

Public Participation Plans

Regional Board Preparation and Implementation Guidelines



Prepared by the North Coast
Regional Water Quality Control Board

April 2000

Developing the Public Participation Plan

Executive Summary

The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) has developed the Public Participation Plan (PPP) guideline to assist in the implementation and development of public involvement goals and objectives for investigation and cleanup activities of specific sites. The PPP documents issues and concerns of site neighbors and of the community. The PPP also provides opportunities for public involvement in the decision making process throughout the investigation and cleanup of the site.

In addition to assessing existing community concerns regarding planned activities at a site, the PPP should establish procedures for accurate and timely release of information to potentially affected and interested citizens, elected officials, public interest groups, and representatives of regulatory agencies. The PPP should present methods to facilitate communication between the RWQCB, involved agencies, and the community.

The development of a Public Participation Plan follows several steps. Although PPPs for different sites will vary in length and context, the overall plan can be written in accordance with the following outline. The outline is developed to give an overview, and can be utilized as a table of contents (Table 1) for the PPP.

Report Organization

- The Public Participation Plan is organized as follows:
- Section 1.0 gives a description of the purpose of the Public Participation Plan, as well as a brief summary of the history of the site.
- Section 2.0 provides background information on the site, as well as an overview of the nearby community.
- Section 3.0 summarizes known community issues or concerns expressed during interviews through other information gathering efforts.
- Section 4.0 describes additional activities that will be conducted to accomplish the public participation objectives, and lists personnel involved with the project.

- Section 5.0 outlines the schedule for activities to be done on the site.
- Section 6.0 lists all of the references utilized to develop the PPP.

Additional information in the forms of tables, graphs, schedules, and maps can be organized throughout the report. The table of contents, which explains the different sections, should describe the location of this data and should be easy to follow. All maps included in the PPP should be descriptive and accurate. An overview map that shows the surrounding area, as well as a site map will allow for visual interpretation of the location.

This complete public participation plan should be used for any sites with remedial action plans or for any other site where significant controversy exists about investigation or cleanup activities. The abbreviated public participation checklist (Appendix 1) should be utilized for all other sites.

Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	COMMUNITY BACKGROUND	1
2.1	Current Site Description	1
2.2	Site History	1
2.3	Planned Site Activities	1
2.4	Land Use	2
	2.4.1 Current Land Use	2
	2.4.2 Future Land Use	2
2.5	Demographic Survey	2
3.0	COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS	3
3.1	Historical Community Involvement	3
3.2	Summary of Interview Findings	3
	3.2.1 Concerns about the Site	3
	3.2.2 Communication with Local and Government Officials	4
	3.2.3 Level of Community Concern	4
	3.2.4 Preferences for Information Dissemination	4
4.0	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP) ACTIVITIES	4
4.1	Fact Sheets	5
4.2	Public Repository	6
4.3	Public Meetings	6
4.4	Key Public Involvement Contacts	7
5.0	SUBMITTAL SCHEDULE	7
6.0	REFERENCES	7
	MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION	8
	TABLE	
1.	Table of Contents	9

APPENDICES

1. Abbreviated Public Participation Checklist

10

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section explains the purpose of the Public Participation Plan, the site of particular concern, the responsible parties involved, and the lead government agency or agencies involved in the oversight of the project.

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan program includes such things as: involving the public in the implementation and development of the project, the objectives of the site investigation, and the cleanup process and goals for the site. The description of the site of particular concern will identify the site's name and location. Responsible parties will also be recognized in this section, including former and present land owners or agencies financially responsible for the cleanup of the site. The lead oversight agency or agencies will also be identified, and a summary of pertinent information about their role in the project should be included.

SECTION 2.0 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

This section provides a description of the specified site and surrounding area, historical uses of the site, planned site activities, land use issues, and demographics of the people living near the site.

SECTION 2.1 Current Site Description

This section describes the overall setting and status of the site. The section should include a description of the property, physical setting, and include all parcels and total acreage. The description should be supported by a site map, which will supplement the site description. The specific location of a site, in relation to nearby cities, schools, streets, waterways should be described. Distances from nearby structures can be specified in miles, yards and feet.

The contaminants of concern should be identified.

SECTION 2.2 Site History

The Site History summarizes the historical activities conducted at the site. This should include pertinent historical data about the development of the property, with specific focus upon the period or periods when site contamination took place. Pertinent previous structures, as well as their purpose, can be described in this section. Historical owners and their uses of this site should be described, with specific years included. Explain all known land uses of any type, and list all periods of time with unknown use.

SECTION 2.3 Planned Site Activities

The Planned Site Activities section of the Public Participation Plan should briefly describe all past, present, and future actions proposed for the site. These activities will include investigation, sampling, excavation, assessment and remediation efforts for the site. The areal extent of contaminants of concern should be discussed. Investigation activities for previously identified contaminants should be identified, as well as the methods to be utilized in their removal or mitigation.

Any future planned activities, and their dates, should be included in the Public Participation Plan on a separate table. These activities will be referenced to in Section 2.3, as well as the table of contents.

SECTION 2.4 Land Use

This section describes current land uses near the site and possible future uses of the site and surrounding areas. If there are planned future alterations within the zoning activities for the site, or surrounding the site, then these changes should be identified along with present urban and rural city planning ordinances.

SECTION 2.4.1 Current Land Use

This section provides information about the current land use on and around the site. This part of the Public Participation Plan includes: the density of surrounding housing, the types of industrial and commercial business, and all park and open spaces in the encompassing area. Schools, hospitals, churches, and other public facilities also need to be included, and their proximity to the site.

SECTION 2.4.2 Future Land Use

Section 2.4.2 documents the possible specified future land use for the site, and the surrounding area. The future plans for property in and around a city, and projected developments or annexations, which will be affected by the contamination on the site.

SECTION 2.5 Demographic Survey

A demographic survey of the area surrounding the site is conducted to provide a profile of residents and others who may want information about site activities, and to aid in developing an effective public participation plan. Demographic information should be obtained for the area within a 1.0 mile radius from the center of the site. The information should be divided and organized into specific incremental radii, according to population and surrounding facilities. Information for each radius includes data on

total population, households, income, age, and ethnicity. These should be obtained from the most recent census for the surrounding area.

SECTION 3.0 COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

To evaluate the level of public interest in and possible concern about a site, interviews should be conducted with members of the community. Interviews are designed to give interviewees the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns about the site, and suggest ways of distributing information about the investigation.

A mailing list should be compiled, and informative letters with written questionnaires should be included. This allows for documented information about issues of concern which the public might have. Telephone calls to local residents can be made which invite interested parties to participate in interviews.

All letters, public replies, fact sheets, and questionnaires should be enclosed in the Public Participation Plan.

SECTION 3.1 Historical Community Involvement

This section explains a broad scope of past public participation and knowledge about the site. The section includes information from the media, contact from any private agencies, former studies done in the area, local neighborhood discussions, work, or local or federal government officials.

SECTION 3.2 Summary of Interview Findings

The Summaries of Interview Findings are categorized into four different sections: Concerns about the Site, Communication with Local and Government Officials, Level of Community Concern, and Preferences for Information Dissemination.

SECTION 3.2.1 Concerns about the Site

Interviewees should be questioned about specific concerns about the site. These should include past, present and future issues of particular concern. These concerns might include environmental issues, endangered species, historical site impacts, health risks, effects of remediation, or possible future site development.

SECTION 3.2.2 Communication with Local and Government Officials

Persons interviewed for the Public Participation Plan should be questioned about what contacts they had with other city, county, state, and federal government officials. Questions should include the evaluation of the responsiveness given by these officials to questions and concerns which the public might have.

SECTION 3.2.3 Level of Community Concern

Interviewees should also be asked about their knowledge of concern by friends, neighbors and public officials. Relationships between the public and government officials are questioned to establish the degree of involvement between them. Inquiries about concerns by neighbors will help establish the Level of Community Concern by those people who do not respond to inquiries and letters.

SECTION 3.2.4 Preferences for Information Dissemination

Methods of dispersing information to the public should be established for the Public Participation Plan. These methods possibly include: Fact Sheets, community meetings, media articles and press releases, and information placed in local libraries. Fact Sheets state “what was found” at the site, in comprehensible, non-technical language, and can inform the public about any upcoming hearings and opportunities for public comment.

Community meetings are established so that concerned people can be presented with the status and scope of the investigation, sampling methods planned for use at the site, possible chemical findings including chemical concentrations and locations, and planned cleanup. Media articles and press releases are effective ways for dispersal of information, as well as local television and radio programs. Local libraries are another way for the public to read important information and documents about the site.

SECTION 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP) ACTIVITIES

Goals and objectives of the Public Participation Plan and techniques to be employed to meet the program objectives are discussed in this section. Names of people to contact for information about the site investigation are also provided in this section.

On the basis of the findings from the interviews described in Section 3.0, overall goals can be developed for the Public Participation Plan. These goals can be described in this section, as well as the possible techniques for implementation.

SECTION 4.1 Fact Sheets

Fact sheets are information flyers written in non-technical language to inform the community of key issues about the site investigation and/or cleanup, explain the findings, and discuss the schedule and opportunities for public input. Fact Sheets should be issued at significant milestones during the course of the site investigation.

Fact Sheets may include the following information, when appropriate, depending upon the timing and status of the project:

- Site history and map
- Regulatory agency actions and status of regulatory program
- Description of issues
- Schedule of activities
- Process for public involvement
- Location of information repository
- Name, address, and phone number of contact persons
- Summary of site investigation
- Summary of feasibility study and selected remedy, if needed
- Summary of public participation activities
- Description of cleanup alternatives, if needed.

Fact sheets describing planned field activities for the site investigation should be distributed to individuals on the mailing list. The community mailing list should be included in the Public Participation Plan, and should include the following:

- Representatives from the city within which the site is located as well as county officials
- State and Federal agency representatives
- Elected members of the state and federal legislatures
- Representatives of community groups
- Principals of schools and a representative of child day care centers near the site
- Local business people, including people who own or lease site parcels
- Local residents.

SECTION 4.2 Public Repository

During the investigation and cleanup process, a list of locations will be available so that members of the public can read information and reports about remediation of the site. At a minimum, the following documents or equivalent information will be added to the repositories as final versions become available:

- Fact Sheets
- Records Research Report
- Work Plan for Site Characterization
- Sampling and Analysis Plan
- Data Collection Quality Assurance Plan
- Site Investigation Report

- Public Participation Plan
- Screening Human Health and Ecological Evaluation
- Feasibility Study Reports
- Statement of Basis for Remedy Selection
- Closure Plans
- Public Notices.

Other information may include:

- Copies of brochures and other information about site activities
- Copies of press releases and newspaper articles about the site
- Other information about the site and potential risks associated with specific chemicals that have been found at the site.

SECTION 4.3 Public Meetings

If there is sufficient public interest/concern regarding a site, community meetings will be held, as appropriate, to communicate details to the public regarding the project. Meetings can be established and promoted according to the amount of concern presented by the public. Lists of proposed dates, as well as possible locations should be included in the Public Participation Plan.

SECTION 4.4 Key Public Involvement Contacts

A list of all personnel involved with the project should be provided in Section 4.4. This list includes all key individuals involved from federal, state, and local agencies. These people may be called by individuals wishing to ask questions about or comment on the site investigation, process, and future prospects. The names of the individual, occupational agency, address, and present telephone number should be listed.

SECTION 5.0 SUBMITTAL SCHEDULE

A table should be included which lists all public participation activities that are anticipated to occur. Releases of important documents and pertinent information to the public should be listed in Section 5.0. Listing specific dates for scheduled dissemination of information allows the public to participate in the site investigation and remediation.

SECTION 6.0

REFERENCES

A list of all references used in the project allows the concerned/involved citizens to review the same materials, and encourages public involvement in the project. The references utilized can include various sources such as local maps, city general plans, government agency documents, state land and water laws, all media resources, sampling data, removal action workplans, and various other types of information.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

Glossary: A glossary of terms and acronyms will assist in the understanding of the Public Participation Plan.

Fact Sheets: Fact sheets about the site will be distributed to the community before any interviews take place about the site. This can be referenced in the Public Participation Plan, and attached in the appendix.

Community Interviews: If there was a questionnaire that was sent to the public to ask questions about their knowledge about the site, than this should be included into the Public Participation Plan. All telephone questions can also be included into this section.

TABLE 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7.0 INTRODUCTION

8.0 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Current Site Description
- 2.2 Site History
- 2.3 Planned Site Activities
- 2.4 Land Use
 - 2.4.1 Current Land Use
 - 2.4.2 Future Land Use
- 2.5 Demographic Survey

9.0 COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

- 3.3 Historical Community Involvement
- 3.4 Summary of Interview Findings
 - 3.2.1 Concerns about the Site
 - 3.2.2 Local and Government Officials
 - 3.2.5 Level of Community Concern
 - 3.2.6 Preferences for Information Dissemination

10.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP) ACTIVITIES

- 4.5 Fact Sheets
- 4.6 Public Repository
- 4.7 Public Meetings
- 4.8 Key Public Involvement Contacts

11.0 SUBMITTAL SCHEDULE

12.0 REFERENCES

GLOSSARY

TABLES

1. Schedule of Anticipated Public Participation Activities
2. Schedule of Events

PLATES

1. Area Map
2. Site Map

APPENDIX 1

ABBREVIATED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN CHECKLIST OF STEPS (place in file)

1. Is the Regional Water Board the lead agency? _____ If “No” then coordinate with the lead agency in public participation activities, but no further Regional Water Board plan development steps are needed. If “Yes” then continue.
2. Does the site require preparation of a Remedial Action Plan or the equivalent because contamination is affecting a water supply well, is widespread, or is very serious? _____ If “No” skip to No. 3, and if “Yes” then prepare a Public Participation Plan.
3. Have there been news articles, telephone calls, correspondence, or other public inquiries regarding the site investigation or cleanup, or activities related to the investigation and cleanup (such as site development)? _____ If “No” then skip to No. 5, and if “Yes” then continue.
4. Can the concerns be remedied through dissemination of correct information or one-on-one discussions with concerned party? _____ If “No” then consider development of a public participation plan, if “Yes” then skip to No. 5
5. Is the site within the McMinn Superfund Area? _____ If “No” then skip to No. 6. If Yes, then also provide notice through the local newspaper and the McMinn mailing list.
6. Is the site an underground tank release case? If “No” then skip to No. 8, if “yes” then continue.

7. Does the underground tank case require preparation of a CAP? If “yes” then skip to No. 8, and follow procedures for public noticing under *CAP Preparation Noticing*, if “No” then comply with the following:
 - Notify owner of property, and all identified interested parties of intent to complete cleanup activities.
 - Follow noticing requirements for *Non-CAP and Clean Closures*.
 - If any wastes are left in place, consider future land use issues and need for site development restrictions, and at a minimum ensure notification includes lead public agency for planning decisions.
 - If groundwater exceeds water quality objectives, then follow noticing requirements for CAP sites.
 - If contaminated groundwater has migrated offsite or could migrate offsite then follow noticing requirements for CAP sites.

8. Will there be residual wastes left in place (contaminated soil or groundwater)? _____ If “Yes” then skip to No. 9, and if “No” skip to No. 10

9. Are deed restrictions needed for the final remedy, or any land use restrictions necessary? ____ If yes, then secure such restrictions first, then follow noticing requirements for *CAP Preparation*. If “No,” then follow noticing requirements for *CAP Preparation*.

10. Follow noticing requirements for *Non-CAP and Clean Closures*.

- A. *Non-CAP and Clean Closures* [for sites with no Corrective Action Plan or where all wastes were removed].

Noticing should include:

- Routine notice on the Regional Water Board web site and NOTICE binder.
- Completion of corrective action after site is secured for future use (destruction of wells, etc.)
- Notification to interested parties, to include:
 - Lead public agency for planning decisions
 - Lead public agency for environmental health decisions
 - Land owner(s)
 - Site operators
 - Consultants and attorneys of record

B. CAP Sites and Non-Clean Closures [For sites where Corrective Action Plans are required or where residual wastes will be left in place]

- Routine notice (summarizes status and proposal) of **proposed** corrective action and, where pertinent, intent to close, on the Regional Water Board web site and NOTICE binder.
- Notification to interested parties, to include:
 - Lead public agency for planning decisions
 - Lead public agency for environmental health decisions
 - Land owner(s)
 - Site operators
 - Consultants and attorneys of record
 - Contiguous land owners
 - Operators of public water supply wells within at least 1000 feet.
 - Owners/operators of private drinking water wells within 500 feet.
 - Any other identified interested party
- Post notice at site
- Allow 30-day comment period
- If controversy arises, then schedule public meeting for response to comments, and if significant controversy, consider development of public participation plan.