Comment on “Sediment research, management and policy—a decade of JSS”

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Förstner and Salomons (2010) provided an overview of 10 years of activities in handling sediment issues within the context of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the European research network, SedNet. Special attention was paid to the “Spittelwasser site” near Bitterfeld, Germany. They alleged that this site continues to represent a “severe pollution problem” for the Elbe River basin, specifically concerning dioxin emissions, and that the responsible state agency (LAF) rejects any responsibility for the management of this issue—and even “blocked” proceedings related to this issue. We assert that this statement is misleading for the following reasons:

1. In 2002/2003, within the Ecological Mega-Project site, extensive analyses of dioxin pollution were conducted. The remediation of the contaminated sites was completed in 2005. The congener pattern of the analyzed dioxins in the region was found to be different from those reported as being the result of magnesium production. The contribution of the Bitterfeld-Wolfen

region to dioxin input into the entire Elbe system deserves further study.

2. The financial resources mentioned are utilized in the Bitterfeld-Wolfen area for necessary long-term measures to protect downstream ground- and surface waters from contamination risks. According to the WFD, this is a “baseline measure”; actually, approximately two million cubic meters of contaminated groundwater are pumped, treated, and then released into the recipient, the Mulde River, per year.
3. In 2008, watercourse maintenance measures in the Spittelwasser system were undertaken. As part of these measures, substantial amounts of sediment were removed, and the proper disposal of these contaminated sediments was financed by the LAF. In this regard, the LAF is far from “rejecting (its) responsibilities” for the financing of sediment management measures when they are necessary, adequate, and appropriate for the elimination of risks to downstream recipients.
4. As a result of the Europe-wide competitive dialogue in September 2010, a planning office has been contracted by LAF to execute the basic evaluation of potentially required measures in the Spittelwasser area. The dialogue with the involved parties (e.g., FGG Elbe) will thereby be technically substantiated.

In summary, we argue that Förstner and Salomons (2010) should have been more attentive in their appraisal of scientific facts and management activities accomplished at this site.

References

- Förstner U, Salomons W (2010) Sediment research, management and policy—a decade of JSS. *J of Soils and Sediments* 10:1440–1452

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