Green Week 2012

Urgency and timing: key-pillars of the science-policy bridge

Jos Brils, Deltares
jos.brils@deltares.nl
a personal, practical experience in trying to influence the Meuse river basin management policy agenda
Once I was involved in a EU-project ...

One of its conclusions in 2008:

Flooding will mobilize historic contamination from river banks and floodplains
Also in the Meuse river basin ...

such contaminated river banks occur:
I was aware of ...

Brils & Harris, 2009 (inspired by Crilly, 2007)
Thus presented results to the IMC ...

Their (unofficial) response:

• Interesting
• But need a more convincing story:

“elaborate an appealing example, where clearly quantified downstream risks result from remobilized contaminants from upstream Meuse riverbanks”
Thus we did ...

- Flémalle site
- Hypothetical, but realistic, severe flood event simulation
- Using **EXPOBASIN**
- Benzene, fluoranthene and cadmium as representative contaminants
- Funded by Deltares
Outcome was ...

“crustaceans will be affected at downstream areas were the remobilized sediments settle again”

(February 2011)

quality of deposits (fluoranthene, μg/kg dw).
Then window of opportunity opened ...

sediment at agenda of IMC annual plenary meeting (week 48, 2011)
Outcome was ...

“after an orientating discussion of the theme 'sediment' it is decided to let the theme rest due to lacking capacity and other priorities.”
My conclusions ...

• It may take quite a lot of endurance to get scientific evidence noticed at policy making levels
• Timing is very important (and think our timing was right)
• However, ‘sense of urgency’ is probably more crucial

What can we do more
– or hope for –
to get mobilization of historic contamination perceived as ‘urgent’ and thus to get it addressed in RBMPs?