CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
FOR THE PG&E TOPOCK COMPRESSOR STATION

NOTICE OF PREPARATION
FOR THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Gila Ridge High School Auditorium
7150 E. 24th Street
Yuma, AZ 85365

Wednesday, May 28, 2008
1:30-4:30 p.m.

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On Behalf of
EDAW

REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MATSUMOTO: Thank you for being here and I'm really appreciative for this beautiful auditorium, so thank you, Gila Ridge High School. My name is Jeanne Matsumoto and I'm a Public Participation Specialist with DTSC, the Department of Toxic Substances Control for the State of California. The Department is one of the departments under California Environmental Protection Agency. It's also the lead regulatory agency for the PG&E Topock Compressor Station, environmental investigation meeting. We have a packet of information with the agenda, a copy of the presentation, an evaluation form, in green, and please fill one out, I welcome suggestions. I always need to improve. We also have additional comment forms because not everyone wants to stand up and speak at a meeting, a large meeting, and we encourage you to turn in a comment. You can leave it with us if it's written, if you chose not to do a verbal one today, or you can mail it. We'll have contact information up on the screen in a little bit. The purpose of the meeting or why we're here, DTSC is gathering input on what should be in the Environmental Impact Report. That's what this scoping meeting is all about. We're specifically looking for environmental issues to be

analyzed and possible alternatives or mitigation members. It’s our intention to gather input from agencies, tribal reps and tribal members, stakeholders, and the public. We will not be responding directly to comments received today and we will stay after to answer any questions. Once we’ve completed the formal scoping process, then we would love to have questions so we’ll be around for all of you to answer questions. The process that we’re going to go through for a Notice of Preparation comment is if you have a comment, stand and state your name for conversation purposes. We won't be recording your name and it won't go into the administrative record, we just would like to be able to converse with anyone who comments. There's two ways we’ll be recording comments today. One is a digital recorder and the other will be a graphic recording, which is really fun. The agenda, we’ll start with introductions then Aaron, the Project Manager, will give you a project background overview. We’ll have the EIR process then we’ll take formal comments and we’ll stick around or we will stay after for questions and answers. The DTSC Team includes Watson Gin, Karen Baker, Aaron Yue, the Project Manager, and myself. The office of planning and environmental analysis includes Kathie,

Bill, who’s sneaking away, and Susan Wilcox. The EDAW Team, and EDAW is an independent consulting firm helping prepare the EIR. The EDAW Team includes Bobbette, who will be discussing the EIR in a few minutes, Jamie, Leaha, who is busy and working probably out at the front table, Leslie, who’s busy out at the front table, Nancy, graphic recorder, and Stev. And at this time, I’d like to turn the big clicker over to Aaron Yue, the Project Manager.

MR. YUE: Thank you, Jeanne. Good afternoon. What I'm going to do is basically give you a quick overview of the project and what has transpired in the past. Again, my name is Aaron Yue, that information is in your packet and it’s also in the fact sheet and any information you’ve received. My official title is the Senior Hazardous Substances Engineer, but I am the lead Project Manager for the site. What I’ll be covering today, I’ll be covering basically the project background, what the project is about, and also a brief history of the investigation and the clean-up process. The project background, PG&E Topock Compression Station, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, is located about 15 miles southeast of Needles, California, approximately an hour and a half from here, I think. The area does have cultural and

spiritual importance to the Native tribal people. The station is also surrounded by land that's managed by the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. And this is a big map of where the site is at. Needles is right there, the Topock Compressor Station is right over here. And I know this map is a little harder to see. We actually have a larger aerial of the site so you can look at it. Operational history, PG&E has owned and operated the station since 1951 and the station compresses natural gas. What they do is they bring in gas of other mid-west states and as the gas travels through the pipeline there are pressure losses and so PG&E essentially has a compression station to add pressure to (inaudible) to keep moving the natural gas to its customers in Northern and Central California. They don't do any processing of natural gas at the site. The natural gas is exactly the type of gas that you use at home cooking and heating. Here's an older aerial photo of what the compressor station looked like. I don't remember the year of that, but essentially again, natural gas comes in, these are compressor engines, and as the gas is compressed it’s moved along the pipeline up north. These two are the old cooling towers and I’ll be talking a little bit

about that. The picture here is actually a replacement cooling tower; these are the new cooling towers. What transpired in the past is between 1951 and 1985, pretty typical of (inaudible) industries, they used a lot of hexavalent chromium as an additive to the cooling tower water to keep corrosion down and also to keep the (inaudible) away from the pipes. And as part of the process, when the cooling water is spent or when it’s used to a certain degree, they have to get rid of the cooling water and what they’ve done in the past is they essentially discharged the cooling water to a dry wash, called the Bat Cave Wash, and eventually, over time, the water seeped through the ground, seeped through the soil and entered into the groundwater. So, currently there is a hexavalent chromium plume that is extending towards the Colorado River, approximately 2300 by (inaudible). And here is the general projection, a vertical projection, of where the plume is at in relation to the compressor station. This is the Bat Cave Wash that discharged. Currently PG&E has switched over to a phosphate-base. What I mean by projection is that it’s looking straight down at it and what we’ve found over time with investigation is that the green area here represents, if you take a cut into the ground

vertically in this direction, what you'll see is that this is the location of hexavalent chromium, this is a floodplain. The blue represents the groundwater and actually the darker blue here is the Colorado River itself. So, in this particular aerial photo, it looked as if the hexavalent chromium has actually reached the Colorado River. What we've essentially found is there is a bit of the plume directly under the river, but it's about 80 feet below the bottom of the river. So, what have we found up to now? In the clean-up process, essentially, there are three major steps. One is to try and figure out how bad is the situation. The second step is how do we clean up the (inaudible). And the third step is obviously how do we clean up the plume. Under step one, for the State of California, PG&E is under consent agreement to follow the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Under RCRA, the first phase or the first step is outlined and the information can be found in the RCRA facility investigation report. The second step will be detailed in the upcoming document called the Corrective Measure Study Report or the Feasibility Study. And then finally, of course, the third step is (inaudible). So, what have we learned so far? At this particular point, because the hexavalent chromium

plume is so close to the Colorado River, the Department of Toxic Substances Control has decided to put the priority to the groundwater investigation and clean-up over the soil contamination. Investigation for the soil is still upcoming and we're (inaudible) to determine the nature and extent of contamination. For the groundwater, PG&E, since signing a consent agreement back in 1996, has installed and actively monitoring over 150 groundwater wells and they are actively monitoring those wells. What we've also done is to sample the Colorado River quarterly. And through the low river water's down, you have to (inaudible). What we've found is that the Colorado River is not impacted by the hexavalent chromium. What we do know right now is that the groundwater investigations (inaudible) left to do. So, we know enough information to actually (inaudible). As part of the investigation, in fact in 2004, PG&E put in a new well next to the river and we saw that there was contamination at a location that's 60 or 70 feet away from the river. So, we required PG&E immediately begin extraction of the groundwater to keep the water from the plume, so there is a reversal (inaudible) and (inaudible) measure. As part of that active extraction, since 2004, PG&E has actually removed over

200 million gallons of contaminated groundwater and recovered over 4,700 pounds of chromium from the (inaudible). As far as the soil investigation, as I mentioned earlier, our priority right now is to control the contamination of the groundwater and to find a remedy for that. The soil, nevertheless, will still need to be investigated. PG&E had identified 29 areas to investigate the extent of the contamination because some soils have surfaced contamination. PG&E has also, as part of that investigation, drafted the soil sampling work plans and those work plans right now are being reviewed (inaudible) agencies and the Bureau of Reclamation is actually actively looking at that as well. The second step is to determine how we should clean-up the contamination that we've found so far and what we're doing, and that's part of this particular process, is trying to identify the final groundwater and soil clean-up technologies that will be used and really evaluated in the upcoming documents, in particular the Correct Measure Study and the Feasibility Study that I've mentioned earlier. And some of the environmental impact effects analysis will be conducted in the final report (inaudible) Environmental Impact Report, (inaudible) comments from stakeholders, agencies, some of their concerns. And

then, of course, at the end of the Environmental Impact Report process, and once we have that certified, we'll select a final remedy and we will go ahead and (inaudible) final remedy. We will only select the final remedy after we have public input from stakeholders. So, that pretty much concludes mine, and right now I'd like to turn presentation over to Bobbette.

MS. BIDDULPH: Thank you, Aaron. I guess the first thing that I really express at this meeting is that this is really the first step of the environmental review process, and that's getting from stakeholders, from you, agency members, to really scope out the environmental issues that we need to address in the environmental analysis. We haven't really started our technical analysis yet. We're just beginning. This is the first opportunity to provide that input to us, ask us questions, so that we are sure that we are addressing all those questions and those ideas in that environmental analysis as we move forward. Now, just a few basics, if you will, an Environmental Impact Report is required for the Topock remediation project. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, DTSC must prepare an EIR for any project that it proposes to carry out that may cause a significant effect on

the environment. As Aaron described, the project under review in this case is the clean-up of this groundwater plume, as well as some of the soils contamination that has occurred at the Topock Compressor Station. These two issues, the groundwater and the soils, are going to actually be analyzed in a different level of detail in that environmental document, and for that reason it’s a Program Environmental Impact Report. There will be more detail on the clean-up of the groundwater plume because we have more detail on how that's going to be implemented and we will have more detail on that. As for soils, some of those studies are still going to be underway when the EIR gets published. So, we’re going to do our best job to project what those likely effects will be, but it’s anticipated that there will be follow on environmental analysis that will actually tier off this Program EIR to address the soils contamination. And I actually jumped ahead a little bit. I wanted to reiterate, as Aaron describes, that the different approaches to clean-up both the soil and the groundwater will be addressed in this study called the Corrective Measure Study, Feasibility Study. There will be one for groundwater and one for soils. This slide actually talks a little bit about what I

just described about this concept of this being a Program EIR and us having more detail on the groundwater clean-up than we will have initially on the soils clean-up. Now, this slide here provides just a real laundry list of the issues that we're going to be addressing in the Environmental Impact Report. This is what we commonly refer to as a Full Scope EIR, meaning we're going to be addressing all of the potential environmental effects that the clean-up project could potentially cause. And this is really just a laundry listing of those topics and today we're interested in hearing about any specific issues of questions or ideas about the analysis that should be conduct for any of these topical areas, or perhaps we've missed one. As well, under the California Environmental Quality Act there's a series of other topics that are addressed in the CEQA document. The first in this listing is alternatives to the proposed projects, so what are the different ways that we could clean-up this site of the groundwater and the soils, and then comparing those alternatives. Maybe one alternative has fewer environmental effects than another. Really providing that information to flush out what are the best approaches for the environmental standpoint. As well, the document will summarize

those effects, those impacts that have been found to be less than significant where there's really not concern, but those conclusions will be substantiated. We'll discuss how we got to that conclusion. If there are any significant and unavoidable impacts, and that's basically an impact for which there's no feasible mitigation, those will be summarized and there will be a description as to why feasible mitigation is not possible, but of course the goal is to identify mitigation approaches. As well, the document will address irreversible changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. And cumulative impacts are those impacts that you look at other projects that are occurring in the area or in the region and consider what your project, the clean-up of this site, in combination with those other projects, considering these impacts together and whether or not those effects might be detrimental. So, as I mentioned, we're really at the beginning stages here. There have been a lot of investigations with hazardous materials and the contamination, but we're just getting underway in terms of addressing what the environmental effects of the clean-up actions could be. And in order for us to conduct those analyses, we're going to be looking to a variety of

resources, published reports, outreach to agencies. We're also going to be contacting tribal members and getting input from them and that input is confidential to respect that requirement. As well, where we need to, we'll be doing site specific studies to supplement this (inaudible) information. So, perhaps going out and doing some additional biological resource work on the site or other sites (inaudible) to get the level of detail that we need for analysis. Now, this chart just provides a very simple graphic representation of the process that is in front of us and it basically shows the different ways that we're outreaching to agencies and stakeholders in the community in terms of fact sheets, which are the orange boxes, public meetings as well as providing information in information repositories, places people can go for the information. So, the first column is where we're at today. There will be other opportunities for input during the Draft EIR review period and the Final EIR review period. This schedule that we're on is for these studies to be completed in the Spring of 2010 with those different opportunities for input throughout the way. So, as we've mentioned several times, the purpose of today's meeting is to gather input on the EIR so we can move forward and conduct

that work with the benefit of that input. We’re interested in, for instance, hearing about what types of environmental effects should be studied in the EIR, whether you have potential ideas for alternative approaches or mitigation measures that might reduce or eliminate potential environmental impacts, or if you also have project related questions. As you probably gather today, we don't necessarily have all of the details about how the remediation or the clean-up is going to take place but there's different alternatives that are being considered, and so answers to those project related questions are also something that we can take that input and find those answers throughout this process. This slide summarizes the different opportunities that we have during this public input phase for providing that input and we’re actually in the second series of five public meetings. We’ll be having three more through this week and next. And there really are a variety of ways in which you can provide your input to us. Today, providing that input verbally, as we are recording information digitally. In addition, providing comments in writing, it’s a really good way to make sure that your input is accurate. We can get that via a form that we passed out today or a formal letter can be written. But

what's really important is that we get that input by July 1st in order for us to kick off that environmental review process.

MS. MATSUMOTO: For more information about the project, of course, you can contact Aaron, myself. We also have a media, public information, is up there in case the media would like to get a hold of someone. We have information repositories and what they are, are files that keep the project documents in areas close to where the public can access them. They all seem to be a bit of a drive from Yuma, so I would recommend, in addition to the administrative record in California, the Topock website. All the documents are posted on the website, as well as up-to-date information and I think it’s a very nice resource if you have access to a computer. At this time, we would like to comments. And if you have a comment, you would stand and tell us your first name for conversational purposes. Let the record note that there are no comments today and that will officially end our comment portion, and if you would like to ask any questions, we’re open for question and answer now. Okay. That's it. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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- MEETING ADJOURNED -

TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that I, Kelli Wells, transcribed the digitally-recorded public meeting of the California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Toxic Substances Control, dated May 28, 2008; that the pages numbered 1 through 18 constitute said transcript; that the same is a complete and accurate transcription of the aforesaid to the best of my ability.

Dated June 26, 2008.

Kelli Wells, Transcriber
Statewide Transcription Services