

EM SSAB Contributes Community Views to Clean-up Decisions

2011 Local Board Contributions

The Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) has a unique mandate to provide input regarding the cleanup of nuclear legacy sites to the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management (EM).

Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the EM SSAB today comprises eight local boards, located in Hanford, WA; Idaho Falls, ID; Los Alamos, NM; the Nevada National Security Site; Oak Ridge, TN; Paducah, KY; Portsmouth, OH; and the Savannah River Site, SC.

EM has made public participation a fundamental component of its cleanup mission and has found that the EM SSAB, which draws upon diverse community viewpoints to provide advice and recommendations, has contributed greatly to bringing community values and priorities to the cleanup decision-making processes. As part of its annual assessment of board contributions, a summary of key recommendations is created by site management. What follows are some of the identified achievements of the local boards of the EM SSAB in 2011.

1. The **Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board (NSSAB)** was asked by the site to review the history and current activities related to three Corrective Action Sites (CASs) in Yucca Flat at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) and to recommend a path forward for cleaning up the CASs waste, which includes plutonium-contaminated pipe systems. Among the recommendation options were closing the CASs in place by limiting future access to the pipes and removing the pipes and disposing of the contaminated waste in accordance with waste disposal regulations. If the board recommended leaving the contamination in place, the Nevada Site Office (NSO) asked the NSSAB to provide a recommendation as to the type of protective measures that should be employed. The NSSAB recommended secure disposal in place, exploration of stabilization options, and independent review. The NSO implemented this recommendation and is in the final process of receiving closure approval from the State of Nevada.

The agency and the State of Nevada have benefited from this direct involvement of the board in cleanup decisions and the indication of community preferences. Furthermore, the recommendation for disposal in place (compared to the second option, which called for removal of contamination) could result in taxpayer cost savings of up to \$32,000,000.

2. In 2011, the **Northern New Mexico CAB** (NNMCAB) approved three recommendations to DOE pertaining to the accelerated removal of transuranic (TRU) waste from disposal Area G to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant site in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Two of these recommendations preceded the 2011 Las Conchas fire, the largest fire in New Mexico history, which resulted in the evacuation of Los Alamos. The expression of NNMCAB concerns and those of state and local officials spearheaded planning between the agency and the State on this work area. As a result, all legacy and newly generated TRU waste will be removed from the site by no later than December 31, 2014.

3. The **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board** recommended that DOE work with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to change the National Priority List boundaries of the reservation, noting that indicating which areas were and were not contaminated would be beneficial to public understanding. The board also pointed out that a change in perception of Oak Ridge would help recruit new business, industry, and families to the area, which in turn will boost the economic health of the community. DOE responded by initiating activities to delineate areas of the reservation that have no history of industrial activity or evidence of contamination.

4. **Savannah River Site CAB**. In September 2011, DOE- Savannah River Site (SRS) released to DOE Headquarters (DOE-HQ) and to the public the Savannah River Site Strategic Plan (also known as Enterprise.SRS). This plan

charts a course to continue the SRS tradition of maintaining environmental stewardship and national security while providing lasting solutions to major issues and challenges facing the nation. Throughout 2011, leading up to the release of the strategic plan, the SRS CAB provided ongoing input and viewpoints to draft versions for inclusion in the final document. These comments included continued priority of environmental clean-up, revitalizing and repurposing assets for the future, and expanding the Site focus into Clean Energy, all valuable contributions to the final plan.

5. **Portsmouth Site-Specific Advisory Board (PORTS SSAB)** made a recommendation for DOE to focus its citing characterizations on the two most suitable locations for a potential on-site disposal facility. In doing so, the board advised the site to address its concerns, including regulatory compliance, maximum disposal to accommodate consolidation of all existing landfills on site, consideration of cultural and historical assets, and community-supported future use, among other factors. By maintaining the accelerated demolition and decommissioning (D&D) schedule, work can proceed in a manner that allows for the expeditious cleanup of the site and prepares it for potential development. This could save \$5.4 billion over the lifecycle of the D&D project.

By narrowing the number of potential locations to be studied, the cost of evaluating multiple locations was eliminated. Further, the recommendation allows the D&D contractor to continue its work in unison with the accelerated D&D schedule.

6. **Paducah CAB.** Contamination associated with the Northwest and Northeast Plumes is the greatest environmental concern associated with the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP). To date over 3 billion gallons of water has been treated through the Northwest Plume with over 2,470 gallons of trichloroethene (TCE) removed as a direct result.

The PGDP CAB reviewed the Northwest Plume Interim Remedial Action Optimization project and recommended that DOE continue with the process of expediting time frames and enhanced communication efforts between DOE, EPA, and Kentucky Division of Waste Management. Expediting projects such as this are in the best interest of the public, and will result in increased removal rates for TCE and 99Tc from the area of the Northwest Plume containing the highest concentrations of these compounds.

7. The **Hanford Advisory Board** (HAB) members were actively involved in providing input and advice in the development of the 2011 Hanford Lifecycle Scope, Schedule and Cost Report (Lifecycle Report) that was issued in August 2011. This Lifecycle Report is a milestone requirement (M-036-01) under the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, also known as the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA). The Lifecycle Report is the first of its kind in the DOE complex and comes after years of discussions with regulatory agencies and HAB members seeking this information. The HAB provided valuable stakeholder input.

8. The **Idaho Citizens Advisory Board** (CAB) prepared two letters to DOE-HQ officials regarding its concerns about funding for cleanup at Idaho National Laboratory (INL). While acknowledging the INL's track record on achieving progress towards cleanup and supporting continued efforts to achieve the 2015 Vision for cleanup completion, the CAB identified the future savings that could be realized if modest investments were made to allow the accelerated rate of cleanup to continue at the INL.

DOE-HQ responded that they shared the CAB's goal for accelerating cleanup and acknowledged the potential cost-savings that could result from an accelerated schedule.