Message

From: Mutter, Andrew [mutter.andrew@epa.gov]
Sent: 12/6/2019 9:18:47 PM
To: Thomas, Deb [thomas.debrah@epa.gov]
CC: Sopkin, Gregory [sopkin.gregory@epa.gov]; Smidinger, Betsy [Smidinger.Betsy@epa.gov]; Urdiales, Aaron [Urdiales.Aaron@epa.gov]; Partridge, Charles [Partridge.Charles@epa.gov]; Vranka, Joe [vranka.joe@epa.gov]; Mylott, Richard [Mylott.Richard@epa.gov]; Wardell, Christopher [Wardell.Christopher@epa.gov]; Spence, Sandra [Spence.Sandra@epa.gov]; Barnicoat, Dana [Barnicoat.Dana@epa.gov]; Greene, Nikia [Greene.Nikia@epa.gov]; Elsen, Henry [Elsen.Henry@epa.gov]; Sethuraman, Jag [Sethuraman.Jag@epa.gov]; Wall, Dan [wall.dan@epa.gov]
Subject: RE: Media Query regarding the Butte Health Study (Meconium) - Butte Weekly (Deadline COB today)

Deb,
Spoke to Charlie and below are the responses to your questions. Will send out an updated version in a few minutes.

Best regards,

Andrew

Andrew Mutter

Director, Public Affairs
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From: Thomas, Deb <thomas.debrah@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 1:46 PM
To: Mutter, Andrew <mutter.andrew@epa.gov>
Cc: Sopkin, Gregory <sopkin.gregory@epa.gov>; Smidinger, Betsy <Smidinger.Betsy@epa.gov>; Urdiales, Aaron <Urdiales.Aaron@epa.gov>; Partridge, Charles <Partridge.Charles@epa.gov>; Vranka, Joe <vranka.joe@epa.gov>; Mylott, Richard <Mylott.Richard@epa.gov>; Wardell, Christopher <Wardell.Christopher@epa.gov>; Spence, Sandra <Spence.Sandra@epa.gov>; Barnicoat, Dana <Barnicoat.Dana@epa.gov>; Greene, Nikia <Greene.Nikia@epa.gov>; Elsen, Henry <Elsen.Henry@epa.gov>; Sethuraman, Jag <Sethuraman.Jag@epa.gov>; Wall, Dan <wall.dan@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Media Query regarding the Butte Health Study (Meconium) - Butte Weekly (Deadline COB today)

Just a few comments/questions.

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Also, if funding and an available lab are not yet identified it may take longer than 45 days. In that case we probably should say we will have a better idea of timing after we speak to the laboratory that will run the samples. (Charlie is confident we have the funding and lab support to completed within 45 days)

Will the raw data analysis and sample processing be done in parallel so we are talking about a total of 45 days for both activities? (Yes; that is if we receive the data and samples at this same time. There are two separate teams with will process each.)

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

A big thank you to the team for the great work responding to some challenging questions. Great focus on the science. Deb

Debra H. Thomas
EPA Region 8
Deputy Regional Administrator
303-312-6298

On Dec 6, 2019, at 12:36 PM, Mutter, Andrew <mutter.andrew@epa.gov> wrote:

Greg, Deb, Betsy, and Aaron,
We received the below media query (nine questions) from the Butte Weekly newspaper (Mr. Matt Vincent). The team prepared and proposes the below responses.

Pls review and comment.

Thx

Q1) I felt that Dr. Hailer kind of put you on the spot in the meeting when she mentioned she'd already showed you her meconium data back in March 2019 and asked you to clarify what your change in response was to the same data now that it's in her report and now that it's published. Can you give me an official statement as your answer to that question, and would you care to clarify for the record the details of that March 2019 meeting?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q2) More relevant, now that the data is published with references, and has appeared on the front page of the daily newspaper, causing quite a stir, what is your detailed plan for next steps and a timeframe to complete it? E.G. In your estimation, how long will it take for EPA to conclude from Hailer/McDermott's raw data and additional samples whether we have an issue that needs further attention?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q3) Relative to what you said at the Board of Health meeting about running remaining samples "blind" at an EPA, CDC or independent laboratory, which Katie confirmed there were remaining meconium samples; and her offer to go through in excruciating detail her methods, raw data, etc. -- Have you confirmed that she will send you her (and McDermott's) leftover splits and have you received or officially requested the study's raw data?

A3) See above.

Q4) Hailer made a very confident statement that she/McDermott had looked through all of their methods, data, etc. and ultimately concluded "No: we didn't make any mistakes." You made a number of statements that clearly indicated a need for EPA to "confirm", "looking at the study further" "delving into the data much deeper" and even went so far as saying "if the Butte data holds up" "if these (data) turnout." What are the main things you are looking at in the data and what do you make of Hailer's comment that there were no mistakes made?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q5) Hailer and McDermott say in their study's published conclusion that their approach "provided straightforward evidence of elevated exposure to metals in a mining exposed community. The approach was inexpensive, thorough and required no advanced statistical analysis." Further they used the term "potential public health emergency." What is your reaction and assessment to these conclusions.

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q6) Please explain your experience in toxicology and with EPA and in that experience, what is your assessment/comparison of this particular "pilot" "proof of concept" study and how it is being amplified versus any other examples you've worked with or are aware of?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q7) You mentioned a study from Canada as the "gold standard" of meconium studies, which used >2,000 samples and as relevant study you are looking to for appropriate comparisons. Can you please send that to me and perhaps give me a reason why you hold it in higher regard to the other studies referenced in Hailer's study and in her presentation/comparisons?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q8) Do you know anything about the NIH grant proposal Hailer/McDermott submitted and why it was unsuccessful?

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

Q9) Please feel free to add anything else, any other statements that you would like me to include in the story. Again, don't hesitate to call or email me if you have additional questions. Thanks again!

A9) Nothing additional at this time.

Best regards,

Andrew

Andrew Mutter

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