

Public Participation Plan
Housatonic Basin Natural Resources Restoration Project
Adopted by Trustee SubCouncil for Connecticut
July 22, 2003

Restoration Project Overview

The Housatonic River Basin Natural Resources Restoration Project (hereinafter, "Housatonic Project") is a product of the natural resource damage assessment and restoration process established under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act ("CERCLA"). Pursuant to an October 27th 2000 Consent Decree among the United States, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the State of Connecticut, the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts and the General Electric Corporation (GE), GE paid over \$15 million in natural resource damages, of which approximately \$7.5 million dollars (plus interest) are available for restoration projects in Connecticut.

Before the funds allocated to Connecticut may be used to implement natural resource restoration projects, the Natural Resource Trustees for the Housatonic Project in Connecticut (representatives from the State of Connecticut, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) must develop a Natural Resources Restoration Plan ("Restoration Plan"). The Restoration Plan must evaluate a reasonable number of restoration alternatives and explain the rationale behind the choices made regarding the restoration projects that will be implemented. In addition, the final Restoration Plan cannot be adopted and implemented without the opportunity for public comment.

The development and implementation of this Public Participation Plan, as well as the final Restoration Plan Document, is the responsibility of the following groups.

- ❑ **Trustee SubCouncil for Connecticut:** The SubCouncil has the authority and the responsibility for making decisions regarding how the funds will be utilized in Connecticut. The SubCouncil consists of the Trustee Representatives for:
 - ❑ Commissioner of the CT State Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP)
 - ❑ The Under Secretary of Oceans and Atmosphere of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA)
 - ❑ Regional Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5.
- ❑ **Trustee Work Group (TWG):** The Trustee Work Group is comprised of technical staff of Trustee agencies. This group is responsible for the production of work products and draft documents for action by the Trustee SubCouncil.
- ❑ **Technical Consultant Group (Consultant Team):** The Consultant Team is comprised of planners, engineers and scientists from Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. and

Milone & MacBroom, Inc. and public relations professionals from Solutions Public Relations & Marketing. This group will assist the Trustees in the development of the Restoration Plan.

Additional background information, an overview of the planning process and the nature of public participation in the development of a Restoration Plan are included in the "Housatonic Basin Natural Resources Restoration Project, Restoration Planning Process Document," dated March 2003.

Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The purpose of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to encourage the active participation of the public in the formation and implementation of the Housatonic River Basin Natural Resources Restoration Plan for Connecticut, by:

- Identifying and describing the various media outlets and forms of communication that will be used to encourage dialogue between interested citizens, the Trustee SubCouncil for Connecticut, the Trustee Work Group and the Consultant Team; and
- Identifying and communicating the roles of each of the above-mentioned groups and clearly describing the process by which projects will be reviewed and selected.

Goals of the PPP

- 1) Provide an open and inclusive planning process.
- 2) Assure that all interested members of the public are given opportunities to have a meaningful impact on the outcome of the planning process and in the implementation of the approved Restoration Plan.
- 3) Inform the public of the planning process and the opportunities for public input.

Opportunities for Public Participation

- A. There are two formal avenues for public participation. They include:
 - **CT SubCouncil Public Forums**, The State and Federal trustees will have monthly meetings in the community to receive input and information from the public about the development and implementation of the Restoration Plan. Presentations will be given by the trustees on project progress and findings. Additional public meetings or workshops may also be held at critical project milestones. A schedule of these meetings will be posted with the Connecticut Office of the Secretary of State and on the Internet, and public notices regarding upcoming meetings will be submitted to the media as noted under item B below.

- **CTAG Meetings:** The Trustee for Connecticut has formed the CT Trustee's Advisory Group (CTAG) to advise the State on the development and implementation of the Natural Resources Restoration Plan. This group is comprised of 19 organizations (See Attachment B, List of Organizations Making Up the CT Trustee's Advisory Group for list of members). The role of the CTAG is to represent the point of view of its member organizations and advise the CT Trustee through its review, comment and participation in the development of restoration planning documents and decisions. The CTAG participants are also expected to act as liaisons with their respective organizations to foster the exchange of information and ideas. Additional information regarding the role of CTAG is included in Attachment C – "Housatonic Basin Natural Resources Restoration Project, Connecticut Trustee's Advisory Group, Purpose and Role in the Restoration Process." This group has already met several times and will continue to meet monthly, with a published schedule of public meetings. The public is welcome at all CTAG meetings.

B. In addition to the SubCouncil Forums and CTAG meetings, there are several other opportunities summarized below that will be utilized to disseminate information and notices about key project milestones to the press and public.

1. Web site: A web site dedicated to this project has been created at <http://www.housatonicrestoration.org>. This site will be updated frequently and will contain postings regarding key project milestones, scheduled meetings, work products and contact information for the Trustee SubCouncil, TWG members, Consultant Team members and CTAG members. Fact sheets and summaries of project progress and findings will also be posted.
2. Press Releases: Information about the progress of the project as well as information at key milestones will be released periodically to the media.
 - a. Press releases will be distributed to: Bethel Beacon, Brookfield Journal, CT Post, Kent Good Times Dispatch, Lakeville Journal, Litchfield County Times, Litchfield Enquirer, New Haven Register, New Milford Times, News Times, Register Citizen, Republican-American, The New Milford Spectrum, Voices and The Newtown Bee. At the time that the draft Restoration Plan will be issued for public review and comment, an announcement of availability will also be placed in the Federal Register.
3. Restoration Plan Flow Chart: This chart will depict the progress of the planning process. It will be posted on the Web site and will be available at meetings.
4. Fact Sheets: Written summaries will be created for presentation at meetings and distribution to interested parties to increase understanding of the restoration planning process and results. Potential topics include:
 - Project Eligibility Criteria

- Project Evaluation Criteria
 - Project Proposal Submittal Requirements
 - Results of Project Eligibility Determination
 - Results of Detailed Project Evaluation
 - Recommended Restoration Plan Summary
5. Meeting Notices: All meeting notices will be sent to area print media and radio stations.
 - a. In addition to the print media mentioned above, meeting notices will be sent to area radio stations, including: WAPJ-FM, WKZE-FM & AM, WLAD-AM, WQQQ-FM, WZBG-93.7FM, WICC-AM, WPKN-FM, WSHU-FM.
 6. Email: An extensive email list will be developed, updated on a regular basis, and used to disseminate meeting information and project updates.
 7. Designated contacts: encourage dialogue and provide a mechanism for citizens to submit questions and comments prior to or after each meeting, the TWG and the Consultant Team will designate a person that the public may contact by either mail or email.

Project Milestones

As the project progresses, there are a number of key milestones where public participation and input will be emphasized. A description of each milestone, as well as the opportunities for public input at each step, follows. Public comments will be collected through both verbal communication at public meetings and written communication outside of public meetings. A deadline for receiving public comment will be established for each step of the process.

1. Phase I: Development of the Restoration Planning Process Document and the Public Participation Plan.

- As part of the scheduled SubCouncil and CTAG meetings, the Restoration Planning Process Document and Public Participation Plan will be introduced to the public, with the ultimate goal of adoption of the RPPD and PPP. During Phase I the public will be invited to comment on the proposed planning process outlined in the RPPD as well as the procedures envisioned to inform the public through the PPP.

2. Phase II: Restoration Plan Development.

A. Development of Eligibility Criteria to Select Projects.

- The Eligibility Criteria will be used to initially review project proposals. These criteria are mandated by the federal regulations governing the use of the restoration funds, as well as other federal, state, and local laws. A public meeting will be conducted, or held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled SubCouncil meeting to ensure that all stakeholders understand the Eligibility Criteria and to obtain comments from the public on the Eligibility Criteria.

B. Development of Evaluation Criteria that will be used to prioritize proposals for further consideration.

- Evaluation criteria that will be used to assess and rank eligible projects will encompass a wide range of environmental, technical, economic and regulatory factors. A public meeting will be conducted, or held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled SubCouncil meeting, to obtain comment from the public on the Draft Evaluation Criteria. Public input on these evaluation criteria before adoption by the CT Trustee SubCouncil is critical. Public comments will be used to reassess the evaluation criteria before adoption by the SubCouncil.

C. Development of requirements for project proposals.

- Guidelines for the submittal of project proposals, including formats, contents and scope, will be developed by the Trustee SubCouncil to promote consistency. The public will be invited to comment to the Trustee SubCouncil regarding the structure of the requests for proposals. A public meeting will be conducted or held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled SubCouncil meeting to obtain comments from the public.
- In addition, a workshop will be held to assist interested parties to understand how to develop project proposals that meet the Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria and to answer questions about proposal expectations.

D. Eligibility determination of project proposals.

- A special meeting will be held to inform the public of the findings of the preliminary screening of proposals using the eligibility criteria and to answer any questions regarding the results.

E. Evaluation of eligible projects.

- Updates will be given at the monthly Trustee SubCouncil meetings on the status of individual project reviews and the evaluation process. Following the evaluation of all eligible project proposals using the Evaluation Criteria, a summary of the projects that will receive further consideration will be presented to the public during a public meeting held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled SubCouncil meeting. During this meeting, the SubCouncil will seek comments and answer questions from the public regarding the results of the evaluation process. These comments will be used to reassess the draft project ratings and subsequent adoption by the SubCouncil.

F. Detailed Analysis of Projects and Restoration Alternatives.

- Each project identified for further consideration will undergo a detailed analysis of technical feasibility, implementability, costs, potential benefits, and potential social and environmental impacts. Projects will also be grouped into alternatives for an environmental impact analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) requirements. The results of these detailed analyses, which will identify those projects to be incorporated into the Restoration Plan, will be presented to the public during a regularly scheduled SubCouncil meeting. During this meeting, the SubCouncil will

solicit comments and answer questions from the public regarding the evaluation results. These comments will be used to reassess the results of the detailed analysis before adoption by the SubCouncil.

G. Development of Restoration Plan Draft.

- The draft Restoration Plan will provide the results of the entire project proposal evaluation and restoration plan development process, identify the projects (i.e., the Preferred Alternative) that will receive funding and the environmental impact analysis. The draft Plan will be presented at a regularly scheduled public meeting, and feedback from the public will be solicited. Based on this feedback, a final draft Restoration Plan will be proposed.

H. Approval of the Final Restoration Plan.

- The public will be invited to review and comment on the final draft Restoration Plan as part of a formal public hearing process. Based on public comment, the Final Restoration will be prepared and presented to the SubCouncil for approval.

Document Release and Information Repositories.

Documents related to development of the Restoration Plan will be published throughout the process, and will be modified to reflect public comment. As drafts of these documents are developed and modified to reflect public comment, they will be uploaded as Adobe Acrobat files (PDF) onto the Web site maintained by the Consultant Team (www.housatonicrestoration.org).

In addition to electronic access to documents, the SubCouncil will establish information repositories within the Housatonic River watershed in Connecticut. Candidate locations for repositories include:

- a. Cornwall Public Library, 30 Pine Street, Cornwall, CT*
- b. Kent Memorial Library, 32 North Main Street, Kent, CT*
- c. Housatonic Valley Association, 150 Kent Road, Cornwall Bridge, CT*
- d. CT Department of Environmental Protection, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT
- e. EPA Records Center, Boston, MA*
- f. Offices of the regional planning organizations as well as in public libraries in the watershed, that include the towns of Salisbury, New Milford, Danbury, Shelton and Stratford.

* US EPA established repositories

The documents that will be sent to these repositories includes:

- Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the National Resources Trustees
- Restoration Planning Process Document and Public Participation Plan
- Drafts and adopted/published documents

- ❑ Meeting minutes
- ❑ List of contacts for the SubCouncil, CTAG and the Consultant Team
- ❑ Work products prepared for the SubCouncil that is intended for publication.