



U.S. AIR FORCE

Pease Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting

Thursday June 5, 2025

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Portsmouth Regional Office
Pease International Tradeport, 222 International Drive, Suite 175, Portsmouth, NH 03801

Meeting Summary

Meeting in Brief

This RAB meeting focused on updates related to various environmental testing results and site-specific updates, including stormwater testing and site upgrades. The group discussed the five-year review process and community involvement plan, with feedback from a recent survey highlighting public concerns about PFAS, drinking water, and health effects. Updates were provided on waste disposal practices, water system operations, and the EPA's recent announcement regarding changes to PFAS Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), along with discussions about improving communication.

Meeting materials: Presentation slides and pre-recorded technical presentations can be found at: <https://www.afcec.af.mil/Home/BRAC/Pease-Archives/>

Video: A recording of the meeting can be found at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmIIYfsuyW0&feature=youtu.be>

Stormwater Update

Tom Gerhard, WSP, provided a stormwater update as a pre-recorded technical presentation. In late 2024, stormwater sampling was performed during two rain events at six outfalls. The results showed the total PFAS Mass Transport (grams) ranging from 0.007 to 1.056, depending on the outflow and rain event.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: Why was the stormwater testing done?

A: The first round of PFAS sampling in storm water was done in 2021 as part of the Remedial Investigation. The 2021 testing focused on concentrations of PFAS in stormwater. The 2024 testing focused on mass discharge. For this reason, the 2024 results are presented in grams, rather than parts per trillion.

Q: Did you test PFAS concentrations in rainwater?

A: PFAS testing in rainwater was not a focus. We did one PFAS sample in rainwater, and it tested as 3 parts per trillion for PFAS.

Q: The presentation highlighted only four PFAS compounds. Were these the only ones tested?

A: The testing included all PFAS compounds. No significant quantities were noted beyond the four PFAS compounds that were presented.

Site 8 & AIMS Update

Tom Gerhard, WSP, provided an update on Site 8 and AIMS as a pre-recorded technical presentation. Since the last RAB meeting in December 2024, subcontractors have removed ~8,000 gallons of methanol solutions from the regeneration process equipment at Site 8. The major process equipment (clarifier, sand filter, sludge press, and GAC vessels) were ordered by WSP and are in fabrication. At AIMS, the installation of new groundwater infiltration trenches and all associated instrumentation has been completed.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: Where does the sludge go from Site 8?

A: It goes to a RCRA Class C hazardous waste landfill permitted to handle PFAS-impacted wastes. Other options are currently limited. Incineration is not currently allowed, and other technologies are still being tested.

Q: Is AIMS ever shut down when the water table is too low or high? Or do these fluctuations simply limit the capacity of AIMS?

A: AIMS adjusts extraction based on water table level, but it is not shut down due to fluctuations in the water table.

Q: What is the role of the sand and resin in the Site 8 system?

A: The sand addresses residual iron, and the resin addresses PFAS. There are no changes to the resin in the most recent upgrades.

Q: How do you account for the different flow rates at Site 8 (52 gallons/minute) and AIMS (278 gallons/minute)

A: The systems are designed with different capacities. The design capacity at Site 8 is 120 gallons/minute. The upgrades to enable the Site 8 design capacity are targeted to be completed by January 2026.

Ecological Risk Assessment

Stephen Cochrane, WSP, provided an update on the ecological risk assessment data as a pre-recorded technical presentation. The goal of this risk assessment is to collect enough data from terrestrial and aquatic species to develop site-specific uptake models. Data collection has been completed for terrestrial and aquatic species and the assessment is in process.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: There seem to be sampling gaps with fish & invertebrates. Will further sampling happen?

A: It is unlikely that we will take additional samples. The available samples allow us to see trends and build a reliable model. If gaps appear in the model, we will consider more samples.

Q: When will the analyzed data be available for the community?

A: The analysis and Air Force review needs to be completed before bringing it to the community. January 2026 is the earliest anticipated date for an initial community review. A finalized report is anticipated by fall 2026.

Q: Can you provide more details on shellfish sampling, including where and what types of shellfish were sampled?

A: Shellfish were collected as part of invertebrate sampling, largely from outlets and coves that feed into the bay. Most of the samples were oysters, but some locations only had red mussels.

Q: RAB members asked a series of questions about testing on farmed oysters, who is responsible for “do not eat” advisories, and whether the ecological risk assessment data gets shared with DES.

A: Shellfish samples did not include farmed oysters. Air Force indicated that this is not in their purview. The data will be shared with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES), and it is DES who is responsible for “do not eat” advisories.

Private Wells Update

Chris King, U.S. Air Force, provided an update on private wells. Notification letters have been sent to residents that have PFAS results that exceed the Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) as defined by EPA. These residents can access state subsidies for temporary filters or to support interconnection with municipal water systems. There are two public wells that are above the MCLs but below the prioritization threshold of three times the MCLs. These are likely to be addressed during a later round of actions and funding. Air Force contract actions are taking place to address private wells, on a “worst-first” approach. This contract should be in place by the end of August.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: How many private wells exceed the EPA MCLs? Have they all been contacted?

A: 21 wells exceed the MCLs and four meet the threshold of three times above the MCLs. The wells that have sample results have been contacted. There will be another round of sampling next week for all wells that are part of the private well monitoring program. When we receive the results, these well owners will be contacted.

Q: What support will be offered to well owners?

A: Well owners can contact the Town of Newington to be connected with State funding for temporary filters. Once the new contract is in place, the Air Force will be able to work with well owners to address PFAS, but this involves an extensive process. The Air Force will prioritize the wells with the highest PFAS levels first. Depending on an engineering evaluation and cost assessment, well owners will be offered either a connection to the municipal water system or a point-of-entry treatment (POET) filter system.

Q: What is the status of municipal wells that are above the MCLs but not above the three times threshold?

A: The City of Portsmouth is in the process of putting a design together for a treatment facility for the two remaining public wells. Processes are beginning to secure funding from the Air Force. There is no timeline on this right now.

Q: How is communication with private well owners being approached?

A: The Air Force took input from members of the community and developed notification letters with the support of consultants, and is also working closely with the Town of Newington and DES. All private wells — whether above or below the three time threshold — have received the same notification letters. The Air Force is not permitted to share the list of private wells with DES. Well owners must reach out to Newington or DES directly. DES has not yet been contacted by well owners.

- RAB members raised concerns about the differential treatment of well owners, where all are receiving the same messaging, but only a few are being prioritized for Air Force support.

Q: Are there any geophysical patterns in which wells are at or above the three times threshold?

A: The Air Force does not have this information at this time.

Community Involvement Plan Update

David Harris and Shauna Jones, AGEISS, provided an update on the Community Involvement Plan (CIP). Per EPA and Air Force requirements, this plan needs to be updated periodically, based on community input. A questionnaire was circulated broadly to community members in March and April 2025, receiving 44 responses. A draft CIP has been developed based on these responses, and is currently undergoing Air Force and regulatory review.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: Will the community receive the plan when it is done? What is the timeline?

A: The plan should be completed by September and the community will receive the plan at that time.

Q: Can you share any recurring themes that you heard from the questionnaire?

A: At a high level, we heard the following:

- 89% of the respondents live or work near Pease
- 80% are aware of the clean up at Pease
- Major concerns include PFAS in drinking water and associated health effects. Respondents wanted to be assured that the cleanup will be complete once the process is done.
- Many respondents were not aware that the documents related to the cleanup program are publicly available. Only 7% indicated they were receiving regular information about the cleanup activities.
- A third of respondents believe that PFAS concerns are being adequately addressed.

Pease Five-Year Review and Community Comments/Questions

Deborah McDonald and Catherine Guido, with ECC, provided updates on the Pease Five-Year Review based on comments and questions received from the community. The primary purpose of a five-year review report is to evaluate the effectiveness of a remedial action at a site, ensuring it remains protective of human health and the environment. The most recent Five-Year review is based on a data review period between January 2019 and December 2023, and includes an assessment of 20 sites at Pease. The presenters responded to three areas of community concern:

- **Re-Baselining:** Four sites were identified for re-baselining because of significant data gaps. This re-baselining determines the level of protectiveness of the remedy at a site in a given

period of time. There are 4 levels: 1) Protective, 2) Short term protective, 3) Protectiveness deferred, and 4) Not protective. *Site 8 was determined to be short term protective.*

- **Waste Disposal:** It continues to be legal to move and dispose of contaminated soil/waste off-site to an appropriate treatment/disposal facility.
- **New Development:** PFAS testing on sites with new development is the responsibility of the property owner, not the Air Force.

RAB members asked several clarifying questions, which are summarized below:

Q: Can soil from Pease be moved off site?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there documentation about where waste was disposed of in the 1990s?

A: We have not found any records of this. DES noted that while the exact location is unknown, the understanding is the waste was segregated and handled properly.

Q: There is a new daycare being established for the National Guard near Pease. For land like this, who would be responsible for testing?

A: As the owner, Pease Development Authority (PDA) is responsible for testing. However, PDA can also make this testing a requirement of any developer who is leasing PDA land. If testing is required after the development is completed, it becomes the responsibility of the entity leasing the parcel.

Q: Was the lead memo and memo on sea level rise included in the Five-Year Review?

A: The lead memo falls outside the review period. It will be considered in the next five-year review. The memo on sea level rise was rescinded by the current administration, so it will not be included. However, DES monitors groundwater table levels and related impacts.

Comment: The report does not seem to adequately convey that Site 8 is not functioning to its maximum capacity. The framing of Site 8 as “short term protective” glosses over the current limitations of the system, and misses an opportunity to build broader support for necessary improvements.

Response: Site 8 is doing what it is supposed to do, despite lower than desired flow rates. The goal is still to increase flow rates, which will be an improvement on existing capacity.

Comment: In the community questions and comments on the Five-Year Review, dated April 11th, there was a question raised about protectiveness being deferred until 2028 or later. This question was not addressed in the presentation today.

Response: This will be added as an action item for the next meeting.

Q: There are eleven private wells that are above New Hampshire Ambient Groundwater Quality Standards (AGQS) for one or more PFAS compounds. Were the wells in this category that are on POETs also connected to the municipal water supply? If not, are these wells being routinely monitored and evaluated against current groundwater standards to ensure these users are protected?

A: No, these wells with POETs are not also on municipal water supply and yes, they are routinely tested. Eight to nine wells received treatment and are also being tested against current MCLs.

RAB Community Member Topics and Q&A

Andrea Amico, RAB member, provided updates on a recent MCL announcement from EPA, community foam sampling, and monthly newsletter reporting on Site 8:

EPA Announcement: On May 14, 2025, US EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that MCLs will be kept the same for PFOA and PFAS, but the compliance deadlines will be extended by two years to 2031. EPA is also rescinding the MCL regulations for four other compounds: PFHxS, PFNA, GenX and PFBS. Amico conveyed community disappointment at these changes, and also noted that Pease still has State level MCLs to fall back on.

- Mike Daley, EPA, stated that GenX has not been found at Pease.
- Andrea Amico noted that PFOS is the most significant driver at Pease. PFHxS also impacts wells in the Pease area.
- Chris King stated that the Air Force is proceeding based on existing policy until official changes are made.

Monthly Newsletter: The community is grateful to receive monthly updates. A RAB member asked if it would be possible for the reports to clearly document improvements being made and their impact in relation to the performance of treatments in previous months and years. Mike Daly (EPA) suggested that OM&M reports may already have this information, and could potentially be used as a basis for community-facing reports.

Action Item:

- Mike Donahue (Pease RAB) will meet with Peter Sandin (DES) to discuss what a regular improvements report would look like
- Mike Daley, EPA, will share relevant OM&M reports with the RAB

Foam Sampling: Andrea Amico is working with Dr. Paula Mouser at UNH to test foam. Andrea collected two samples in April 2023, and additional samples with UNH in fall 2024. They recently received results from Temple University:

- The concentrations of PFAS are much higher in foam than in surface water
- PFOS is much higher in foams compared to other PFAS

Ongoing Activities: UNH is applying to NOAA for expanded foam sampling. Amico and Mouser continue to share results with the media, and have been invited to give a talk at an NHDES conference in June 2025. NH DES has also put out a factsheet on surface water foams.

Update on Drinking Water

Al Pratt, with the City of Portsmouth Public Works, provided updates on drinking water. He noted that there has been good rain this year, which has replenished groundwater levels to normal levels. The Pease groundwater treatment plant is running four resin trains for PFAS removal, which are capable of pumping 690 gallons per minute. The Portsmouth and Collins wells are in the Portsmouth system but have been impacted by PFAS in Pease. The City of Portsmouth is working on a treatment design to address this.

Public Comments

There was one public comment from Hagai Nassau, with Skeo:

Q: It sounds like the ecological risk assessment sampling is complete. What is the purpose of the work plan currently under review?

A: The work plan documents the statistical approach to analyzing the data. The earlier work plan addressed field sampling. The work plan will be available for Skeo to review after WSP receives comments from the Air Force.

Next Steps:

Toby Berkman (CBI) summarized the action items emerging from the meeting. These action items include:

- EPA to address the second to last community question regarding the Five-Year review about protectiveness being deferred until 2028 or later
- Mike Donahue (Pease RAB) to meet with Peter Sandin (DES) to discuss updating the quarterly reports with timeline demonstrating progress
- EPA to send information on the last two OM&M reports to RAB members
- USAF to alert RAB members when the Ecological Risk Assessment work plan is available for review
- CBI to work on meeting summary and distribute to RAB for review
- USAF and CBI to schedule the next RAB meeting and communicate to members

Meeting Attendees

RAB Members Present: Andrea Amico (community member and co-chair), Bradford Connolly (community member), Mike Daly (appointed member: US EPA), Michael Donahue (community member), Keith Girouard (appointed member: NH Air National Guard), Huddy Grandy (community member), Christopher King (appointed member: Air Force Civil Engineer Center, DoD Chair), Al Pratt (appointed member: City of Portsmouth Public Works), Paul Roy (community member), Peter Sandin (appointed member: NHDES). Jared Sheehan (appointed member: Pease Development Authority)

Meeting Support Staff Present: Toby Berkman (Consensus Building Institute, RAB Meeting Facilitator), Stephen Cochrane (WSP), Tom Gerhard (WSP) Dante Gulle (Ageiss), Catherine Guido (ECC), Aarati Halbe (Consensus Building Institute Support), Deborah McDonald (ECC)

Others Present via Zoom: Patrick Carrol (State Government), Erin Cotton (State Government), Val de la Fuente (USAF), David Harris (Ageiss), Kelly Hunter (State Government), Shauna Jones (Ageiss), Karmen King (Skeo), Claire Marcussen (Skeo), Hagai Nassau (Skeo), Ravi Ravichandran (USAF), Brian Younkin (Skeo)

Appendix A: Meeting recording times

Link to meeting video recording: <https://youtu.be/HmlIYfsuyW0>

Recording timestamps are listed parenthetically next to the associated topics that were discussed.

Summary

5:00 Pre-Recorded Technical Presentations – Air Force and WSP (not included in meeting recording)

- Update on Ecologic Risk Assessment data
- Update on stormwater data
- Update on the Airfield Interim Mitigation System (AIMS) and Site 8

5:35 Welcome, Introductions, RAB Business – Consensus Building Institute

Review technology, meeting agenda, introductions

- Introductions of RAB community members, air force representatives, Portsmouth representatives, and WSP **(0:03:00)**
- Approve Dec. 2024 Summary discussion, considered approved **(0:04:00)**

5:45 Q&A on Pre-Recorded Technical Presentations

- Discussion of stormwater and ecological risk assessment presentations including results, methods, locations, and future testing. **(0:05:26)**
- Questions from RAB member about Site 8 sludge removal, AIMS reaction to low water tables, Site 8 upgrades (what is included and removed), and other technologies for waste treatment. **(0:15:52)**
- Question from RAB member about timeline of Site 8 upgrades. **(0:19:00)**
- Questions from RAB member about the ecological risk assessment field work and if there will be further testing to fill in gaps from missing samples, and the timeline of releasing data. **(0:22:42)**
- Question from Rab member about the locations of shellfish sampling, if any farmed oysters were sampled, and if data would be shared with DES to enforce restrictions. **(0:25:16)**

6:05 Private Wells Update – Air Force

The Air Force provided an update on information-sharing with owners of private wells with elevated PFAS levels. **(0:32:25)**

- Questions from RAB member about number of residential wells that exceeded the MCL, number of wells that were 3x the MCL, attempts to contact residents, timelines, and how the state/air force will assist in payment and remediation. **(0:34:44)**
- Discussion around the status of municipal wells, timeline, priorities, and role of Air Force and city of Portsmouth. **(0:38:10)**
- Discussion around messaging to residents with exceedances and Air Force's limitations on data sharing with DES and cities. **(0:39:40)**
- RAB member questioned whether there is a pattern to the distribution of the higher exceedance wells. **(0:44:00)**
- Discussion around the process that went into developing the notification letters. **(0:45:00)**

6:20 Community Involvement Plan Update – Air Force

The Air Force provided updates on the 2015 Pease Community Involvement Plan (CIP) and potential future actions. **(0:47:44)**

- Andrea asks about the timeline of CIP final plan, themes of the interviews, and results. **(0:51:40)**

6:35 Break

Audio off at **(56:27)**, back on at **(1:07:05)**

6:45 Presentation on the Pease 5-Year Review and Community Comments/Questions – Air Force

ECC shared findings from the Pease 5-Year Review, as well as responses to comments and questions raised by members of the community. **(1:07:52)**

- Discussion on waste and soil, disposal facilities, and documentation required. **(1:23:27)**

- Discussion around new developments and who is responsible for testing and determining whether activities are safe. **(1:27:04)**
- Discussion about whether the Air force will address sea level rise and extreme weather in future work. This was rescinded by the current administration. **(1:31:19)**
- Discussion on documentation of the challenges at Site 8 in the five-year review. **(1:32:51)**
- RAB member raises concern about two potentially unaddressed questions related to current exposures and effectiveness of POET systems in relation to current MCL values. **(1:41:45)**

7:15 RAB Community Member Topics and Q&A

- RAB shares EPA announcement of planned updates to PFAS MCLs. **(1:46:34)**
- RAB provides feedback on monthly newsletter reporting for treatment plants **(1:54:38)**
- RAB shares results from UNH foam testing. **(2:03:44)**

7:40 Brief Update on Drinking Water - City of Portsmouth

- City of Portsmouth provides update on water levels, demands, efficiency of new treatment methods, and progress with planned updates on Portsmouth and Collins wells. **(2:12:48)**

7:45 Public Comments

- Representative from Skeo (technical advisor for community) asked about reviewing ecological risk assessment workplan and when that document will be available for review. **(2:16:00)**

7:55 Meeting Recap and Next Steps – Consensus Building Institute

- Follow up on the second to last community question on the 5 year review, RAB to work on ways to update plant reporting, Air Force to provide info from last two OM&M reports, Air Force to alert RAB when BERA work plan is ready for review. **(2:20:00)**

8:00 Adjourn