Communicating Mercury Fish Consumption Advisories to River Users in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley

SETAC North America
November 9 – 13, 2014
Presentation Outline

- Background
- Communication
- Approach
- Remedial Advisory Panel
- Collaboration
- Summary
Background

Project Location

Plant Site
Background – Historical Timeline

1929: Mercuric sulfate use in acetate rayon fiber production begins


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1950: Mercuric sulfate use stops

1960: DuPont funds 100-year monitoring program

1970: Studies predict fish improvement in 20 years

1980: Fish tissue levels are not decreasing as predicted

1982: DuPont and VDEQ launch collaborative effort – South River Science Team

2000: DuPont and VDEQ launch collaborative effort – South River Science Team

2001: DuPont and VDEQ launch collaborative effort – South River Science Team

2005 - 2012: Extensive field investigations

2006: Construction begins

2007: Baseline monitoring begins

2014: South River enters into regulatory process

2015: Baseline monitoring begins

2016: Construction begins

2017: Baseline monitoring begins

2018: Baseline monitoring begins

2019: Baseline monitoring begins

2020: Baseline monitoring begins
Communication: Fish Advisory

No more than two meals (1/2 pound each or the size of your hand) per month should be eaten from these waters because of mercury and PCB levels. Carp, channel catfish, and white sucker should not be eaten from these waters. Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children should not eat fish from these waters.

No more than two meals (1/2 pound each or the size of your hand) per month should be eaten from these waters because of mercury levels. Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children should not eat fish from these waters.

No fish other than trout should be eaten from these waters because of mercury levels. Stocked trout have been tested and are safe to eat.

No consumption restrictions.
Communication: South River Science Team

State
- VDEQ
- VDGIF
- VDH

Federal
- EPA
- USF&WS

City
- City of Waynesboro

NGOs
- Friends of the Shenandoah
- Virginia Conservation Council
- Trout Unlimited
- Shenandoah River Keeper

Academia
- College of William and Mary
- James Madison University
- Virginia Tech
- University of Delaware
- University of Waterloo
- Colorado State University
- Western Washington University
- Texas Tech University

DuPont
- Engineers
- Geologists
- Risk assessors

Expert Panelists
- Will Clements
- Dave Hirschman
- Ralph Turner

Consultants
- URS
- Anchor QEA

South River Science Team
Approach - Communicative

- 3 or 4 meetings/year
- website
- Local office
- Bi-annual newsletter
- Fact sheets, wallet cards, bookmarks, and brochures
- Print and broadcast media
- Bilingual public outreach programs
Website

- Developed in 2007
- Re-designed in 2012
- Accessible to the public
- Updates:
  - Fish consumption advisory
  - Interactive map showing advisories, boat ramps, parks
  - Information in Spanish

southriverscienceteam.org
SRST Office

- Information repository and field office
- 2006: Open to public
- 2006 – 2010: Visitor Center
- 2010 – present: Meeting Space and Information Center
Newsletter

- Bi-annual publication: 2002 – 2013
- Four-page layout reporting on research and outreach activities
- Modified to two page layout focus on off-site project work and on-site remedial efforts
Fact Sheets

- Six one-page fact sheets
- Site-related information
- Available at the SRST office, community events, outreach activities, and website
- Future fact sheets – planned remedial activities
Print and Broadcast Media

- Informative bulletin boards at fishing access areas
  - Bilingual consumption advisories
  - Brochures

- Media briefings of key milestones
  - Newspaper
  - NPR radio stations
  - Local television stations
Bilingual Program – Promotores de Salud

- Developed in 2010
  - 2011 – 2014: 30 Promotores graduated
- Communicate fish consumption advisory
- Members of local community
  - Trained as community health and mercury educators
  - 40 Hr training course
- Russian and Arabic communities incorporated into program
Credible

- Expert Panel
- 75+ scientific journal publications
- Domestic and international conferences
- 50+ Masters and Ph.D. students
- Benchmarking with other mercury sites
Remedial Advisory Panel

- 8 – 12 members of community and groups (e.g., Service clubs, recreational groups, city, county, and state agencies)
- Facilitate communication and understanding between DuPont and community stakeholders
- Represent the voice of the community
- Meet two times a year
SRST Collaboration - Benefits

- Provides a focal point for stakeholders
- Allows timely discussion and forward decision-making
- Coordinates all agencies in one forum
- Provides opportunities to share resources
- Vets issues to enhance stakeholder satisfaction
SRST Collaboration – Key Learnings

- Managing financial resources
  - Expansive program with multiple tasks and projects
- ‘Walking the talk’
  - Follow up on project findings
- Making progress
  - Stay focused on the science
  - Direct non-technical issues to a different forum
- Leveraging academic resources
  - Valued by stakeholders
  - Positive public relations/educational opportunities
Framework for effective outreach

SRST OUTREACH AND INFORMATION OUTPUT TO THE COMMUNITY

INPUT AND INVOLVEMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY
QUESTIONS?