Questions from Nov 15, 2012 EPA Meeting

1. Based on the direct area of the Cap, are there any concerns of the tugboat activity creating unsuspecting problems such as subsidence?

Subsidence in the area was caused primarily by excessive groundwater pumping in the past. The subsidence district has been created, and new groundwater management practices have limited the amount of subsidence in the area. Tugboat activity could create erosion concerns for the cap. The cap was designed to limit these potential concerns (eg, using large rocks for the armored cap), and regular inspections including surveys are conducted to identify potential problems. When identified, a maintenance program is instituted to complete repairs. [Valmicheal can probably say something a bit more detailed than this].

2.Does the EPA have any future concerns for subsidence in the immediate area of the Cap?

Subsidence in the area was caused primarily by excessive groundwater pumping in the past. The subsidence district has been created, and new groundwater management practices have limited the amount of subsidence in the area.

3.When will the responsible party respond regarding the Cap assessment?

The responsible party is conducting an investigation of the erosion of cap materials. Concurrently, the EPA has asked the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to complete their own study of the cap. This study by the ACOE will be finalized in _____.

4.Why was the responsible party controlling the design and construction of the Cap?

The Responsible Party is responsible for designing and instituting all investigation and remedial activities necessary for the site. All of this work is overseen by the EPA. So while the responsible party is responsible for designing and doing the work, the EPA is in control of what actually occurs.

5.Why does TDHS allow more dioxin (1000 per trillion) than other states for residential exposure?

[I'll let TDHS answer this one]

6.Why is the objective or purpose of the Cap in place to get to a solution in 7 to 10 years when clean-up should be more immediate?

Based on the risk assessments that were completed, the greatest risks were related to direct contact with the waste material. Therefore, the cap was quickly installed. However, in order to make sure that the contamination is addressed appropriately, it is necessary to do a complete study to make sure that we understand exactly what contamination is out there, where it is going, and who might it effect. That is the purpose of the RI. It is only then that it is possible to do a good evaluation of what are the

different ways that they site could be cleaned up, and of all those different ways what is the best. That is the purpose of the feasibility study. So, the purpose of the cap was to address the highest risks as quickly as possible, with more time and care taken to characterize the site and identify a long-term solution.

7.Can EPA do the clean-up directly? Under what conditions?

The EPA oversees all of the cleanups, but the EPA only conducts cleanups directly when there is no responsible party that is able to pay for the cleanup themselves.

8.Why is not one of immediate solutions to.....build a bulkhead surrounding the cap, dig out the dioxins, transport to a designated site contained area and not waste time in preliminary studies, cap assessments, etc? The longer the wait for clean-up the greater the health risk?

The greatest risks were related to direct contact with the waste material. Therefore, the cap was quickly installed in order to mitigate this serious risk. However, in order to make sure that the contamination is addressed appropriately, it is necessary to do a complete study to make sure that we understand exactly what contamination is out there, where it is going, and who might it affect. That is the purpose of the RI. It is only then that it is possible to do a good evaluation of what are the different ways that they site could be cleaned up, and which way would best once these through studies have been completes. That is the purpose of the feasibility study. So, the purpose of the cap was to address the highest risks as quickly as possible, with more time and care taken to characterize the site and identify a long-term solution.

9.Is Health and Human services determining the immediate risk of residents of the drinking water, fish consumption and direct exposure of dioxin for swimmers, fishermen, etc in the immediate Highlands community?

The Texas Department of State Health Services has completed a human health risk assessment, and the Technical Advisory Team has prepared a summary of this document. The document and summary are both available on the Galveston Bay website.