

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency  
 2011 Community Involvement Training Conference  
 Community Involvement in the 21st Century: Embracing Diversity, Expanding Engagement, Utilizing Technology

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Expanding Engagement in Large Public Comment Listening Forums  
 July 19 12:45pm  
 Adam Saslow



Community Involvement Training Conference Slides - Adobe Connect

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

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## Thank you!

Let's begin today's session!

## A Community Engagement Forum:

Large Scale Public Involvement Processes  
Mountain Top Removal and Hydraulic Fracturing

Presented by Adam R. Saslow and Curt D. Gervich  
to US EPA Community Involvement Conference  
July 19, 2011

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## Who Are These Guys?

- Adam R. Saslow
  - Wall Street to Atlanta... through EPA/HQ
  - Professional Facilitator since 1998
  - Recent High Profile Projects include Anniston, AL, Mountain Top Removal (Spruce #1) and Hydraulic Fracturing
- Curt Gervich - SUNY Plattsburg
  - MS and PhD in Environmental and Natural Resource Planning
  - 12 years experience with NGOs and government agencies in areas of habitat conservation planning, participatory planning and community sustainability (among others...)
  - Research organizational and environmental decision making
  - Teach courses in environmental management, environmental law & policy and sustainability.

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## Today's Discussion - Objectives

- Create the experience of an EPA large public forum
- Demonstrate process and tactics used in several successful forums
- Make the case that large public forums will be increasingly common in the future... but they must be done BETTER than they are today - PCI Method.
- Identify crucial steps to convening successful large public forums
- Share wisdom, and produce new wisdom, about large public forums to improve future performance

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## Experiencing "PCI" (Plexus Community Involvement)

- Registration Process
- Environment
- Training... and Speaking
- Time Management
- Active Listening - What Did We Hear?
- Security

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## Creating the experience of an EPA large public forum

- You just experienced a replication of our MTR and Fracking work
  - Media, live streaming, PR packages and interviews
  - Registration
    - Online Pre-registration
    - Onsite computer registration
    - Speaker's list and wristbands
  - Brief tutorial on effective public comments
  - Publicly visible clock and equitable treatment for all speakers
  - Organized speakers' lines and no-gap timing
  - Behind-the-scenes
    - Constant and immediate communication among facilitators
    - Security and safety personnel

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## Today's Discussion Vehicles – Two Cases

- Mountain Top Removal – Spruce No. 1.
  - Mingo Logan, WV
- Hydraulic Fracturing
  - Dallas, TX
  - Denver, CO
  - Canonsburg, PA
  - Binghamton, NY

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## Mountain Top Removal – Spruce #1

- EPA was reviewing the permit for surface mining at Spruce No. 1 in Logan County, WV in the Spruce Fork Watershed, an area highly impacted by previous mining activities.
- The Spruce No. 1 Mine is one of the largest surface mining operations ever authorized in Appalachia.
- The Mingo Logan Coal Company was already authorized by the USACE and WV to construct six "valley fills" and numerous sedimentation ponds

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## Mountain Top Removal – Spruce #1

- Complex, Controversial, Emotionally Charged Public Meeting
- Personal involvement from Mr. Sussman, Mr. Garvin and senior-most OW officials as well as others
- 1,100 people and LOTS of protestors (including a sanctioned demonstration) OUTSIDE (not inside)
- 75 Police officers
- Bomb Squads
- Secret Service detail that protected Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell
- And... Plexus LI

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## MTR and Plexus, LI

- Our staff worked as a subcontractor to SRA International
- SRA did some of the logistical work and arranged for court reporters and transcribing.
- SRA managed the pre-registration process
- Plexus managed all on-site operations, logistics and facilitation
- This was, essentially, a public hearing.
  - Of course when you open things up to the public, SOMETIMES you get what you are looking for... and sometimes a WHOLE lot more.

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## Shifting gears... To the next case...



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### Identification and Prioritization of Case Studies

- Stakeholder recommendations
- Vulnerable water resources
  - Proximity of other wells, exposure pathways
  - Extent of activity (wells/acre)
- Geologic conditions
- Geographic variations



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### Hydraulic Fracturing and Plexus LI

- EPA wanted to obtain stakeholder suggestions on the study design.
  - Of course when you open things up to the public, SOMETIMES you get what you are looking for... and sometimes a WHOLE lot more.
- Our staff worked as a subcontractor to the CADMUS Group
- Cadmus did some of the off-site logistics, pre-registration and all of the recording
- Plexus managed operations, logistics and facilitation

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### Hydraulic Fracturing Community Involvement – Characteristics

- Complex, Controversial, Emotionally Charged Public Meeting
- Personal involvement from Mr. Sussman, four RA's, and senior-most OW officials as well as others
- 500 to 5,000 people
- Protestors OUTSIDE
- 85 Police officers (in Binghamton... less elsewhere)
- Bomb Squads
- Media
- And... Plexus LI

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### Make the case that large public forums will be increasingly common in the future

- Current and future regulation and permitting challenges are landscape scale and therefore include huge numbers of stakeholders
  - MTR
  - Fracking
  - CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub> and other GHGs
- As environmental and economic crunch tightens, interest, stakes and passions flare
- Social networking technology increases awareness and participation
- Societal trends in how Americans view government and industry increase rancor and participation
  - Katrina
  - BP
  - Yellowstone River Spill
  - RGGI
  - EPA posturing and actions

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### So How Does One Engage the Community?

Generally...

- Create and manage expectations and every point of contact!
- Be sure to be responsive to ALL concerns
- When you don't know the answer, it IS appropriate to say: "I don't know"... followed by "but I will find out."

Specifically...

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### So How Does One Engage the Community... Before the Meeting

- Identify local leadership
- Landscape Assessment \*\*\* as time allows
- Outreach, education and support
- Pre-registration (electronic and by phone)
- Information – (electronic and hard copy)
- Personal touch - Disney

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## So How Does One Engage the Community... During the Meeting

- Operations (“Outside” the room)
  - Team communication
  - Know your community!
  - Safe, comfortable environment – facility AND security
  - Registration Process
  - Wristbands
- Facilitation (“Inside” the room)
  - Team communication (listed twice because it is TWICE as important)
  - Training
  - Flow
  - Clear groundrules – time, positioning and props
  - Equitably enforced
  - Humor... and authority

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## So How Does One Engage the Community... After the Meeting

- Be accessible!
- Candid, direct answers... even when they may not be popular.
- If you don't know... admit it... and find out.
- Let your words dictate your actions.

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## Conclusions

- Creating a safe environment is critical
- Pay for it now... or pay for it later ☺
- Community Engagement – Nothing to Lose and EVERYTHING to Gain
- Transparency Speaks VOLUMES
- And thematically:  
**create expectations... and meet them.**

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## THANK YOU!!!

### For More Information...

<p>Adam R. Saslow Vice President – Sustainability Programs Plexus LI 1600 Parkwood Circle, Suite 310 Atlanta, GA 30039 678.388.1670 Adam.saslow@plexusli.com</p>	<p>Curt Gervich Assistant Professor – Earth and Environmental Science Plattsburgh State University 101 Broad Street Plattsburgh, NY 12901 518.564.4030 Cgervoo1@plattsburgh.edu</p>
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