Using Focused Conversations/Guided Discussions as an Early Outreach Tool

DIANE RUSSELL U.S. EPA REGION 5 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COORDINATOR

DOUG SARNO – FORUM FACILITATION GROUP – PRESIDENT

DAVE SOMMERS SAGINAW-TITTABAWASSEE RIVERS CONTAMINATION COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP PRESIDENT

U.S. EPA COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT TRAINING CONFERENCE
ATLANTA, GA
AUGUST 4-6, 2015

So – what is this?

- Focused Conversation (*IAP2 handbook*): a step-by-step method of leading people through certain phases of reflection, enabling them to process their experience as a group.
- Guided Discussion (*Babylon online dictionary – Learning, Performance and Training Definitions*): A learning experience in which students participate in an instructor-controlled, interactive process of sharing information and experiences related to achieving an instructional objective.

Why would we use it?

- Helps communities provide input that informs decision makers on specific issues early in the process.
  - Results of discussion provide specific outcomes vs. traditional “listening session” or Q&A.
- Robust discussion of bigger picture and impacts allows for more informed and knowledgeable community.
- Agency gains a better community perspective through multiple interactions.
- Communities feel more a part of decision making process.

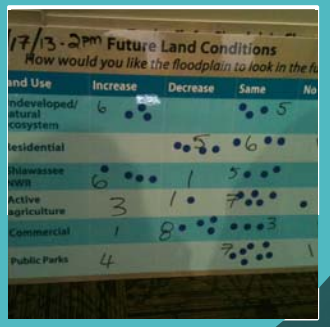
Today's Discussion

In the field

- Overview of a site in Michigan where this tool was used
- Results of effort
- Reflections from on the ground

Best Practice

- Elements of this application that may be useful to carry forward for your needs



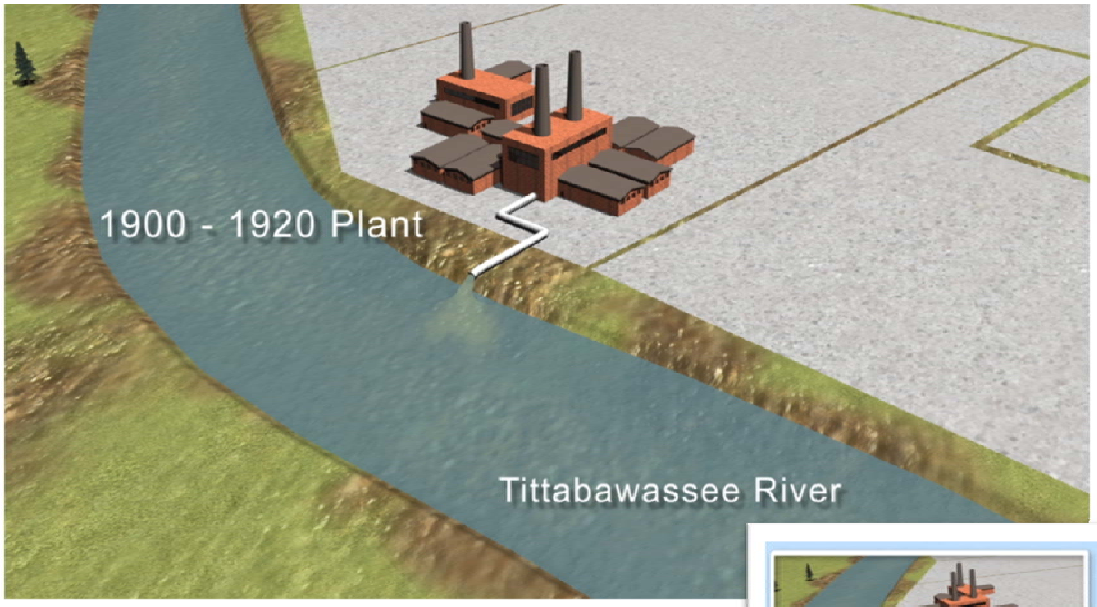
Interactive exercise

In the Field

THE USE OF FOCUSED CONVERSATION/DIRECTED DISCUSSION ON THE GROUND

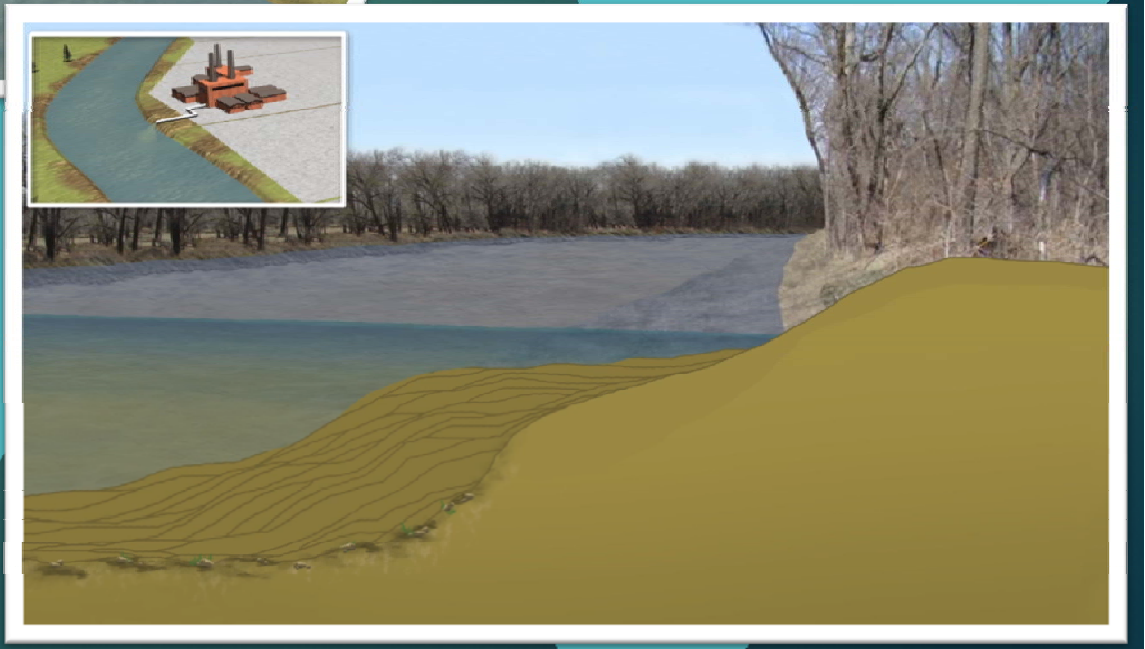
The Tittabawassee River/Saginaw River and Bay site

The environmental issue



Historical waste practices from Dow Chemical Michigan Plant discharged contamination into the Tittabawassee River

Those discharges included dioxin and furans which then deposited into the river sediment and floodplain



Clean up plan

- EPA with our partners committed to getting to a cleanup plan to address dioxin contamination
- 24 miles of river, 4,500 acres of floodplain affected

The challenge

Many turned off by the process going on for decades

Strongly differing opinions/accounts/versions of dioxin impacts

Over 600 floodplain property owners would be affected.

Outreach as a solution

- Our solution – OUTREACH!! ☺
  - Early input makes for a more meaningful proposed plan
    - What does this community value when weighing trade-offs that come with cleanup?
  - Design outreach that captures many voices on specific topics
    - Meetings not designed to rehash old arguments, but to explore specific questions.

Fundamental Elements

This site had several elements that made using Focused Conversation/Discussion a possibility:

Commitment by agency to conduct enhanced community engagement at site

Financial and personnel resources

Time before a decision would need to be made

- We planned for outreach to take place more than a year ahead of the proposed cleanup plan.

Outreach methods/design

Goals

- The goals of this outreach effort were to:
  - Understand community values about the current state of the floodplain & desires for future conditions and uses.
  - Obtain feedback on the possible tradeoffs that come with the cleanup options.
  - Identify what other information may be needed by the community.

“Tier” Groups

- The “Tier” indicates the outreach commitment for EPA based on how critical the group’s input is.

Priority Group	Description
1st Tier	The individuals and groups that will be most directly affected by EPA’s Tittabawassee floodplain cleanup decision
2nd Tier	Groups that are important because of the nature of their impact on the community and concerns regarding EPA’s cleanup decisions
3rd Tier	Groups that are important in the community but may not be directly affected by EPA’s Tittabawassee floodplain cleanup decision

Delivery Methods

Methods identified to interact with tier groups include:

- Organize a series of small group guided discussions with 1st tier groups at convenient times and places
- Invite 2nd tier groups or individuals to meet or attend standing meeting
- Informal comments can be offered or taken at any time from groups/individuals from all tiers

Materials

Materials supporting outreach efforts:

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

TITTABAWASSEE RIVER FLOODPLAIN SOILS OUTREACH STRATEGY
ADDENDUM #1 TO THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN FOR THE
TITTABAWASSEE RIVER, SAGINAW RIVER AND BAY SITE
FEBRUARY 2013

OVERVIEW

The Tittabawassee River, Saginaw River and Bay Site includes areas in and along a 24-mile stretch of the Tittabawassee River south of the confluence of the Chippewa River, the 22-mile Saginaw River and portions of the 1,143 square mile Saginaw Bay. The rivers and floodplains include residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and agricultural areas of Midland, Saginaw and Bay Counties in Michigan. The Saginaw Bay watershed is one of Michigan's most diverse areas – its rich resources support agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, outdoor recreation and a vast variety of wildlife. In the Tittabawassee River, dioxins and furans are the primary contaminants in sediment, riverbanks and floodplain soil. These contaminants came from historical releases from The Dow Chemical Company's Midland Plants.

EPA, in coordination with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, is requiring Dow to evaluate cleanup options at the Site under a legal agreement that was signed in 2010 between EPA, DEQ and Dow. Activities to be carried out under the agreement fall into three critical categories:

- Limiting contact with bare floodplain soil in areas frequently used by people
- Controlling movement of highly contaminated soil and sediment through early actions
- Developing comprehensive long-term cleanup options for the rivers and bay

The current focus is on the Tittabawassee River because upstream cleanup is needed before EPA can move ahead with the Saginaw River and Bay. EPA's initial strategy for comprehensive long-term cleanup was to divide the Tittabawassee River into seven segments for development of upstream-to-downstream cleanup options. The cleanup decisions for each segment would have addressed contaminated sediment, river banks and floodplain soils concurrently.

As the cleanup has moved forward, EPA recognized that cleanup decisions for an upstream segment that represents a small fraction of the Tittabawassee River floodplain could establish precedents for downstream floodplain properties. Therefore, EPA has developed a refined approach that will allow the entire floodplain population to be engaged and participate in the decision-making process at the same time. The intention is to maximize input before the cleanups are proposed or selected. EPA believes that up-front community engagement will increase participation in selected cleanups while providing property owners with certainty about what cleanup will be offered, even if implementation is staggered over several years. Comprehensive decision-making for the floodplains all at the same time is likely to result in overall faster cleanup and risk reduction for the floodplain.

EPA's revised strategy for comprehensive cleanup includes the following elements:

- Continued selection and implementation of upstream-to-downstream cleanup for in-channel sediment and river banks for Segments 2 – 7 of the Tittabawassee River. (Segment 1 cleanup was selected in 2011, is under way and is expected to be complete in 2013.)

CIP Addendum

TITTABAWASSEE RIVER FLOODPLAIN SOIL
ALTERNATIVES ARRAY

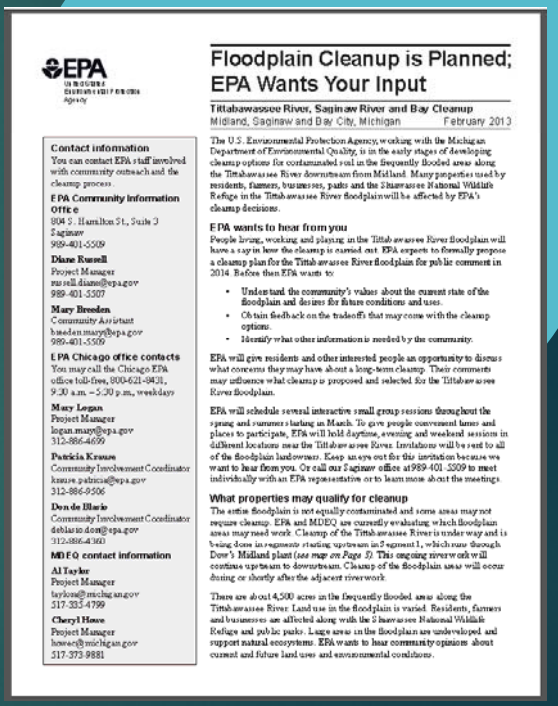
Tittabawassee & Saginaw River Team

PREPARED BY:
TITTABAWASSEE & SAGINAW RIVER TEAM

PREPARED FOR AND SUBMITTED BY:
THE DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY

JANUARY 18, 2013
DOW SUBMITTAL NUMBER : 2013.003

Alternatives Array



EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

Floodplain Cleanup is Planned;
EPA Wants Your Input

Tittabawassee River, Saginaw River and Bay Cleanup
Midland, Saginaw and Bay City, Michigan — February 2013

Contact information
You can contact EPA staff involved with community outreach and the cleanup process.

EPA Community Information Office
804 S. Hamilton St., Suite 3
Saginaw
989-401-5509

Diane Russell
Project Manager
russell.diane@epa.gov
989-401-5507

Mary Breeden
Community Assistant
breeden.mary@epa.gov
989-401-5509

EPA Chicago office contacts
You may call the Chicago EPA office toll-free, 800-621-8431, 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., weekdays

Mary Logan
Project Manager
logan.mary@epa.gov
312-886-4699

Patricia Krause
Community Involvement Coordinator
krause.patricia@epa.gov
312-886-9506

Deirdre Illavis
Community Involvement Coordinator
deblaric.deir@epa.gov
312-886-4360

MDEQ contact information

Al Taylor
Project Manager
taylora@michigan.gov
517-335-4799

Cheryl Howe
Project Manager
howec@michigan.gov
517-373-9881

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, working with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, is in the early stages of developing cleanup options for contaminated soil in the frequently flooded areas along the Tittabawassee River downstream from Midland. Many properties used by residents, farmers, businesses, parks and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in the Tittabawassee River floodplain will be affected by EPA's cleanup decisions.

EPA wants to hear from you

People living, working and playing in the Tittabawassee River floodplain will have a say in how the cleanup is carried out. EPA expects to formally propose a cleanup plan for the Tittabawassee River floodplain for public comment in 2014. Before then EPA wants to:

- Understand the community's values about the current state of the floodplain and desires for future conditions and uses.
- Obtain feedback on the tradeoffs that may come with the cleanup options.
- Identify what other information is needed by the community.

EPA will give residents and other interested people an opportunity to discuss what concerns they may have about a long-term cleanup. Their comments may influence what cleanup is proposed and selected for the Tittabawassee River floodplain.

EPA will schedule several interactive small group sessions throughout the spring and summer starting in March. To give people convenient times and places to participate, EPA will hold daytime, evening and weekend sessions in different locations near the Tittabawassee River. Invitations will be sent to all of the floodplain landowners. Keep an eye out for this invitation because we want to hear from you. Or call our Saginaw office at 989-401-5509 to meet individually with an EPA representative or to learn more about the meetings.

What properties may qualify for cleanup

The entire floodplain is not equally contaminated and some areas may not require cleanup. EPA and MDEQ are currently evaluating which floodplain areas may need work. Cleanup of the Tittabawassee River is under way and is being done in segments starting upstream in Segment 1, which runs through Dow's Midland plant (*see map on Page 3*). This ongoing riverwork will continue upstream to downstream. Cleanup of the floodplain areas will occur during or shortly after the adjacent riverwork.

There are about 4,500 acres in the frequently flooded areas along the Tittabawassee River. Land use in the floodplain is varied. Residents, farmers and businesses are affected along with the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge and public parks. Large areas in the floodplain are undeveloped and support natural ecosystems. EPA wants to hear community opinions about current and future land uses and environmental conditions.

Fact Sheet

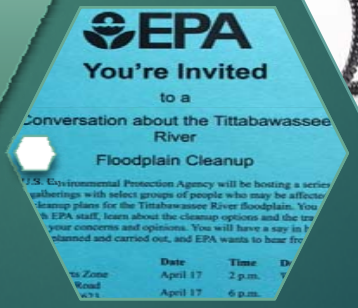
How we let people know

Mailed fact sheet with discussion content

Mailed invitations (up to 3)

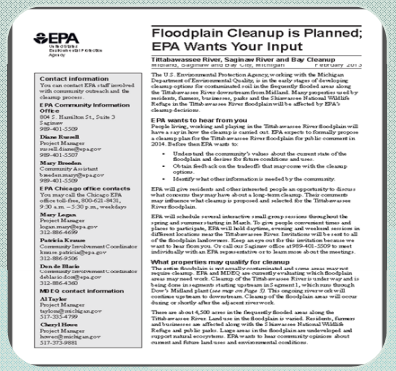
Site spring newsletter

Follow-up phone call



Final set of meetings advertised in local papers

Discussion-specific materials



Floodplain Cleanup is Planned; EPA Wants Your Input

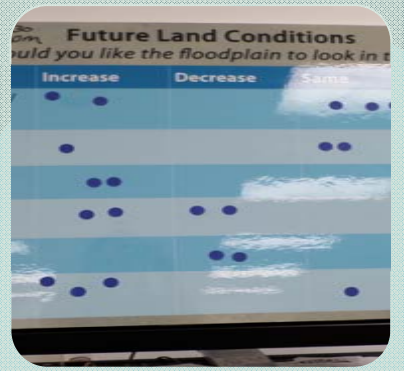
Tittabawassee River, Saginaw River and Bay Cleanup

Copy of fact sheet to highlight important concepts

Posters outlining site and current land use

Worksheets to guide discussion topics

- Future land use
- Trade-offs between cleanup options



Posters and stickers to capture discussion

Outcomes

1st Tier Stakeholders:	2nd Tier Stakeholders:	3rd Tier Stakeholders:
• Held 21 meetings for property owners at multiple locations • Nearly 100 people attended • Conducted best efforts to maximize participation	• Meet with 4 groups including the CAG • All elected officials were informed of our outreach plans • Made efforts to engage other 2nd tier stakeholders	• No groups came forward to request a meeting.

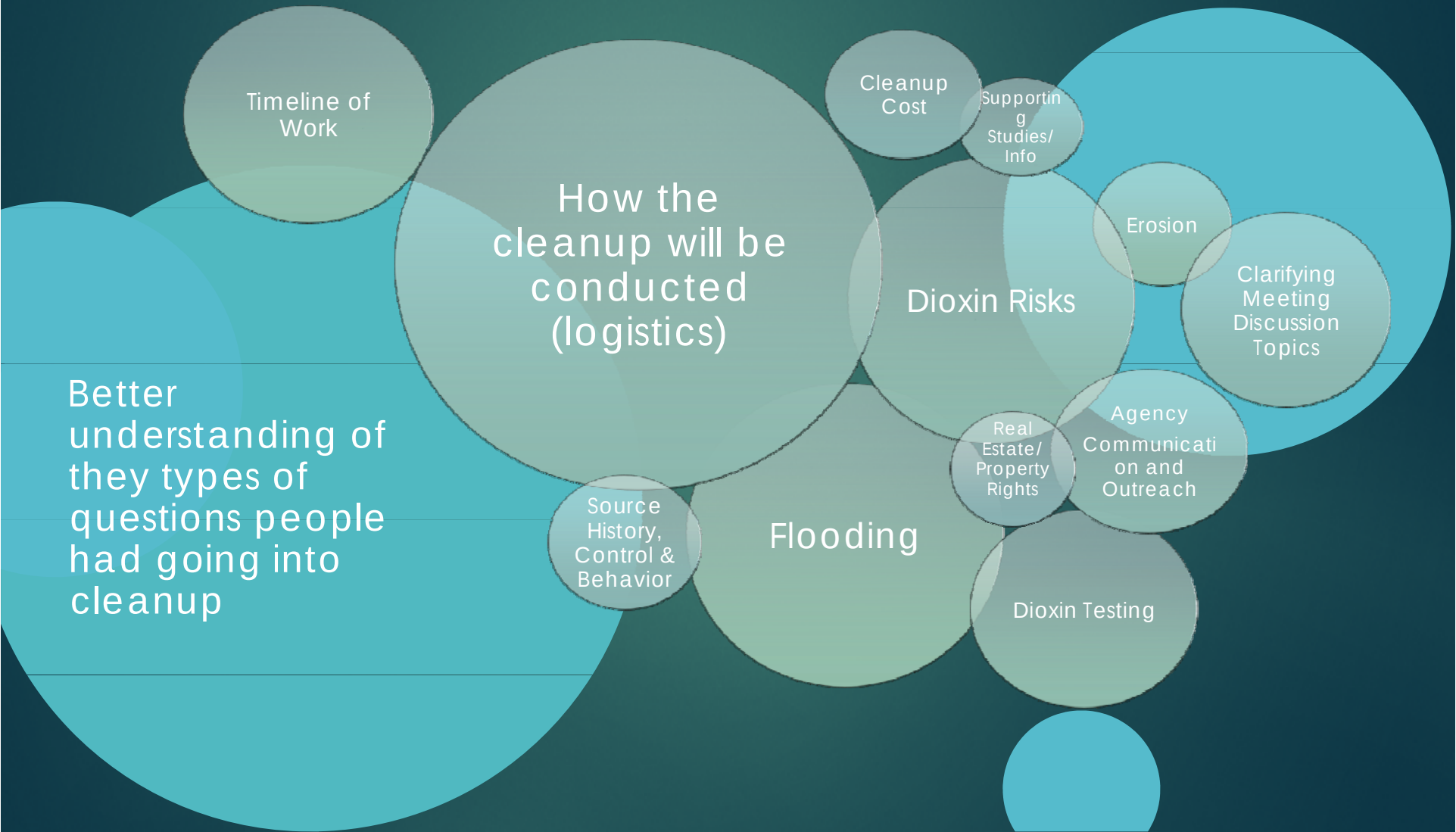
- Full presentation on outcomes available: http://www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/dowchemical/pdfs/dowchemical-cag-floodplain-presentation-201311.pdf

What did we gain?

Better understanding of what the community valued

- Keep natural areas same or increase
- Protection/improvement of ecosystem by focusing work
- Move quickly and prioritize areas (residential)
- Cost shouldn't limit work, especially in more contaminated areas
- Short-term impacts might be ok, worker safety important
- Community generally not sure of monitoring/maintenance as a cleanup tool, but more contaminated areas should rely on that less

What did we gain?



What did we gain?

- Helped us create a cleanup plan and supporting documents that accounted for community values
  - Separate cleanup numbers for different use areas
  - Green space was important to protect
- Community when going into public comment was well informed
  - FAQ document reflecting actual community questions
  - Continued information exchange through informal sessions just before proposed plan
- Helped us move our plan forward and get understanding and support

Reflections on the ground

- Dave Sommers, CAG member and floodplain resident
  - Personally attended a session
  - Initially seemed like a game, unsure of intention of meeting
  - Discussion and exercises did make us think about our priorities and place values on it
  - Once viewed final results, made more sense and gave a value to what the concerns of the residents were
  - It might be helpful to show results from previous sessions so residents understand how the discussion and exercises are summarized

Best Practices

REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF BEST PRACTICES IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Best Practices Employed Effectively

- Took activities directly to the impacted stakeholders
- Very aggressive convening efforts
- Reached a broad cross-section of stakeholders and a high percentage of those most impacted
- Created clear mental model of the decisions to be made, and trade-offs
- Used visual and hands-on approaches to get public understanding and input
- Framed questions and activities toward the articulation of values, not positions
- Effectively communicated back to the community what was heard and how it was used in decision-making

Challenges to Consider When Taking Similar Approaches

- Ensure sufficient background information to set baseline of knowledge
- Make a clear connection to the potential influence of public input on the final decision
- Clearly connect the process to community issues and concerns
- Ensure a clear understanding of what is being asked
- Ensure a clear understanding of what the output means and how it will be used (not a vote)

Lessons Learned

- Taking the time and effort to educate your community helps minimize issues
- Understanding community values BEFORE a proposed plan does help in crafting an acceptable cleanup plan
- Having engaged community members assist in the outreach design is useful
- Probably do not need as many meetings to be effective (i.e. less meetings inviting more people)
- Tiering stakeholder outreach efforts was effective in getting input from those directly effected and prioritize our resources

Interactive Exercise

TOOL IN ACTION

Set Up

This exercise will involve:

- participant assignments as various members of the community.
- Two discussion topics
  - Current and future land use
  - Cleanup options and trade-offs
- Each topic will include an exercise to gather community values on these topics

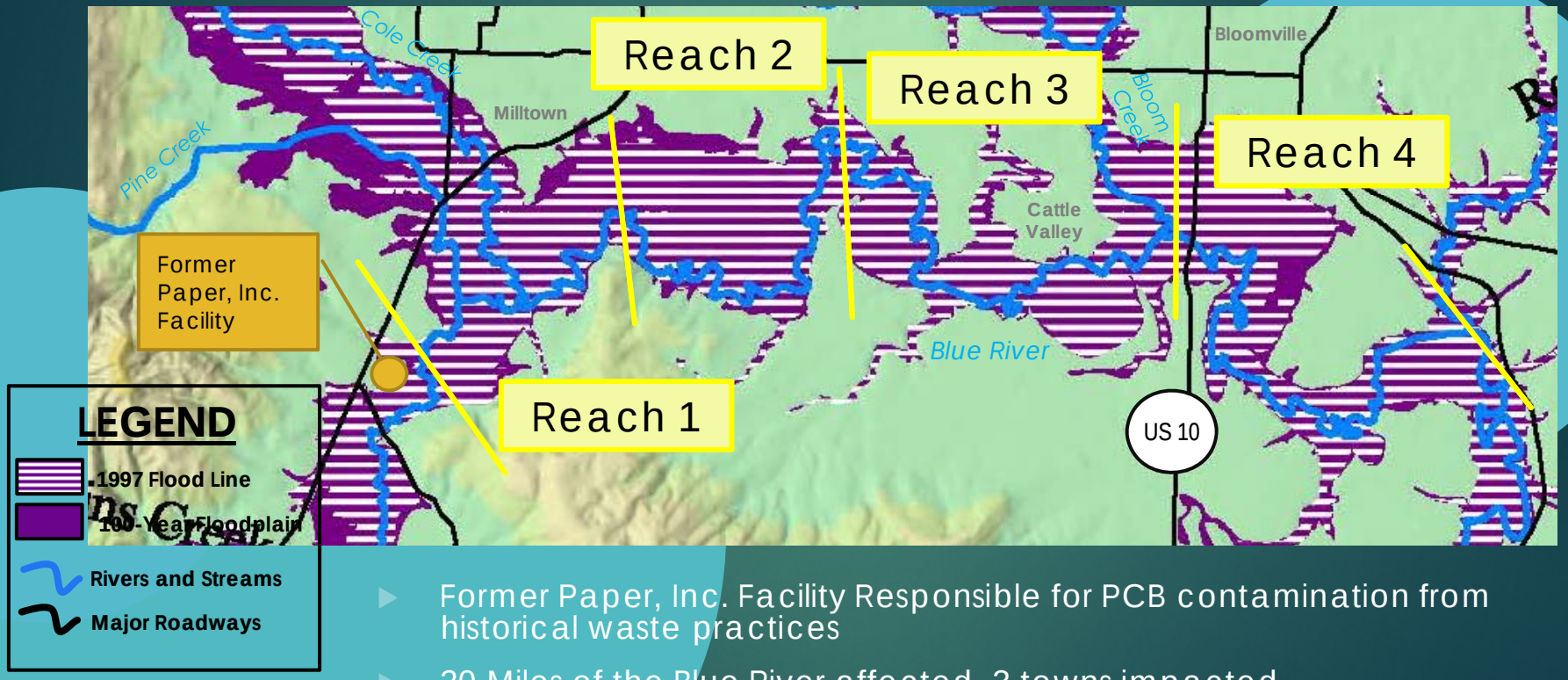
Please note: Don't get too lost in this exercise – it is intended to give you a taste of this tool in action. Discussion meetings typically last 1 ½ hours.

Participant Roles

Roles	
Milltown Canoe Shop Owner	Cattle Valley Developer
Milltown Resident - lifelong	Bloomville Environmental Group Member
Milltown Resident - new	Bloomville University Professor
Milltown Asparagus Farmer	Bloomville Chamber of Commerce Chair
Milltown Town Councilman/Property Owner	Bloomville Property Owner – PCBs out
Former Paper, Inc. Facility Owner	Bloomville Property Owner – Buy out
Milltown Industrial Business Owner	Bloomville Property Owner – No work
Cattle Valley Farmer – more land	Bloomville Mayor
Cattle Valley Farmer – wants out	

MOCK SITE:
The Blue River PCB Site

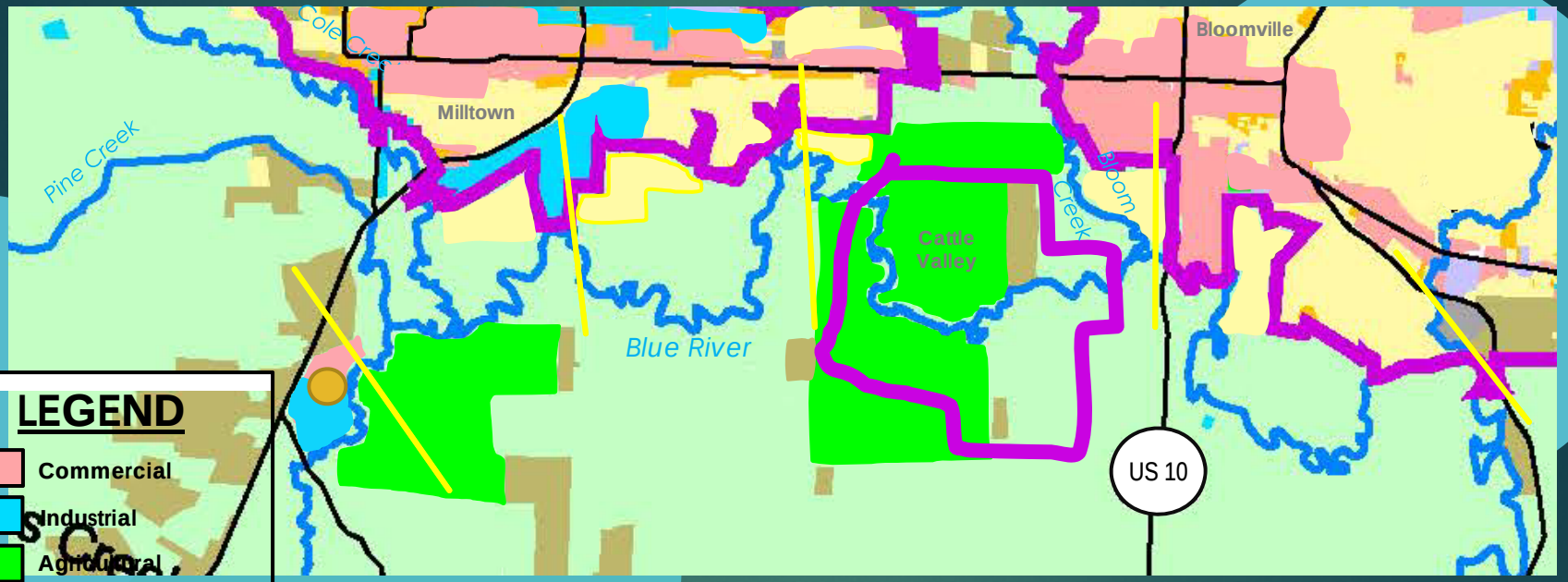
Blue River PCB Site



- Former Paper, Inc. Facility Responsible for PCB contamination from historical waste practices
- 20 Miles of the Blue River affected, 3 towns impacted
- Recent data supports that the 1997 flood line Between Reaches 1 and 4 contain PCB impacted soils above human health risk.

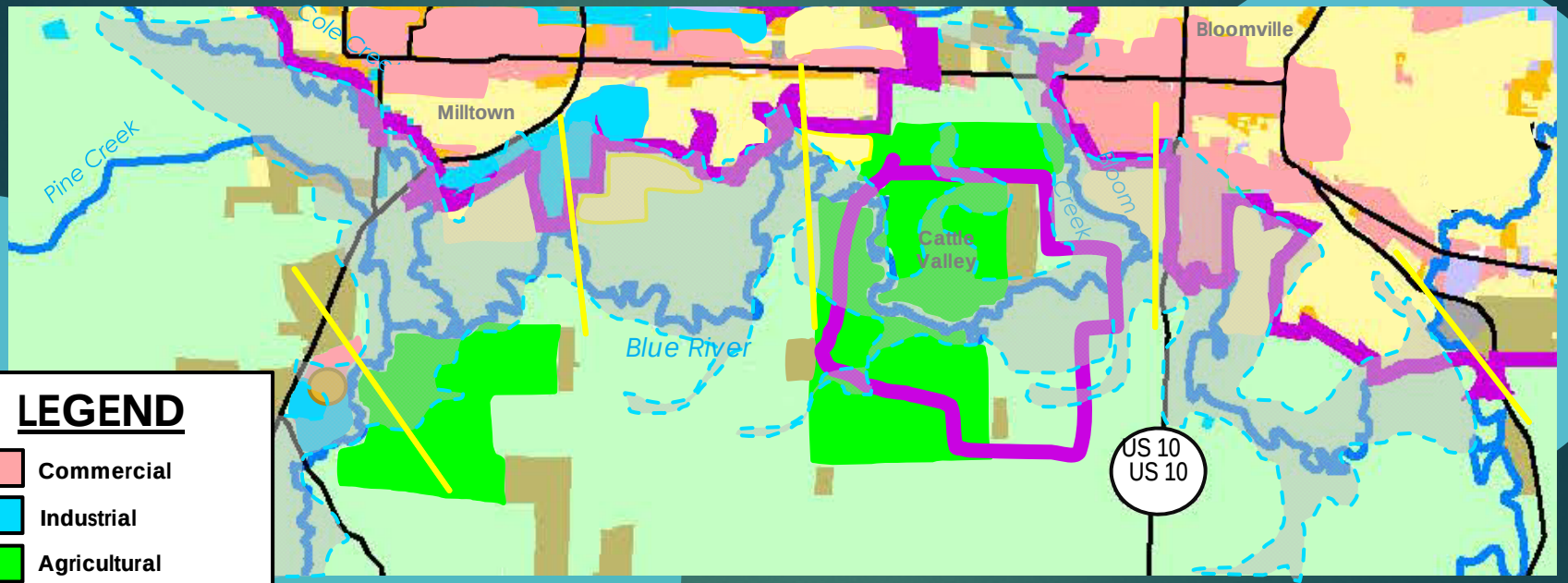
Note: This is a mock site developed for training purposes and any similarities to real places or sites is circumstantial

Current Land Use

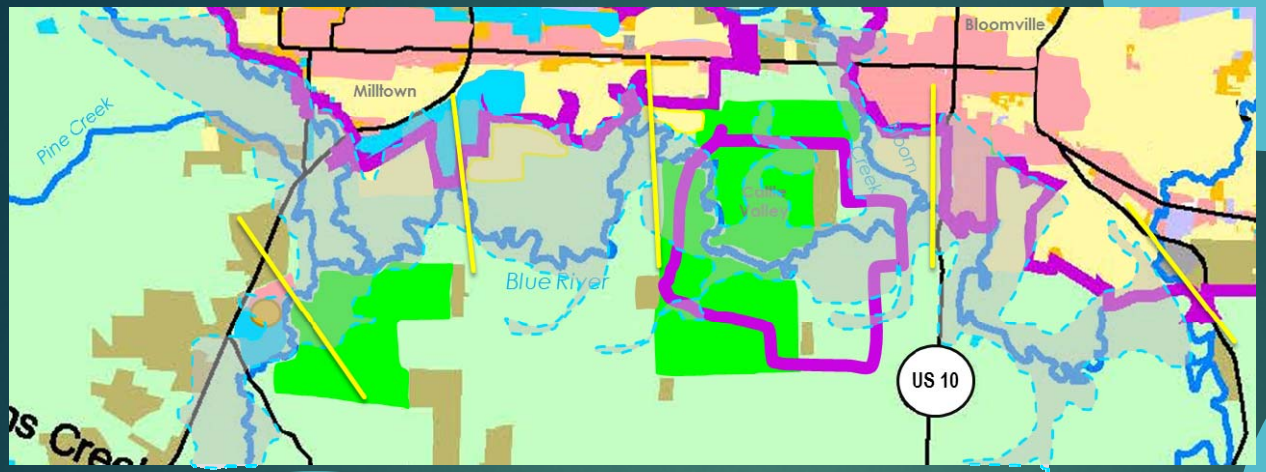


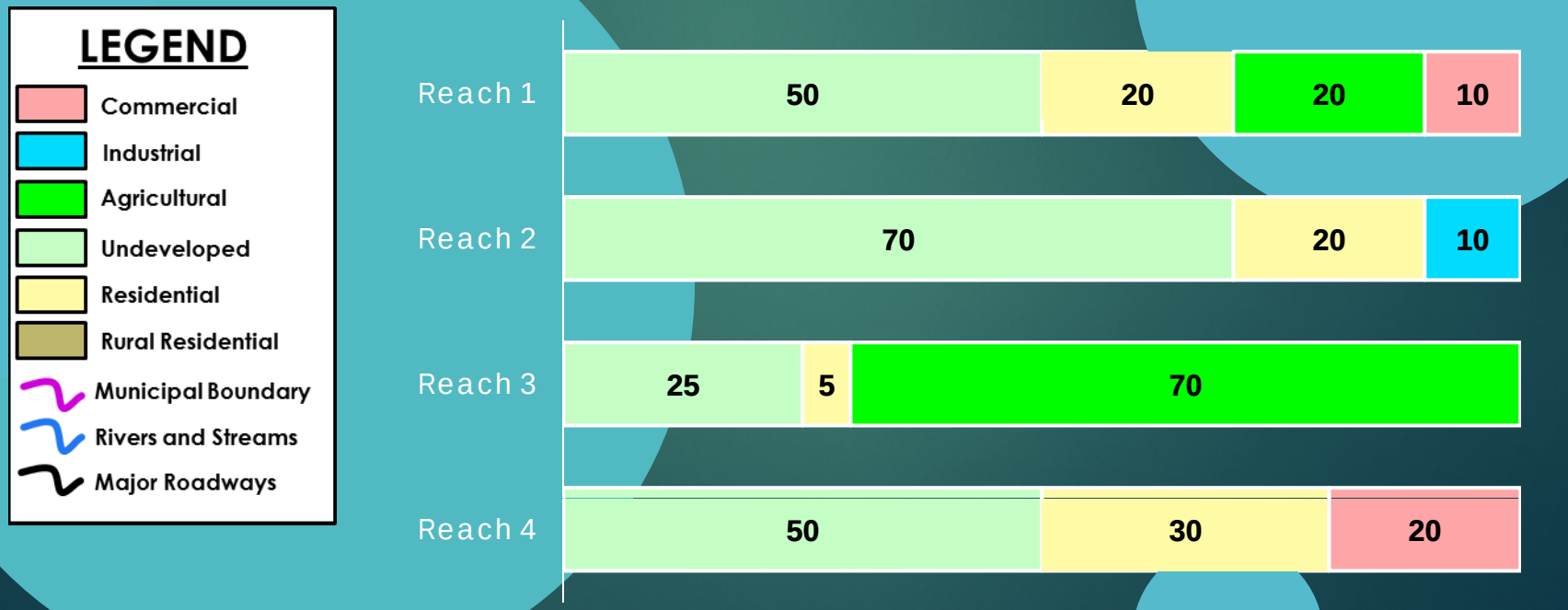
Note: This is a mock site developed for training purposes and any similarities to real places or sites is circumstantial

Current Land Use & Floodplain



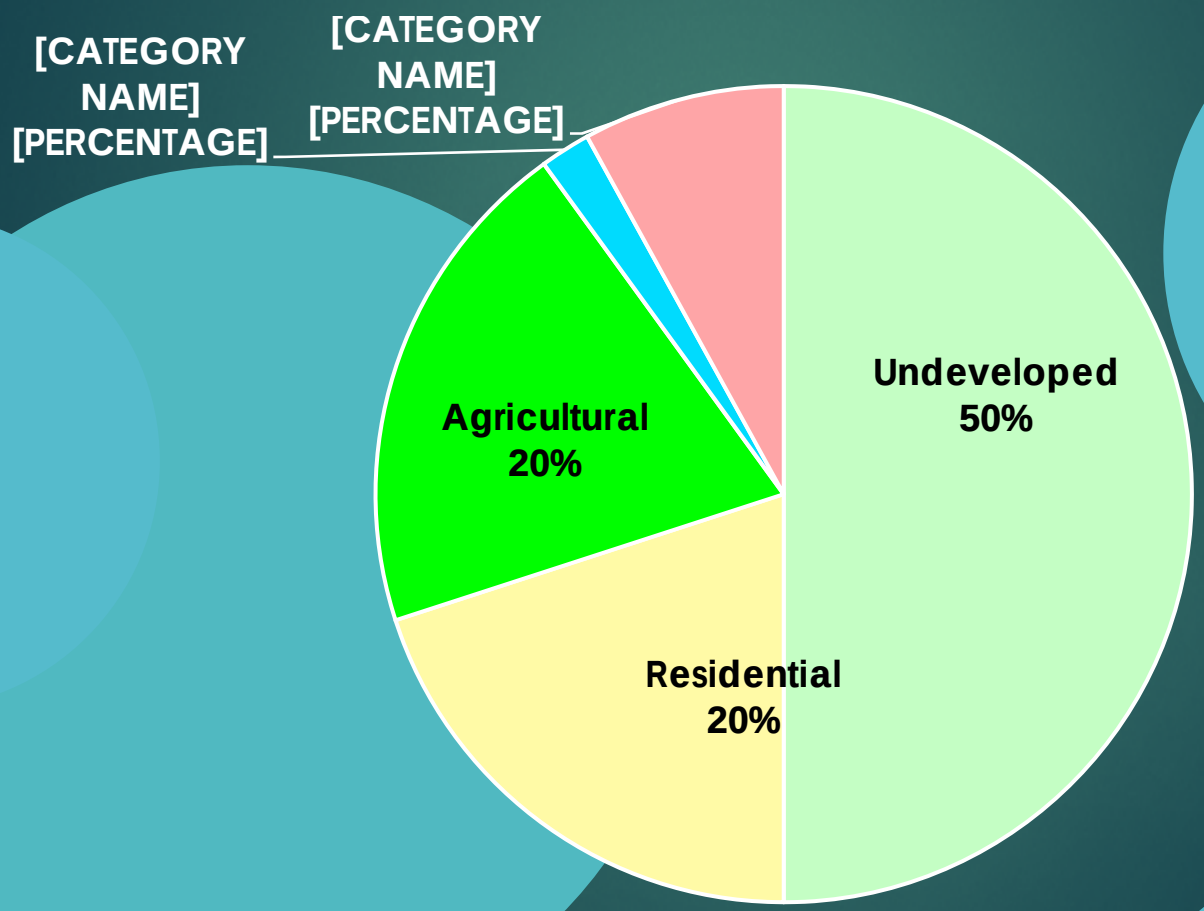
Note: This is a mock site developed for training purposes and any similarities to real places or sites is circumstantial





Note: This is a mock site developed for training purposes and any similarities to real places or sites is circumstantial

Current Land Use & Floodplain



Note: This is a mock site developed for training purposes and any similarities to real places or sites is circumstantial

Future Land Conditions

How would you like the floodplain to look in the future?

Land Use	Increase	Decrease	Same	No opinion
Undeveloped Areas				
Residential				
Agricultural				
Industrial				
Commercial				

The Blue River PCB Site - Cleanup options & tradeoffs

Floodplain Cleanup Options

Soil Removal

- Digging up contaminated soil and replacing it with clean soil.
- Contaminated soil would be transported off-site for disposal at a landfill.
- Current ecosystem would be effected.

Soil Cover

- Placing cover of clean material over contaminated soil.
- Keeps people and animals from coming into contact with contamination.
- Stops rainwater and wind from washing or blowing away the contaminated soil.
- Current ecosystem would be effected.

Land-use Management

- Puts legal limits on the use of property.
- Keeps areas in natural condition.
- Does not keep wildlife away from the contamination.
- State already limits construction and development in the floodplain.

Floodplain Cleanup Options (cont.)

Other things to consider:

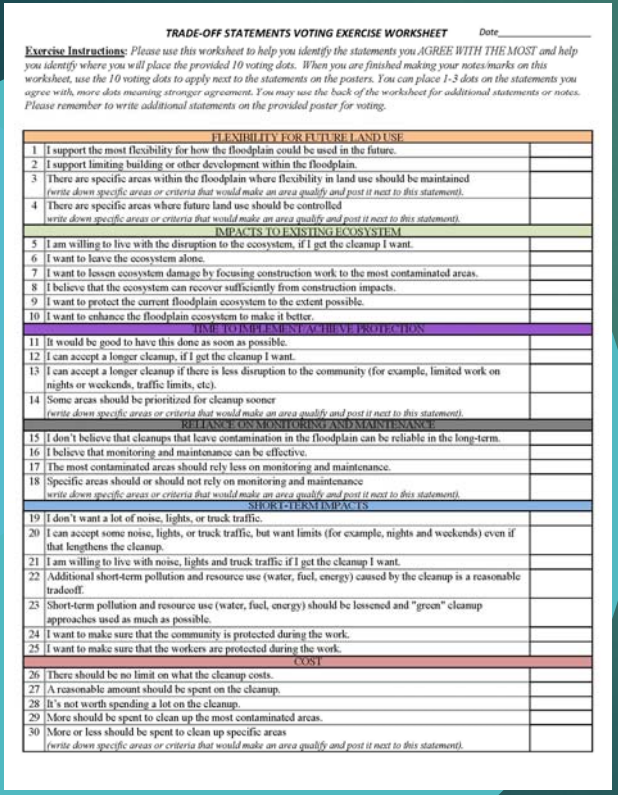
- Each option can protect people and the environment under the right conditions.
- All have some tradeoffs or impacts to consider.
- A mixed approach combining the options may provide the best balance among the tradeoffs for the floodplain cleanup.

Tradeoffs for Floodplain Cleanup Options

	CLEANUP OPTIONS		
TRADEOFFS	**LAND USE MANAGEMENT**	**SOIL COVER**	**SOIL REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL**
Flexibility for future land use	Least flexible	Somewhat flexible	Most flexible
Impacts to existing ecosystem	Least impact	More impact	Most impact
Time to implement and achieve protection	Least time to implement	More time to implement	Most time to implement
Reliance on monitoring and maintenance	Reliance on monitoring	Reliance on both monitoring and maintenance	Least to no reliance on monitoring
Short-term worker and community impacts	Least short-term impacts	More short-term impacts	Most short-term impacts
Cost	Least cost	More cost	Most cost

Tradeoff statements worksheet

Page 1



TRADE-OFF STATEMENTS VOTING EXERCISE WORKSHEET Date_____

Exercise Instructions: *Please use this worksheet to help you identify the statements you AGREE WITH THE MOST and help you identify where you will place the provided 10 voting dots. When you are finished making your notes/marks on this worksheet, use the 10 voting dots to apply next to the statements on the posters. You can place 1-3 dots on the statements you agree with, more dots meaning stronger agreement. You may use the back of the worksheet for additional statements or notes. Please remember to write additional statements on the provided poster for voting.*

	FLEXIBILITY FOR FUTURE LAND USE	
1	I support the most flexibility for how the floodplain could be used in the future.	
2	I support limiting building or other development within the floodplain.	
3	There are specific areas within the floodplain where flexibility in land use should be maintained *(write down specific areas or criteria that would make an area qualify and post it next to this statement).*	
4	There are specific areas where future land use should be controlled *write down specific areas or criteria that would make an area qualify and post it next to this statement).*	
	IMPACTS TO EXISTING ECOSYSTEM	
5	I am willing to live with the disruption to the ecosystem, if I get the cleanup I want.	
6	I want to leave the ecosystem alone.	
7	I want to lessen ecosystem damage by focusing construction work to the most contaminated areas.	
8	I believe that the ecosystem can recover sufficiently from construction impacts.	
9	I want to protect the current floodplain ecosystem to the extent possible.	
10	I want to enhance the floodplain ecosystem to make it better.	
	TIME TO IMPLEMENT/ACHIEVE PROTECTION	
11	It would be good to have this done as soon as possible.	
12	I can accept a longer cleanup, if I get the cleanup I want.	
13	I can accept a longer cleanup if there is less disruption to the community (for example, limited work on nights or weekends, traffic limits, etc).	
14	Some areas should be prioritized for cleanup sooner *(write down specific areas or criteria that would make an area qualify and post it next to this statement).*	
	RELIANCE ON MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE	
15	I don't believe that cleanups that leave contamination in the floodplain can be reliable in the long-term.	
16	I believe that monitoring and maintenance can be effective.	
17	The most contaminated areas should rely less on monitoring and maintenance.	
18	Specific areas should or should not rely on monitoring and maintenance *write down specific areas or criteria that would make an area qualify and post it next to this statement).*	
	SHORT-TERM IMPACTS	
19	I don't want a lot of noise, lights, or truck traffic.	
20	I can accept some noise, lights, or truck traffic, but want limits (for example, nights and weekends) even if that lengthens the cleanup.	
21	I am willing to live with noise, lights and truck traffic if I get the cleanup I want.	
22	Additional short-term pollution and resource use (water, fuel, energy) caused by the cleanup is a reasonable tradeoff.	
23	Short-term pollution and resource use (water, fuel, energy) should be lessened and "green" cleanup approaches used as much as possible.	
24	I want to make sure that the community is protected during the work.	
25	I want to make sure that the workers are protected during the work.	
	COST	
26	There should be no limit on what the cleanup costs.	
27	A reasonable amount should be spent on the cleanup.	
28	It's not worth spending a lot on the cleanup.	
29	More should be spent to clean up the most contaminated areas.	
30	More or less should be spent to clean up specific areas *(write down specific areas or criteria that would make an area qualify and post it next to this statement).*	

Page 2

TRADE-OFF STATEMENTS VOTING EXERCISE WORKSHEET Date_____

	ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS/NOTES	

Results

Your reflections...

Panel Discussion

For more information

EPA Region 5 Saginaw Field Office

Diane Russell

989-401-5509 office
russell.diane@epa.gov

Tittabawassee River/Saginaw River & Bay Site website:

www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/dowchemical

EPA Community Information Office
804 W. Hamilton St.
Saginaw, MI 48602
989-401-5509

Forum Facilitation Group

Douglas J. Sarno

Forum Facilitation Group, Ijamsville, MD
The Participation Company, Scottsdale, AZ

301-798-2713 office
703-927-6265 cell
doug@forumfg.com

Saginaw-Tittabawassee Rivers Contamination Community Advisory Group

Dave Sommers, CAG President
info@saginawcag.org

CAG website:

http://www.saginawcag.org