

Proactive Stakeholder Engagement to Support Decision Making and Path Forward in the Field of Site Remediation: A Case Study

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Background/Objectives. Expert reviews are a type of review process where subject matter experts and specialists in one or several technical fields are brought together to analyze, debate and brainstorm on a given subject in order to support decision-making and make recommendations on a particular course of action. This process can be greatly enhanced when stakeholders are proactively involved. Stakeholder involvement is seen as a transparent way to engage interested parties and provide a higher level of confidence to a plan or path forward. This approach also adds credibility for the local community, especially when this community has an active participation in the approval of the remedial action plan. In the field of contaminated site cleanup, proactive stakeholder involvement can be used to validate an optimal remedial scenario for complex sites based on the most up to date science and vetted by informed and interested parties such as specialized consultants, academic researchers and governmental agency specialists. Such an approach supports in-depth and meaningful interaction and networking between different scientific disciplines and areas of expertise that would otherwise be difficult to organise.

Approach/Activities. In this case study, university research leaders as well as members of the regulating agencies were invited to contribute to weight in on the issues at hand, and provide pertinent comments and questions. Key stakeholders contributed to the composition and procedural design of expert reviews, which helped ensure that those stakeholders found the results of this process credible. The consistency of the approach, which was aligned with the principles of sustainable remediation, across the entire project life cycle, was another important factor in building trust and credibility.

Results/Lessons Learned. This presentation will illustrate the challenges and benefits of proactive stakeholder engagement in the field of sustainable site clean-up through a case study. The contaminated site which will be discussed presents many complexities (technical, social and legal); located in a unique natural environment (ecological reserve) and used by local residents, too sensitive to be remediated by standard methods, strict regulatory context, etc. The step by step process by which the process was initiated and conducted will be described to show the success, and lessons learned, obtained from the participation of the diverse group of stakeholders, and to illustrate how this type of approach can build consensus, to the benefit of the natural environment and the local community.