. We actually
8 have a larger aerial of the site so you can look at
9 it. Operational history, PG&E has owned and operated
10 the station since 1951 and the station compresses
11 natural gas. What they do is they bring in gas of
12 other mid-west states and as the gas travels through
13 the pipeline there are pressure losses and so PG&E
14 essentially has a compression station to add pressure
15 to (inaudible) to keep moving the natural gas to its
16 customers in Northern and Central California. They
17 don't do any processing of natural gas at the site.
18 The natural gas is exactly the type of gas that you
19 use at home cooking and heating. Here's an older
20 aerial photo of what the compressor station looked
21 like. I don't remember the year of that, but
22 essentially again, natural gas comes in, these are
23 compressor engines, and as the gas is compressed it's
24 moved along the pipeline up north. These two are the
25 old cooling towers and I'll be talking a little bit

1 about that. The picture here is actually a
2 replacement cooling tower; these are the new cooling
3 towers. What transpired in the past is between 1951
4 and 1985, pretty typical of (inaudible) industries,
5 they used a lot of hexavalent chromium as an additive
6 to the cooling tower water to keep corrosion down and
7 also to keep the (inaudible) away from the pipes. And
8 as part of the process, when the cooling water is
9 spent or when it's used to a certain degree, they have
10 to get rid of the cooling water and what they've done
11 in the past is they essentially discharged the cooling
12 water to a dry wash, called the Bat Cave Wash, and
13 eventually, over time, the water seeped through the
14 ground, seeped through the soil and entered into the
15 groundwater. So, currently there is a hexavalent
16 chromium plume that is extending towards the Colorado
17 River, approximately 2300 by (inaudible). And here is
18 the general projection, a vertical projection, of
19 where the plume is at in relation to the compressor
20 station. This is the Bat Cave Wash that discharged.
21 Currently PG&E has switched over to a phosphate-base.
22 What I mean by projection is that it's looking
23 straight down at it and what we've found over time
24 with investigation is that the green area here
25 represents, if you take a cut into the ground

1 vertically in this direction, what you'll see is that
2 this is the location of hexavalent chromium, this is a
3 floodplain. The blue represents the groundwater and
4 actually the darker blue here is the Colorado River
5 itself. So, in this particular aerial photo, it
6 looked as if the hexavalent chromium has actually
7 reached the Colorado River. What we've essentially
8 found is there is a bit of the plume directly under
9 the river, but it's about 80 feet below the bottom of
10 the river. So, what have we found up to now? In the
11 clean-up process, essentially, there are three major
12 steps. One is to try and figure out how bad is the
13 situation. The second step is how do we clean up the
14 (inaudible). And the third step is obviously how do
15 we clean up the plume. Under step one, for the State
16 of California, PG&E is under consent agreement to
17 follow the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.
18 Under RCRA, the first phase or the first step is
19 outlined and the information can be found in the RCRA
20 facility investigation report. The second step will
21 be detailed in the upcoming document called the
22 Corrective Measure Study Report or the Feasibility
23 Study. And then finally, of course, the third step is
24 (inaudible). So, what have we learned so far? At
25 this particular point, because the hexavalent chromium

1 plume is so close to the Colorado River, the
2 Department of Toxic Substances Control has decided to
3 put the priority to the groundwater investigation and
4 clean-up over the soil contamination. Investigation
5 for the soil is still upcoming and we're (inaudible)
6 to determine the nature and extent of contamination.
7 For the groundwater, PG&E, since signing a consent
8 agreement back in 1996, has installed and actively
9 monitoring over 150 groundwater wells and they are
10 actively monitoring those wells. What we've also done
11 is to sample the Colorado River quarterly. And
12 through the low river water's down, you have to
13 (inaudible). What we've found is that the Colorado
14 River is not impacted by the hexavalent chromium.
15 What we do know right now is that the groundwater
16 investigations (inaudible) left to do. So, we know
17 enough information to actually (inaudible). As part
18 of the investigation, in fact in 2004, PG&E put in a
19 new well next to the river and we saw that there was
20 contamination at a location that's 60 or 70 feet away
21 from the river. So, we required PG&E immediately
22 begin extraction of the groundwater to keep the water
23 from the plume, so there is a reversal (inaudible) and
24 (inaudible) measure. As part of that active
25 extraction, since 2004, PG&E has actually removed over

1 200 million gallons of contaminated groundwater and
2 recovered over 4,700 pounds of chromium from the
3 (inaudible). As far as the soil investigation, as I
4 mentioned earlier, our priority right now is to
5 control the contamination of the groundwater and to
6 find a remedy for that. The soil, nevertheless, will
7 still need to be investigated. PG&E had identified 29
8 areas to investigate the extent of the contamination
9 because some soils have surfaced contamination. PG&E
10 has also, as part of that investigation, drafted the
11 soil sampling work plans and those work plans right
12 now are being reviewed (inaudible) agencies and the
13 Bureau of Reclamation is actually actively looking at
14 that as well. The second step is to determine how we
15 should clean-up the contamination that we've found so
16 far and what we're doing, and that's part of this
17 particular process, is trying to identify the final
18 groundwater and soil clean-up technologies that will
19 be used and really evaluated in the upcoming
20 documents, in particular the Correct Measure Study and
21 the Feasibility Study that I've mentioned earlier.
22 And some of the environmental impact effects analysis
23 will be conducted in the final report (inaudible)
24 Environmental Impact Report, (inaudible) comments from
25 stakeholders, agencies, some of their concerns. And

1 then, of course, at the end of the Environmental
2 Impact Report process, and once we have that
3 certified, we'll select a final remedy and we will go
4 ahead and (inaudible) final remedy. We will only
5 select the final remedy after we have public input
6 from stakeholders. So, that pretty much concludes
7 mine, and right now I'd like to turn presentation over
8 to Bobbette.

9 **MS. BIDDULPH:** Thank you, Aaron. I guess the first thing
10 that I really express at this meeting is that this is
11 really the first step of the environmental review
12 process, and that's getting from stakeholders, from
13 you, agency members, to really scope out the
14 environmental issues that we need to address in the
15 environmental analysis. We haven't really started our
16 technical analysis yet. We're just beginning. This
17 is the first opportunity to provide that input to us,
18 ask us questions, so that we are sure that we are
19 addressing all those questions and those ideas in that
20 environmental analysis as we move forward. Now, just
21 a few basics, if you will, an Environmental Impact
22 Report is required for the Topock remediation project.
23 Under the California Environmental Quality Act, DTSC
24 must prepare an EIR for any project that it proposes
25 to carry out that may cause a significant effect on

1 the environment. As Aaron described, the project
2 under review in this case is the clean-up of this
3 groundwater plume, as well as some of the soils
4 contamination that has occurred at the Topock
5 Compressor Station. These two issues, the groundwater
6 and the soils, are going to actually be analyzed in a
7 different level of detail in that environmental
8 document, and for that reason it's a Program
9 Environmental Impact Report. There will be more
10 detail on the clean-up of the groundwater plume
11 because we have more detail on how that's going to be
12 implemented and we will have more detail on that. As
13 for soils, some of those studies are still going to be
14 underway when the EIR gets published. So, we're going
15 to do our best job to project what those likely
16 effects will be, but it's anticipated that there will
17 be follow on environmental analysis that will actually
18 tier off this Program EIR to address the soils
19 contamination. And I actually jumped ahead a little
20 bit. I wanted to reiterate, as Aaron describes, that
21 the different approaches to clean-up both the soil and
22 the groundwater will be addressed in this study called
23 the Corrective Measure Study, Feasibility Study.
24 There will be one for groundwater and one for soils.
25 This slide actually talks a little bit about what I

1 just described about this concept of this being a
2 Program EIR and us having more detail on the
3 groundwater clean-up than we will have initially on
4 the soils clean-up. Now, this slide here provides
5 just a real laundry list of the issues that we're
6 going to be addressing in the Environmental Impact
7 Report. This is what we commonly refer to as a Full
8 Scope EIR, meaning we're going to be addressing all of
9 the potential environmental effects that the clean-up
10 project could potentially cause. And this is really
11 just a laundry listing of those topics and today we're
12 interested in hearing about any specific issues of
13 questions or ideas about the analysis that should be
14 conduct for any of these topical areas, or perhaps
15 we've missed one. As well, under the California
16 Environmental Quality Act there's a series of other
17 topics that are addressed in the CEQA document. The
18 first in this listing is alternatives to the proposed
19 projects, so what are the different ways that we could
20 clean-up this site of the groundwater and the soils,
21 and then comparing those alternatives. Maybe one
22 alternative has fewer environmental effects than
23 another. Really providing that information to flush
24 out what are the best approaches for the environmental
25 standpoint. As well, the document will summarize

1 those effects, those impacts that have been found to
2 be less than significant where there's really not
3 concern, but those conclusions will be substantiated.
4 We'll discuss how we got to that conclusion. If there
5 are any significant and unavoidable impacts, and
6 that's basically an impact for which there's no
7 feasible mitigation, those will be summarized and
8 there will be a description as to why feasible
9 mitigation is not possible, but of course the goal is
10 to identify mitigation approaches. As well, the
11 document will address irreversible changes, growth-
12 inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. And
13 cumulative impacts are those impacts that you look at
14 other projects that are occurring in the area or in
15 the region and consider what your project, the clean-
16 up of this site, in combination with those other
17 projects, considering these impacts together and
18 whether or not those effects might be detrimental.
19 So, as I mentioned, we're really at the beginning
20 stages here. There have been a lot of investigations
21 with hazardous materials and the contamination, but
22 we're just getting underway in terms of addressing
23 what the environmental effects of the clean-up actions
24 could be. And in order for us to conduct those
25 analyses, we're going to be looking to a variety of

1 resources, published reports, outreach to agencies.
2 We're also going to be contacting tribal members and
3 getting input from them and that input is confidential
4 to respect that requirement. As well, where we need
5 to, we'll be doing site specific studies to supplement
6 this (inaudible) information. So, perhaps going out
7 and doing some additional biological resource work on
8 the site or other sites (inaudible) to get the level
9 of detail that we need for analysis. Now, this chart
10 just provides a very simple graphic representation of
11 the process that is in front of us and it basically
12 shows the different ways that we're outreaching to
13 agencies and stakeholders in the community in terms of
14 fact sheets, which are the orange boxes, public
15 meetings as well as providing information in
16 information repositories, places people can go for the
17 information. So, the first column is where we're at
18 today. There will be other opportunities for input
19 during the Draft EIR review period and the Final EIR
20 review period. This schedule that we're on is for
21 these studies to be completed in the Spring of 2010
22 with those different opportunities for input
23 throughout the way. So, as we've mentioned several
24 times, the purpose of today's meeting is to gather
25 input on the EIR so we can move forward and conduct

1 that work with the benefit of that input. We're
2 interested in, for instance, hearing about what types
3 of environmental effects should be studied in the EIR,
4 whether you have potential ideas for alternative
5 approaches or mitigation measures that might reduce or
6 eliminate potential environmental impacts, or if you
7 also have project related questions. As you probably
8 gather today, we don't necessarily have all of the
9 details about how the remediation or the clean-up is
10 going to take place but there's different alternatives
11 that are being considered, and so answers to those
12 project related questions are also something that we
13 can take that input and find those answers throughout
14 this process. This slide summarizes the different
15 opportunities that we have during this public input
16 phase for providing that input and we're actually in
17 the second series of five public meetings. We'll be
18 having three more through this week and next. And
19 there really are a variety of ways in which you can
20 provide your input to us. Today, providing that input
21 verbally, as we are recording information digitally.
22 In addition, providing comments in writing, it's a
23 really good way to make sure that your input is
24 accurate. We can get that via a form that we passed
25 out today or a formal letter can be written. But

1 what's really important is that we get that input by
2 July 1st in order for us to kick off that environmental
3 review process.

4 **MS. MATSUMOTO:** For more information about the project, of
5 course, you can contact Aaron, myself. We also have a
6 media, public information, is up there in case the
7 media would like to get a hold of someone. We have
8 information repositories and what they are, are files
9 that keep the project documents in areas close to
10 where the public can access them. They all seem to be
11 a bit of a drive from Yuma, so I would recommend, in
12 addition to the administrative record in California,
13 the Topock website. All the documents are posted on
14 the website, as well as up-to-date information and I
15 think it's a very nice resource if you have access to
16 a computer. At this time, we would like to comments.
17 And if you have a comment, you would stand and tell us
18 your first name for conversational purposes. Let the
19 record note that there are no comments today and that
20 will officially end our comment portion, and if you
21 would like to ask any questions, we're open for
22 question and answer now. Okay. That's it. The
23 meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

24 --oOo--

25 - 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 28, 2008; that the
pages numbered 1 through 18 constitute said transcript;
that the same is a complete and accurate transcription of
the aforesaid to the best of my ability.

Dated June 26, 2008.



Kelli Wells, Transcriber
Statewide Transcription Services