POTOMAC RIVER SHEEN INCIDENT AFTER-ACTION REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Summary from the After-Action Conference focusing on the regional response to the November/December 2016 incident

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Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

POTOMAC RIVER SHEEN INCIDENT AFTER-ACTION REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN
Prepared by the Horsley Witten Group, Inc.
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The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) organized an after- action Conference (AAC) on March 17, 2017 at Fairfax Water's Griffith Treatment Plant in Lorton, Virginia to discuss the regional response to the November/December 2016 oil sheen incident on the Potomac River. Sixty-two people participated representing affected water utilities, U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), COG, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), local fire department and emergency management personnel, state environmental and emergency response agencies, public health agencies, and private industry.

The resulting after-action report provides a detailed timeline of the incident and details on identified improvement planning items. The improvement planning items (items are not listed in any priority order) include:

- Determine how an EPA-established Incident Management Team (IMT) can further involve drinking water utilities (i.e., inclusion where appropriate reps from utilities in planning and environmental unit).
- Support development of a geographic response plan for the "non-tidal" Potomac River.
- Increase utilization of the ICPRB website during incidents.
- Verify that ICPRB time of travel information is reaching the affected utilities.
- Improve coordination between utilities and their primacy agencies (EPA Office of Drinking Water, MDE, and VDH).
- Increase coordination between utilities and their state/county emergency management and public health representatives.
- Identify EPA-approved laboratories at the local/regional level that can assist with sample analysis.
- Create opportunities (i.e., training and exercises) that encourage relationship building between communities/utilities that use the Potomac River as a raw water source and the respective regulatory and response agencies.

The after-action conference provided an opportunity for stakeholders affected by the petroleum discharge incident to discuss lessons learned and identify areas for improvement. The following objectives guided the AAC:

- Come to a consensus on what occurred during the incident (e.g., timeline).
- Identify best practices (e.g., capabilities) employed during the incident that should be continued/expanded.
- Identify areas for improvement to increase preparedness and response capabilities related to similar incidents.
- Develop an After-action Report/Improvement Plan that will serve as a roadmap for stakeholders to improve preparedness for, response to, and recovery from Potomac River spill incidents.
- Determine if updates/modifications are needed to emergency response plans, standard operating procedures, and/or other tools (e.g., Response Protocol Toolbox) utilized during the incident.

Action/Follow-up	Associated Tasks	Responsible Agency	Agencies Who Should Be Involved	Resources and Possible Sources
Ensure that the information/actions taken by participant subgroups (e.g., laboratories, public information) are available during UC and COG coordination calls.	• Schedule subgroup calls prior to COG and UC coordination calls to ensure that the UC has the most up-to-date information. • Add an agenda item for subgroup report out during COG and UC coordination calls. • Schedule face-to-face meetings when possible. • Ensure that primacies/EMAs participate in subgroup calls/meetings in addition to EPA-established UC. • Develop clear, concise agendas for all coordination calls.	• COG • UC (when established)	• EPA OSC, PIO, ODW • Primacy agencies • State/county/local EMAs	• Conference calls • Situation Reports • Incident Action Plans
Verify that Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) time of travel information is reaching all stakeholders.	• Review the distribution list annually. • Add others (e.g., local/county EMA, County Fire Departments, EPA Region 3) to the distribution list as needed.	• ICPRB	• COG • Drinking water utilities • EMAs	• Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) information • COG distribution lists
Increase awareness of the ICPRB Potomac Spills ListServ (https://groups.io/g/PotomacSpills) capabilities (e.g., spill reporting and information) as a coordination tool during incidents.	• Incorporate functionality updates when needed. • Post incident related documents (e.g., Incident Action Plans, SitReps) on the ICPRB website. • Review website use after each incident.	• ICPRB	• COG • Drinking water utilities	• Current website capabilities • Incident lessons learned • Training and exercises
Identify EPA-approved laboratories at the local/regional level that can assist with sample analysis.	• Better integrate testing of water for purposes of assuring safe drinking water and verify that sample results from identified laboratories are enforceable in court. • Identify ways that utility samplers can work alongside EPA samplers and take their own samples.	• EPA – ODW, OSC • Drinking water utilities	• State primacy agency laboratories	• Established plans and procedures • Current laboratory relationships • EPA's Water Laboratory Alliance • CDC's Laboratory Response Network

Action/Follow-up	Associated Tasks	Responsible Agency	Agencies Who Should Be Involved	Resources and Possible Sources
Increase regional capabilities to detect and respond to spills in the Potomac River.	• Identify regional monitoring capabilities. • Establish an integrated monitoring system on the river. • Determine if facilities (e.g., NRG, White's Ferry) along the Potomac River would be willing to deploy boom if requested. • Identify existing stakeholder (e.g., utilities, EMA, regulators, private industry) spill response capabilities (e.g., boom, boats, floodlights). • Exercise with county/DC fire departments, boom deployment exercises. • Drinking water utilities should include fire departments in call down lists as first call. • Identify procedures for spills involving non-floatable contaminants.	• COG • Drinking water utilities • Fairfax County Fire, Montgomery County Fire, DCFEMS	• Private entities • State primacy agencies • State/county/local EMAs	• Existing resource inventories
Develop or update community long-term water outage plans	• Verify the existence of or develop a long-term water outage plan. • Consider increasing the ability to transfer water from reservoirs. • Create new interconnections.	• Drinking water utilities • EMAs	• State primacy agencies • EPA - ODW	• Established plans, policies and procedures • Regional utility lessons learned • Capital improvement projects
Create opportunities (i.e., training and exercises) that encourage relationship building among communities, regulatory and response agencies, and utilities that use the Potomac River as a raw water source.	• Engage upstream industrial users. • Catalog the spill history of facilities along the Potomac River. • Develop public/private partnerships. • Conduct training and exercises with facilities along the Potomac River.	• COG	• Drinking water utilities • State primacy agencies • State/county/local EMAs • Private entities	• Training and Exercise Plans • Emergency Response Plans • Community Emergency Management Plans

Action/Follow-up	Associated Tasks	Responsible Agency	People Who Should Be Involved	Resources and Possible Sources
Increase coordination between utilities and their local/county emergency management representatives.	• Discuss local/state EOC activation and drinking water utility involvement for spills in the Potomac River. • Determine local response capabilities (i.e., boom deployment). • Identify ways to improve the local response to an incident (e.g., 24-hour phone numbers). • Determine if fire departments or EMAs have the jurisdiction to require a suspected responsible party to provide a sample. • Identify training opportunities (e.g., tabletop exercises)	• Local/county EMAs • Drinking water utilities • Local Fire Departments	• COG • State EMAs • State primacy agencies	• Training events (e.g., EPA-sponsored) • Established plans, policies and procedures • Incident lessons learned • EPA's Coordination of the Water and Emergency Services Sectors: An Important Step to Better Response
Improve coordination between utilities and their primacy agencies.	• Identify training opportunities. • Conduct AACs and incorporate lessons learned.	• State primacy agencies • Drinking water utilities	• COG • EMAs (county and state)	• Training events • Established plans, policies, and procedures • Incident lessons learned

Action/Follow-up	Associated Tasks	Responsible Agency	People Who Should Be Involved	Resources and Possible Sources
Increase unknown contaminant sampling and analysis capabilities.	• Share EPA's Sampling Guidance for Unknown Contaminants in Drinking Water. • During a spill incident, the Incident Commander (IC) or UC should specify the purpose of sampling (e.g., screening for rapid decision making, forensic for fingerprinting a substance). • Drinking water utilities and primacies should determine objectives, volumes, methods. • Drinking water utilities, in coordination with primacies, should specify laboratory analysis and turnaround times needed. • Sampling guidelines should identify the specific sampling bottles and reagents that drinking water utilities should have available. • Identify gaps that EMAs could support.	• Drinking water utility laboratories • State primacy agencies	• EPA - ODW • EMAs	• EPA's Sampling Guidance for Unknown Contaminants in Drinking Water Established plans, policies and procedures • Incident lessons learned

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777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

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