

Case Study

Umyuaq
CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

Establishing a Restoration Advisory Board

Background

Umyuaq Consulting Group, LLC (UCG) is a leading provider of community relations for environmental remediation projects, including military munitions and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). With extensive knowledge of restoration response processes, such as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), our team has the capacity to work independently or as a remediation sub-contractor to meet a project's community engagement needs.



First Stewart RAB Meeting

Challenges

Lake Washington, in New Windsor, New York, served as a primary drinking water source for surrounding communities until the forever chemicals, Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), were identified in the water. After losing this drinking water source, the community sought answers and remediation solutions from the U.S. National Guard and U.S. Air Force. Slow response times regarding this emerging contaminant caused an adversarial relationship between the community and government. The community also requested a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) be formed to support community participation and dialogue.

After the Stewart RAB was formed in late 2019, the COVID-19 protocols added the challenge of adapting meetings to a virtual format.

Highlights

- Clients: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) & National Guard Bureau
- Duration: 2019 to 2021
- Results:
  - Established the RAB in less than 6 months.
  - Facilitated meetings between a RAB sub-committee, the National Guard Bureau, Stewart Air National Guard Base, and USACE to gain consensus on the RAB bylaws.
  - Coordinated & facilitated 2 in-person public meetings, 1 in-person RAB meeting, and 6 virtual RAB meetings.

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Solutions

Clear and consistent communication, responsiveness, and relationship building with key community leaders became the building blocks for establishing the RAB and improving two-way communications between the government and community.

Key steps to building and operating the RAB included:

- RAB Selection Committee – Worked with base personnel and key community members to develop a RAB selection committee to promote RAB participation and select the initial RAB members. Strengthened communication channels between the government and the community.
- RAB Operating Procedures Acceptance – Facilitated meetings with a RAB sub-committee and the government to ensure the operation procedures were accepted by both sides.
- RAB Operations Development – Built systems and schedules for sharing information with RAB members, sub-committees, government representatives, contractors, and community members.
- Transition Meetings to a Virtual Platform – Adapted to the social distancing requirements of COVID-19 by quickly evaluating the compatibility of online platforms with numerous federal agencies and supporting community participants in using the new platform. Facilitated quarterly RAB meetings and sub-committee meetings virtually for two years.

Results

The Stewart RAB has been holding quarterly meetings since February 2020. During UCG's time as facilitator, the meetings were regularly attended by RAB members, local government officials/representatives, and community members. RAB coordination and facilitation was then successfully transferred to the next contractor.

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