Pig's Eye Dump Task Force

Notes for Pig's Eye Dump Task Force Meeting #11

Thursday, August 21, 2025
9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Virtual and in person 2nd floor - MPCA 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155

Members in Attendance

- Dan Scollan, Water Resources Ecologist, Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Amanda Cerne, Metropolitan Council (Alternate on behalf of Sam Paske)
- Melanie McMahon, Executive Project Lead – Mayor's Staff, City of Saint Paul
- Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County
- Dave Magnuson, Waste Regulation Supervisor, Dakota County
- Caleb Johnson, Environmental Program Manager, Washington County
- Nathan Wallerstedt, Project Management Branch Chief, Army Corps of Engineers - Saint Paul District
- Kirk Koudelka, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- David Bell, Environmental Research Scientist, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Members not in Attendance

- Jimmy Francis, Mayor, City of South Saint Paul
- Bill Sumner, Council Member, City of Newport

Other Contributors

- Pam Anderson, MPCA
- Hans Neve, MPCA
- Stephen Mikkelson, MPCA
- Corinne Stremmel, MPCA
- Ashley Thompson, Zan Associates
- Kara Van Lerberghe, Zan Associates

Presenters

- Hans Neve, MPCA
- Pam Anderson, MPCA

1. Welcome, introductions, agenda

Hans Neve (MPCA) kicked off the meeting, thanked everyone for being in attendance, introduced himself, and went over the agenda. Task force members and consultants followed by introducing themselves.

2. Plan for remaining meetings

Hans Neve (MPCA) shared that the team intended on sharing a visualization of the Dig and Line option, but are unable to due to time, contract limitations, and specific details that we don't have. He then went over upcoming

meetings which will include finalizing remediation, restoration and funding plan recommendations a in October, reviewing the report in December, and final approval of the report in January.

3. Update on stakeholder conversations

Hans Neve (MPCA) gave an overview of two stakeholders meetings that the team had which include the FAA/USDA/St. Paul Airport and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. During these meetings, the FAA/USDA/St. Paul Airport shared concerns about increasing wildlife and flight disturbances, a construction project in the flight path, and any changes to topography. Hans shared that the engineering team feels these are concerns that can be addressed during the planning and design stage of the project. Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County) asked how the island construction project completed by the Army Corps of Engineers was related to the concerns FAA shared. Nathan Wallerstedt (Army Corps of Engineers) shared that the FAA were involved in the island building project through the typical design process and the project was ultimately allowed to move forward. He added that the current state of the islands have attracted shorebirds but that may change in the future as the growth develops. Kirk Koudelka (MPCA) asked if Hans could elaborate on the FAA's safety concerns. Hans added that there are three categories of concerns they shared: bird and aircraft interaction, wildlife attraction and flight path disturbances during construction, and wildlife attraction after restoration. Hans added that these concerns would be addressed during the more detailed planning process but that it is important to share these concerns with the task force. Kirk Koudelka (MPCA) added that they had concerns about the size of the dig and line structure as well. David Bell (MDH) clarified that they shared concerns but that nothing is a deal breaker for the options the task force is considering at this point. Melanie McMahon (City of Saint Paul) confirmed that they would be part of the permitting and plan review process in the future. Nathan asked if the USFW were supportive or unsupportive of any of the options, and Hans shared that they mentioned that the area is in a bird flight path and a heron rookery and shared info of how they typically work together with the FAA to address their concerns while also addressing wildlife. Caleb Johnson (Washington County) asked if there were any mention of threatened or endangered species and how that would impact the site. Dan Scollan (DNR) added that the DNR could look into what some potential concerns might be. David Bell (MDH) asked if they knew how much the dig and line option would need to be altered to meet the FAA requirements. Hans responded that they don't have the answers right now but that would likely be determined during the planning process.

4. Task Force homework report out

Hans Neve (MPCA) gave a background on the remediation options that the task force have talked about which includes targeted waste relocation and filter, new cover, dig and haul no backfill, and dig and line. He also went over different categories of restoration that the task force has discussed which include active use recreation, passive use recreation, natural area, and industrial/commercial. He then asked the task force to share out what their organization's top priorities are and how they would rank remediation and restoration options.

Melanie McMahon (City of Saint Paul) shared that they have had a lot of conversations within the city about this area for years but especially the last meeting working with their parks and recreation groups. The city does not have a specific ranking on the remediation options at this point because they still have some questions and thoughts that they are thinking through. The elements that are important to them include looking at the practicality of it, who is able to fund it, and the practical impact and consequences. A priority to them is that the site is safe and accessible. For restoration specifically, they want to review the great river passage master plan and the goals for the city. They would like to see future use that aligns with the plan which includes passive recreation opportunities such as hiking, canoe/kayak launches, wildlife observation, and walking trails that are safe and accessible.

Dave Magnuson (Dakota County) shared that their priority is the least expensive option that truly protects the environment, which only applies to some of the options they have looked at. For end use, they would refer to the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County. They don't want a solution that has a negative impact on Dakota County, specifically the impacts to the wasteshed in the Twin Cities. Dave shared that storing the Pig's Eye Dump waste at a Dakota County landfill would result in them losing out on over $100 million in host fees unless the state of Minnesota picked up that fee. He added that the waste would fill up their landfills and cause future waste to have to travel farther as new landfills will not be built in the Twin Cities. Their number one remediation option is the Dig and Line due to it being environmentally protective and does not have a negative impact on Dakota County. If funding for the Dig and Line isn't available, the new cover option is low on their list, and they have hesitations about how protective it is. The other two options are off the table for Dakota County.

Caleb Johnson (Washington County) shared concerns about not wanting to do further harm to downstream communities and that the local communities are the ones to decide restoration of the site. Washington County leaders have expressed support for the Dig and Haul option. He added that he wants to validate Dave's concerns for Dakota County from a revenue and environmental standpoint and pointed out that this is a larger regional solid waste management problem and this project ought to be a catalyst to reimagine how we manage waste in the metro area. In terms of priority, public health and the environment is a top priority and Washington County has no feedback on the other three remediation options.

Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County) shared information with other county commissioners and went through as much information as she could. She would echo Melanie's comments about accessibility, safety, and the passive recreation future uses. She reiterated that cost is a factor but not the number one factor for Ramsey County in determining the site's future. She shared concerns about hauling the waste away to another area and the impact to other communities as well as being unsure what waste is currently in the dump and it being more harmful than anticipated. She emphasized that the funding and cost will need to be a larger collective effort with participation through the federal government. Overall, she shared concerns about feasibility of remediation and environmental harm and that Ramsey County would like to see its future use as a natural area.

David Bell (Department of Health) shared that public health protection is their number one priority as well as safety and accessibility. Ultimately, from a public health standpoint they would like the waste to be either fully removed or fully contained so Dig and Haul and Dig and Lise are at the top of their list. He also shared concerns about fish consumption and water quality and emphasized the importance of containing or removing contamination. For the restoration options, they would like to see future use as a natural area with passive recreation. He also shared concerns about unknown contamination and material in the dump and that cost is not their number one factor but still a consideration. As far as ranking, the dig and line and dig and haul are their top choices.

Dan Scollan (DNR) and DNR staff internally did a regional environmental assessment to guide their discussions about Pig's Eye Dump. The outcome of that discussion was determining that their top priorities are surface and groundwater protection as well as protecting fish and wildlife, specifically Battle Creek, Pig's Eye Lake, Mississippi River, and the heron rookery nearby. Their top choice for reuse is passive recreation. For remediation, the dig and haul option is their top choice due to it being most protective of nearby water resources. There were questions and concerns about feasibility of dig and line option in a floodplain environment, high operating cost, and lifespan.

Amanda Cerne (Met Council) acknowledged that they have a lot of roles and perspectives, they think it's important to keep asking questions and looking for answers before making recommendations. She added that a top priority for them is the Metro Wastewater Recovery Facility, its future and need to expand, and unknown potential impacts. She also added that protecting public health and clean water is a top priority as well. She added that they would like to see which option has the biggest impact on the quality of water and see a risk-reward analysis.

Nathan Wallerstedt (Army Corps of Engineers) shared their highest priority is driven by what the local community sees as the vision for the site. In General, Army corps doesn't typically do projects without a partner and guidance from local City or County and community to drive decision making. He also acknowledged that they have a desire for a cleaner and more sustainable environment as they manage thousands of acres of land in the state. He shared there may be opportunities for partnership with the Corps depending on the details of the future site. Overall, they don't have a ranking of the remediation options. He mentioned that the Corps has different areas of involvement with projects like this, so they want to balance all of the different priorities.

Kirk Koudelka (MPCA) shared that they want to see a more protective option selected, so either the Dig and Haul or Dig and Line options. In terms of restoration options, it will be driven by the remedial design. There may be some limitations, for example, if they choose an option with a covered landfill, trees will not be able to exist on the landfill. They are open to supporting nearby industries that have environmental benefits such as the wood waste facility and water treatment facility along the edge of the site.

Dave Magnuson (Dakota County) added that he wants to make sure they are looking at all impacts. He added that a large amount of the waste is in water, and it will be challenging to move wet waste and will need to be dried first. He also added that he thinks the dig and haul option will take longer and that the new landfill design can address the wet waste. Overall, he wants to make sure they are looking at all considerations.

David Bell (MDH) added that there are a lot of unknowns to the timeline of the options and acknowledges that both the dig and line and dig and haul will take a long time and that more details will need to be sorted in a future study. Victoria added that they also don't want to make the situation worse and have hesitations about moving it someplace new but acknowledged there is no easy answer.

Kirk Koudelka asked the task force if it would be helpful to have a list of recommendations and decision items to review at the next meeting and the task force confirmed that it would be.

4. Funding

Hans Neve (MPCA) kicked off the funding options portion of the meeting and handed it off to Pam Anderson (MPCA). Pam shared that it would need to be a collection of options as there is no one specific pot of money to utilize. She went over different funding options for restoration and funding at the state, federal, and local levels. Victoria Reinhardt (MPCA) had questions about the Superfund process and the responsible parties and how identifying them would work. Melanie McMahon (City of Saint Paul) responded that identifying responsible parties would be a lengthy process that could result in legal battles that would be costly and timely. She also emphasized that the City of Saint Paul does not have any funds to address the dump. Victoria added that she thinks it could be beneficial to create a funding program to help fund the cleanup.

Hans Neve asked if the task force had any reflections or questions about the funding portion of the presentation. Victoria emphasized that cost is a factor but not the top priority but wants to make sure it is feasible. Kirk added that previous cleanup costs seemed out of reach and now they seem normal, so there is an evolution and so utilizing partnerships will be effective. He explained that the task force will help guide the MPCA with a united vision, even if they don't have the details of a technical or feasibility study yet. He added that this not just a Saint Paul problem, it's a national problem and potentially a new dump program could be created. He explained that the cost of the project may be more attainable if you break it down to payments over a period of time compared to paying it all at once up front. Kirk emphasized that other funds have been created to deal with similar issues, so the task force could recommend a new tool to deal with this issue. Melanie agreed and supported those ideas and appreciated that these conversations were happening. She added that she wants to be able to show a viable path for the congressional offices with examples of funding programs. Caleb Johnson (Washington County) asked for more details around inventive for private participation and past examples and if any conversations about private participation have happened for this project. Pam Anderson shared that for another project they asked a responsible party to come to the table and negotiate outside of the superfund process but typically do so privately. Victoria asked about when the last time someone has dumped in Pig's Eye Dump and Hans responded that it was closed in 1972. Kirk added that identifying all responsible parties are difficult to identify due to lack of documentation. Caleb asked if there was enough data on contamination to know about the health cost impact of not doing anything. Hans responded that the data they have collected is at the site, but the impact is larger than that since contamination is traveling. It's difficult to quantify contamination caused the father you get away due to multiple sources. Kirk added that this site is more of an ecological risk, and the health concern pathway is through fish consumption compared to direct drinking water.

5. Public Comment

One member of the public appreciated the comments and acknowledgement of the area being designated parkland and the city's vision for the site. They then read a statement from the Southeast Community Organization that communicated desire for full removal of waste and restoration of the site. They emphasized the importance of cleaning up the site for the health of the environment, nearby communities, and wildlife.

Another member of the public shared that it is important to follow up with the responsible parties who dumped to identify what waste has been placed there and get their support for federal funding. They added that they should also address waste that is farther north of the site. They suggested adding a line item to Saint Paul trash service as a funding source.

Another member of the public added that the site will always have a dewatering problem with the waste and that additional sampling to identify problem spots may ease concerns about causing additional issues. They added that if you are going to spend the time digging it up, why keep it here near these communities instead of moving it away with a better place of handling it. They encouraged looking into ways to utilize the waste for energy as well.

Hans opened up opportunity for public comments from online participants but there were no comments.

6. Task force discussion

Hans kicked off task force discussion and asked if the task force had any questions or comments about next steps. Nathan Wallerstedt (Army Corps) said he did not have a lot to add but would appreciate it if the team

could draft recommendations for future review. Amanda Cerne (Met Council) acknowledged the complexity of the project and appreciated insights. Melanie McMahon (City of St. Paul) did not have anything additional to add. Dan Scollan (DNR) shared he is interested in supporting some of the funding ideas they discussed during the meeting. He added that two of the task force representatives were not in attendance, so would like to hear their input as well. Dave Magnuson (Dakota County) did not have anything to add. David Bell (MDH) added that this project is a good example of a project that could create a new fund and would like to advocate for that. He added that it seems prudent to make sure they include in the recommendation funding options since they are recommending two expensive remediation options. Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County) shared that she learned they have some idea of responsible parties and interest of sampling to identify hot spots in the area. She added that it would be helpful to have a list of recommendations before the October meeting l so the task force members can share it with their organizations. She emphasized that it would be helpful to get more data about hot spots and what contamination is present. Caleb Johnson (Washington County) thought the discussion was helpful and the input from community members. He added that it is cheap to throw material away so this could be part of a potentially larger change to the regional waste system. He mentioned that he is interested in seeing the list of responsible parties without committing them to any liability so that organizations are aware if they contributed. He reiterated that there are a lot of external factors that could impact the different remediation strategies and their effectiveness and the importance of creative solutions. Melanie reiterated that she has concerns about naming responsible parties in the report due to it being outside the scope of the task force and inability to name all parties which would delay the goal of moving forward. Victoria Reinhardt asked for clarification on the responsible party identification process and the task force discussed what that process could look like. Caleb clarified that he is not interested in naming responsible parties in the report but what the implications would be and the investment of what that effort would take.

7. Adjourn

Hans Neve (MPCA) adjourned the meeting.