

PBT Strategy Team Conference Call Summary
May 23, 2005, 9:00 am – 10:30 am Central Time

Participants: No formal roll call was taken; over 20 conference lines participated in the call.

Introduction and Meeting Agenda

Ted Smith welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda, which contained the following two items:

1. Review May 20 Draft Strategy and Cost Estimates
2. Next steps

Ted summarized the purpose of the call: to give all PBT Team members a final opportunity to comment on the draft Strategy before it is submitted to the Executive Committee on Friday, May 27. Ted also noted that the team has several additional weeks to develop materials for the appendices to the Strategy. Additional guidance on what can be included in these appendices will be provided by a subcommittee to the Executive Committee, but Ted expects that all of the items in the Action Item Matrix will be included, as well as more detailed cost estimates and the white papers that were developed in preparation for the Maumee Bay meeting in February.

Jim Zorn, speaking on behalf of himself and Gary Gulezian, who was unable to participate in the teleconference, noted that the team had reached a significant milestone with the development of the draft Strategy. He asked Ted to discuss the latest draft of the document.

Ted reviewed the changes made since the previous draft. Ted and other contributors to the Strategy have added details to the results or milestones associated with each recommended action in an effort to comply with the Executive Committee's request for specificity. They also developed cost estimates for all of the recommendations, some of which are no-cost, organizational tasks, while others have significant costs associated with them. Prior to the teleconference, Ted distributed via e-mail a rough, itemized cost estimate for each of the five recommendation categories and sub-recommendations within each category. The approximate cost of activities in all five categories was estimated to be \$75 million/year. Ted invited comments on the results and cost estimate.

Jim Bredin questioned the cost estimate for trash hauling and disposal, which was reported as \$10 million per garbage collection. Ted responded that he and others attempted to calculate the expenses associated with curbside pick-up throughout the Basin. The total cost of such a program was estimated to be approximately \$600 million. This figure seemed unlikely to receive a favorable response from Congress, so the team decided to instead focus on expansion of pilot projects and support of local activities. Susan Boehme added that the estimate of \$10 million was intended to be used for initiating pilot projects and overcoming barriers to trash collection in small municipalities, among other related activities. Jim Bredin suggested delineating these activities in the cost estimate, since "\$10 million/garbage collection" may be misleading.

Liz LaPlante questioned the estimate of \$8 million/year for Waste Pesticide Clean Sweep programs. Ted responded that he consulted with representatives of the US EPA Region 5 Waste Pesticides and Toxics Division to develop this estimate. Liz did not dispute the figure but noted that a successful Clean Sweep program in Michigan's Upper Peninsula was funded entirely by a \$15,000 grant. Ted replied that the idea behind the recommendation is to develop ongoing programs. Sue Brauer offered to forward the information used to calculate Clean Sweeps costs to Liz. Ted noted the importance of requesting adequate funding for these programs and asked Liz to submit supplementary text to address anything that may be missing from the current draft.

Jim Zorn and Ted discussed general issues related to the cost estimates. Jim asked Ted whether or not the estimated costs account for baseline funding of existing programs. Ted responded that the figures represent the total amount of funding needed by the programs; more work is required to determine how much funding these programs already receive. Jim noted that the federal Great Lakes Agency Task Force was supposed to provide information about existing funding to the Strategy teams but has not done so yet. Jim also explained the source of the \$20 million cost estimate for "Tribal Support" to the rest of the team. This figure was inserted by Jim as a placeholder to ensure that funding for tribal programs was included in the Strategy.

Carri Lohse-Hanson provided comments and asked a question about the draft Strategy. First, she noted that the waste hauler lost money during the Upper Peninsula hazardous waste collection that Liz had discussed earlier, indicating that future efforts will need to be better funded. Also, Carri commented that she has rewritten the section of the draft Strategy that focuses on barriers to municipal garbage collection and will distribute the revised section for review. Finally, she asked whether the proposed results of the first recommendation (e.g., a 70% reduction in mercury emissions from utilities) were intended to be applicable nationwide or only to the Great Lakes region. Carri is concerned that utilities in some regions will acquire emission credits rather than reduce emissions, which could prevent these regions from meeting the goal. Ted agreed with Carri, noting that the goal of a 70% reduction in mercury emissions from utilities was drawn from a federal requirement. Therefore, it was intended to apply nationwide.

Jim Zorn expressed concerns over the way the proposed results have been presented in the draft Strategy. In particular, he questioned whether the reduction targets set forth in the Strategy were comparable to those adopted through the Lake Superior Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) and other historical efforts. Ted noted that the Strategy does not supersede the LaMP or any other consensus document.

Dale Phenicie also raised several concerns about the results in the Strategy. He noted that some of the phrases used to describe results (e.g., "By 2015, full phase-outs of mercury bearing products, as possible") were not sufficiently informative or detailed. He was also concerned that the results may suggest developing new regulatory programs and that the private sector appears to bear the full responsibility of funding the recommendations. Dale had hoped that some funding would be set aside to provide incentives for industry to participate in reduction activities. Ted responded that the results were not intended to suggest a need for additional regulations; the methods for achieving reductions have not been specified yet.

Cameron Lory suggested that PBT phase-outs in products could be most effectively achieved by targeting government purchasing on a state and local level. Ted noted that this was a good suggestion.

Ted revisited Dale's concern about incentives for the private sector. He noted that a discussion of incentives would be a valuable addition to the Strategy and welcomed suggestions as to what kind of incentives would be appropriate. Dale responded that it would be difficult to make specific recommendations at this point, but language regarding the development of an incentive program for industry should be included in the document. Susan Boehme remarked that some of this language is already included in various parts of the Strategy. Dale replied that the results and cost estimates should be revised to better reflect the need for incentives.

A University of Wisconsin representative commented that many states are devoting significant resources to energy conservation projects and noted that these states may be ideal targets for efforts to remove PCB-containing electrical equipment. Funding for energy conservation programs could be used to encourage PCB removal. Ted asked for suggestions on how that idea could be incorporated within the five-page Strategy.

The group briefly discussed household hazardous waste (HHW) collections. In Wisconsin, approximately \$700,000 is set aside each year for these events. A suggestion was made to include in the Strategy a recommendation for matching funds to further encourage such collections.

Jim Zorn restated his question about the compatibility between the results set forth in the Strategy and the Lake Superior LaMP targets. Jim noted that the federal requirement for a 70% reduction in mercury emissions from utilities is not as stringent as the Lake Superior LaMP reduction target of 80% by 2010. Carri noted that the LaMP target is based on total emissions of mercury, not emissions from a particular sector. However, the LaMP target will not be reached unless utilities and other sectors make significant progress in their reduction efforts. Dale Phenicie asked Jim why he feels that the LaMP targets will be superseded by the Strategy goals. Jim responded that he merely wants to ensure that historical targets are not overlooked. Mike Murray suggested mentioning in the document that historical efforts to reduce toxics in the Great Lakes may have set stricter targets and that these targets will not be superseded. Ted offered to include Mike's language in an appendix or a footnote.

Mike followed his comment with a recommendation that the cost estimates delineate which costs will be new and which will be devoted to existing programs. Ted responded that this work is underway; however, most of the funding specified in the cost estimates will be new.

The group continued to discuss the results identified in the strategy and the impacts these results may have on emission reduction efforts within the Great Lakes basin. Jim Zorn noted the importance of attaining the more stringent targets that have been identified for persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes basin. Matt Hudson reminded the group of Carri Lohse-Hanson's earlier point: that the federal Clean Air Mercury Rule may allow utilities within the basin to trade emission credits, which would undermine efforts to reduce emissions within the region.

Jim posed several questions related to the recommendation for a basin-wide stewardship strategy. First, he questioned whether the recommendation calls for the Great Lakes region to be more aggressive than other parts of the country. Ted responded that the recommendation is focused within the basin and is intended to coordinate the various stewardship activities already underway in the region. Jim asked who would be responsible for implementing the strategy. Ted proposed that the GLBTS could act in a coordinating role. Jim asked if there is a target date by which the strategy needs to be implemented. Ted replied that there is not.

Jim summarized the review process for the Strategy document after it is submitted to the Executive Committee. He emphasized that everyone on the team has to be reasonably comfortable with the content of the document submitted on May 27, though comments may continue to be submitted after this date. The subcommittee to the Executive Committee is scheduled to meet in Chicago on June 6 to compile all eight Strategy sections into one document. At that time, the subcommittee may approach the Strategy Teams with questions or suggested changes. Jim and Gary must be able to confirm that the team has achieved consensus on the document submitted to the Executive Committee.

Ted resumed the discussion of specific elements in the Strategy document, noting that he had supplemented the third recommendation after talking with representatives of the Water Division within US EPA Region 5. People who work in the water discharge program for the basin requested that some of their priorities be included in the Strategy, and Ted complied. Frank Anscombe responded with a comment about the results section for this recommendation. One proposed result anticipates that 50% of in-basin wastewater treatment plants will have a surveillance program for emerging chemicals by 2010. Frank remarked that the number of facilities conducting monitoring is an imperfect indicator; a more effective indicator would be the number of chemicals being monitored. Melissa Hulting noted that the third recommendation is very broad; therefore, it is difficult to specify all the results that can be anticipated within the page limits of this document.

Ron Janke asked why certain items in the cost estimate have no monetary value associated with them. Some are “n/a,” while others are “minimal” or “unknown.” Ron expressed concern that a recommendation may not be accepted if its costs cannot be estimated. Ted responded that the “unknown” designation was included simply as a placeholder – a specific cost will be associated with all currently “unknown” items before the document is revealed to the public. Ron then questioned whether the “n/a” items should be included in the cost estimate. Ted replied that he saw no need for public funding of these items; their costs will be borne by the private sector. Dale proposed that public funding be included in these items to support industry incentives. Ted agreed to work with Dale on language to that effect.

Jim Zorn asked whether the PBT Team planned to address sites that pose a risk of contamination but have not officially been designated as Superfund sites or Areas of Concern (AOCs). Ted replied that he expects the AOC Restoration/Sediment Team to address these areas. Tom Looby confirmed that the AOC Team will address these sites in its section of the Strategy.

The team briefly discussed the fifth recommendation and the funding of international reduction efforts. Some efforts will require more funding than others.

Jim provided comments on the fourth recommendation, which delegates the responsibility of creating uniform advice on fish and wildlife consumption to the Great Lakes Sport Fish Advisory Task Force. Jim expressed a concern that sport fishing advisories may not be universally applicable to tribal communities, which practice subsistence fishing. Beth Murphy responded that there is tribal representation on the Sport Fish Advisory Task Force. Susan Boehme added that a consistent approach to delivering fish consumption advice, rather than a consistent message, is the goal of this recommendation. Frank Anscombe suggested, and the rest of the group agreed, that removing the word “uniform” from the recommendation would alleviate Jim’s concerns and more accurately represent the intent of the suggestion.

Dale suggested revising the wording of the first recommendation, which refers to “mercury-bearing products.” Dale proposed using the phrase “mercury-added products” instead, since the team is referring to products to which mercury was intentionally added. Cameron Lory suggested adding the term “intentionally” to the recommendation. Dale agreed with her suggestion.

Regarding the results under the third recommendation, Liz LaPlante suggested removing the term “intercomparison,” since this reference is unclear. She also recommended removing the tenth footnote. Ted responded that the footnote would be removed.

The group briefly discussed the estimate of \$50 million for a revolving loan fund under the second recommendation. Laura Rauwerda remarked that a tax incentive might be more palatable for a legislature to consider. Frank Anscombe supported the idea of a tax incentive. Ted noted the importance of having multiple programs available for small and medium-sized businesses, including tax incentives and low-interest loan options.

Carri Lohse-Hanson provided miscellaneous comments on the Strategy. Her comments prompted a brief discussion on the indicators used to assess the progress of reduction efforts in the basin, as well as the potential overlap between mercury-related recommendations made by the Nonpoint Source and PBT Teams.

Ted and Jim Zorn ended the meeting by thanking everyone for their efforts in producing the draft Strategy and for participating in the phone call.