

**Department of Environmental Quality
The Dow Chemical Company**

**Summary of Insights from the Convening Meetings
June 14, 2005**

In January 2005, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and The Dow Chemical Company (Dow) signed a "Framework for an Agreement" to help shape the path forward addressing the dioxin situation in Midland/Saginaw/Bay City areas of Michigan (the "tri-city areas"). One element of that Framework calls for the establishment of a broad-based community involvement process to advise the parties as they move forward. To that end, the DEQ and Dow held a series of four convening meetings in March and April 2005 as a first step in determining how to structure community involvement. The DEQ and Dow received ideas and questions from both the formally invited participants and many of the public observers who attended the meetings. Answers to the questions that were asked during these four meetings are being developed and will be available on the DEQ internet web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/deqdioxin> (select the "DEQ/Dow Framework Rollout Phase I" Quicklink).

The following summary describes the major themes about the public involvement process that, in the opinion of the DEQ and Dow, emerged from the convening meetings.

Community members expressed three clear directions for the public involvement process.

1. Information should be presented clearly and unambiguously

Participants provided conflicting views as to whether or not they needed more information. However, virtually all of the participants wanted one source of information they could trust and easily understand. People expressed frustration about conflicting information provided by the DEQ and Dow and about information that was presented in a form that was too technical or difficult to understand. Some participants suggested that the DEQ and Dow issue joint publications that describe areas of agreement and lay out the differences of opinion clearly and simply.

2. The DEQ and Dow should use of a variety of means to convey information to the community

Participants felt that information was not effectively conveyed to the community. Many people use e-mail and the internet. However, participants indicated that an important segment of the community would be missed if those were the only ways that information was presented and recommended more direct mailings. Participants suggested that the DEQ and Dow use a variety of means to convey information including newsletters,

brochures, newspaper inserts, public meetings, the use of community cable-tv programs, presentations to professional, civic, and educational organizations, meetings with local governmental agencies, expert panels, and meetings designed to convey technical information. There was wide support for greater involvement of local health departments and other local officials to help convey information. People also commonly expressed a desire to receive written information on technical matters related to progress of cleanup activities under the Framework and Dow's hazardous waste facility operating license.

3. People should have meaningful input into the decisions about how historical dioxin releases in the city of Midland, Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers, and Saginaw Bay will be addressed.

There was general recognition that there should be an appropriate role for the community in developing ways of addressing historical dioxin releases in the area. Participants expressed a variety of opinions on what this role should entail. There was widespread agreement that a stakeholder committee could be a valuable tool for providing community input into the decision-making process.

There were a number of points of broad agreement about a stakeholder committee:

- A stakeholder committee should provide a means of providing input that truly represents the variety of interests in the community.
- A professional, neutral facilitator should run the meetings.
- Each meeting should have a specific agenda.
- Clear rules should describe how the meetings are run.

Participants had differences of opinion about other aspects of a stakeholder committee:

- Some expressed an interest in one overall committee representing the entire tri-city areas. Others suggested three different committees individually representing Midland, the Tittabawassee and upper Saginaw Rivers, and the lower Saginaw River and Saginaw Bay.
- Some thought the committee should have the authority to make certain decisions. Others thought it should be advisory only.
- Some thought the committee should consist of a standing group of individuals selected to represent a broad cross section of the community. Others thought that the committee should be open to the public and anybody who wants to participate in a meeting should be able to do so.

- Some thought that video and audio taping of committee meetings should be allowed. Others thought it should not be allowed since it would inhibit candid discussion.
- Some thought certain segments of the community should be afforded a greater voice in the process. Others thought anyone with an interest in the dioxin issue should have an equal voice.
- Some recommended that the DEQ should reactivate its original Community Advisory Panel. Others thought it would be better to organize a new committee that would be more representative of the broader community.

The DEQ and Dow greatly appreciate the information and comments provided by everyone who took the time to participate in the convening meetings. The insights gained through those meetings are being used to develop a proposed on-going community involvement process. The DEQ and Dow will offer this proposed process to the community in a series of town hall meetings this summer.