

**EM SSAB CHAIRS**  
**Bi-Monthly Conference Call**  
**Thursday, June 19, 2008**  
**3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Participants**

**Chairs/Representatives:**

Idaho	John Bollinger
Nevada	Dave Hermann
NNM	J.D. Campbell, Menice Santistevan
Oak Ridge	Spencer Gross, Lance Mezga, Pete Osborne
Paducah	William (Allen) Burnett, Eric Roberts
Richland/Hanford	Shelly Cimon, Lori Gamache, Susan Leckband
Savannah River	Donna Antonucci, Gerri Flemming, Sheron Smith

**DOE representatives:**

EM-13	Melissa Nielson, Doug Frost
EM-12	Christine Gelles
EM-20	Mark Gilbertson
CI	Betty Nolan

***OPENING REMARKS***

Melissa Nielson welcomed the participants to the conference call. In her review of the agenda, Ms. Nielson noted that Jeffrey Bobeck, Director for the Office of Communications and External Affairs, would not be able to participate due to a scheduling conflict.

**Congressional Update**

Betty Nolan from the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs reported that the House of Representatives will likely pass a bill that contains \$62.5 million in supplemental funding for Department of Energy (DOE) environmental cleanup programs. Once approved by the House, the bill will be brought to the Senate floor and will likely pass. The supplemental funding is highly significant because it will become part of the Department's overall baseline funding for FY 2008, which will be used as the foundation for planning in the event of a Continuing Resolution (CR) for the beginning of FY 2009. There is no official way to determine if there will be a CR for FY 2009; however, general wisdom suggests that it will likely be the case for at least the first six months of the new year. The chance of a new Congress extending that CR throughout the remainder of FY 2009 is also a possibility.

With regard to the FY 2009 budget, Ms. Nolan indicated that the House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development marked up the appropriations bill on June 18; however, final numbers are not released until the full committee has had the opportunity to review the bill. The subcommittee chairman, Congressman Pete Visclosky, published a press release suggesting that the subcommittee may propose a \$221.5 million increase in funding for defense and non-defense environmental management programs. The press release is available online at [www.house.gov/visclosky](http://www.house.gov/visclosky).

## **Engineering and Technology Update**

Mark Gilbertson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Technology (EM-20) provided an update on a number of EM-20's activities.

EM is developing a report to Congress that will likely be completed by the beginning of July. The report addresses three topics: glass issues, tank heels, and supplemental treatments. EM-20 has also completed a number of independent, external technology readiness reviews. The reviews are now available online, and Mr. Gilbertson encouraged the EM SSAB members to access them via the EM website at <http://www.em.doe.gov/Pages/EngTech.aspx>.

Mr. Gilbertson reported that EM-20 recently held an engineering and technology workshop that was made available to the public via podcast. Podcasts are useful communications tools that will allow stakeholders to participate in the program's technical workshops without the time and cost required by travel. The challenge in implementing this tool will be to provide timely notification to the appropriate points of contact in order to optimize its usage. EM-20 will continue to encourage its personnel to do what is technically feasible to provide stakeholders with a window into the technical side of the program. Mr. Gilbertson asked for candid feedback regarding the podcasts and how to make them more user-friendly. Podcasts will be an important resource going forward, and EM hopes to expand this capability in order to increase technical understanding of the program and preserve its institutional memory. Mr. Gilbertson noted that his office is also considering archiving these podcasts and creating an electronic library.

Donna Antonnuci of Savannah River indicated that she was not aware of the last podcast but applauded EM for branching out and using new ways to communicate and reach stakeholders.

Mr. Gilbertson noted that EM-20 still needs help figuring out how to best disseminate the workshop and podcast information in a timely manner.

Ms. Nielson recommended that EM-20 utilize her office and its distribution lists to provide information and notice to the EM SSAB members/points of contact.

Ms. Antonnuci suggested that EM explore vendors such as iTunes University in order to archive its podcasts.

Mr. Gilbertson indicated that EM is involved with some university-based lecture series, but part of the issue is determining who has access to those resources and what levels of subscription there are. The university community has been very active in this area and EM would like to take advantage of that.

Shelly Cimon of Richland expressed her support for archiving EM podcasts and emphasized the importance of timely notification.

Mr. Gilbertson added that EM-20 would like to strengthen technical discussions amongst the sites and will help facilitate and encourage relationships with EM's stakeholders. This effort is in response to recommendations from the Hanford and Oak Ridge boards regarding the establishment of site technology coordinating groups. These groups will work within the existing EM SSAB framework and will operate largely at the site-level with the site's leadership. Mr. Gilbertson's role will be to promote cross-site interaction and dialogue. The goal of these technology coordinating groups, along with the use of communication tools such as podcasts, is to improve the quality of technical discussions and understanding.

In addition to its many technical initiatives throughout the complex, Mr. Gilbertson reported that EM has also entered into a bi-lateral agreement with the United Kingdom to share lessons learned with regard to environmental management programs. Mr. Gilbertson added that there has been some discussion regarding joint investments between the U.S. and U.K. to reduce technical risk in the future. EM is also exploring possible relationships with the French, and partnering with the Office of Nuclear Energy. It is important to recognize that as the nuclear industry moves forward, a lot of the necessary innovation will come from other countries and international activities.

### **Waste Disposition Strategies Update**

Christine Gelles, Director for the Office of Disposal Operations (EM-12), provided an update on EM's waste disposition activities.

Operations have started at the Oak Ridge transuranic (TRU) waste processing center for remote-handled (RH) TRU waste. EM needs to prepare a number of drums in order to obtain key measurements for the Carlsbad Central Characterization Project and the EPA, who will audit Oak Ridge's RH TRU program in the near future. This initiative is critical because Oak Ridge is the next large inventory RH TRU waste generator. As shipments from the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) near completion, it is important that Oak Ridge is able to begin shipments to fill the pipeline and maximize the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant's (WIPP) RH TRU receipt capabilities.

Los Alamos National laboratory (LANL) recently shipped an errant drum to WIPP, which was quickly retrieved and returned to the generating site. A root-cause analysis is underway to determine what led to the shipment of the non-compliant drum. Unfortunately, WIPP was forced to cease receiving waste during the retrieval action, but

receipts are now back on track, and the facility is expected to return to a state of continuous emplacement within the next few weeks.

EM-12 is still reconciling TRU waste inventories as part of its data quality objectives before uploading the information in to the Waste Information Management System.

Ms. Gelles reported that EM has had some interesting low-level and mixed low-level waste (LLW and MLLW) developments. The program is working to refine its plans for the continued operation of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) incinerator at Oak Ridge. A revised burn plan has been developed that will continue operations through FY 2009, at which point the incinerator will be shut down. In preparation for this, EM is identifying the readiness of commercial treatment alternatives to the TSCA incinerator and performing market research and acquisition planning to confirm that these capabilities will be accessible. Furthermore, EM is also exploring the possibility of establishing a complex-wide treatment contract that would be available to all DOE programs. Based on these efforts happening in parallel, Ms. Gelles believes that the program will be able to retire the TSCA incinerator without creating any orphan waste streams.

There have been three significant events in the commercial waste disposal arena. The Energy Solutions treatment facility in Oak Ridge has obtained its RCRA permit and temporary authorization, allowing it to treat higher-activity mixed waste. Energy Solutions is also working with the regulatory community to develop a strategy that would release from rad-control the secondary waste streams associated with its Clive facility's thermal processes, thereby eliminating its dependency on the TSCA incinerator. And lastly, Permafix's combustion treatment facility in Kingston, TN has received a PCB destruction draft authorization from the EPA, which will provide yet another commercial alternative to alleviate dependency on the TSCA incinerator. EM has continued to support and encourage these commercial developments for nearly three years; Ms. Gelles emphasized the significance of these initiatives coming to fruition.

Ms. Cimon asked if the commercial resources used by DOE are dependent on the importation of international waste streams for economic viability.

Ms. Gelles explained that while those companies receive some revenue from foreign imports, those practices are not really reflective of their business models. Often, the investments made by those commercial entities are based on DOE waste streams and demands.

Allen Burnett of Paducah asked about where EM stands with regard to the development of a policy or position on recyclable materials.

Ms. Gelles reported that EM recently received management concurrence to release a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing the impact of its proposed plan to sell contaminated nickel inventories from Paducah and Oak Ridge for declassification, decontamination, and processing into an end product that can be used in radiologically

controlled environments. This was a very significant accomplishment for the program that necessitated a high level of coordination amongst the DOE leadership, the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, and a number of Congressional entities. The EA has been released as a draft document with a 30-day public comment period. EM will reevaluate the strategy at the conclusion of the public comment period and, if it is determined that it can be supported by industry and stakeholders, will recommend to the Secretary that the program proceed with the development of a solicitation to sell the nickel. All of these actions will occur within the current constraints of the Secretarial moratorium against the release of radiologically contaminated metals. Ms. Gelles emphasized that EM remains committed to strategically pursuing the reuse of these assets. Information on the draft EA can be found on the Oak Ridge webpage, <http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/>.

Ms. Cimon asked if EM's corporate boards address the integration of nuclear waste from Department of Defense (DoD) programs and operations. Specifically, Ms. Cimon asked for clarification as to whether or not the DoD depleted uranium activities impact EM's safe storage and disposal capacities.

Ms. Gelles responded that most of DoD's waste is not disposed of in DOE facilities, and DoD depleted uranium is disposed of commercially. Therefore, it does not impact EM's storage and disposal capacities. She also clarified that EM's LLW Corporate Board focuses on the integration of DOE programs and DOE waste streams.

The LLW Corporate Board's Secretary, Doug Tonkay, interacts with federal agencies outside of DOE (such as DoD) on a regular basis as part of his position in the Department. EM also interacts with DoD waste generating programs through the annual Rad Waste Summit and monitors their activities along with those of the commercial rad waste sector. DoD waste, such as that from the Gulf War, is accounted for and projected; it is considered a US waste stream from inception. The practices associated with returning DoD waste to the US are markedly different from operations that import waste generated by foreign countries for commercial disposal.

### **Planning Committee for the Fall Chairs Meeting (Washington D.C.)**

Ms. Nielson thanked the planning committee for all of its hard work and reviewed the draft EM SSAB Chairs September meeting agenda with the call participants. The agenda was structured to accommodate panels of DOE-HQ speakers, and each of the local boards was encouraged to submit specific questions and topics for the presenters.

Due to the pending change in administration, the callers agreed to consider deferring the product development period scheduled for September 17, in order to use the time to discuss other cross-cutting EM SSAB issues. Suggested topics and lessons learned include Annual Reports, Member Surveys, Public Outreach, and Recruitment.

Representatives from the Oak Ridge EM SSAB agreed to develop a roundtable on public outreach activities.

John Bollinger suggested that the Waste and Materials Disposition panel address EM's understanding and risk mitigation strategies for a permanent high-level waste repository (i.e. Yucca Mountain).

The next planning committee call is scheduled for July 10 at 3:00 p.m. EST.

### **Around the Complex:**

#### **Idaho – John Bollinger**

- The INL Citizens' Advisory Board (CAB) recently filled its membership ranks and welcomed a new chair.
- In May, the INL CAB participated in its annual site tour.
  - The primary purpose of the annual tour is to acquaint new members with the local EM program.
  - Given the size of the site, participants were only able to cover approximately two thirds of the site. Members will explore the remainder of the site in July and focus on the historical relevance of the area as well.
- The INL CAB approved one recommendation at its May meeting in support of the Supplemental Analysis for the Environmental Impact Statement regarding off-site TRU waste shipments, with the provision that the shipments meet current acceptance criteria, adhere to the established settlement agreement and site plan, do not disrupt regulatory milestones, and do not negatively impact INL's clean-up budget.

#### **Savannah River – Donna Antonucci**

- The Savannah River Site (SRS) recently celebrated the start-up of its Actinide Removal Process and Modular Caustic Side Solvent Extraction Unit facilities, where radioactive salt waste solution will be decontaminated. The event was attended by numerous site representatives, local interest groups, and senior EM officials.
- SRS is currently undergoing a transition in its Management and Operating (M&O) contract. The new contractor, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, will assume full control on August 1.
- The site has released two EAs for public comment regarding its proposed plan for in situ decommissioning of the P-Reactor and dual-purpose military use of SRS land.
- The SRS CAB recently produced a recommendation regarding the consolidation and reuse of existing facilities to achieve cost-savings.

#### **Richland – Susan Leckband**

- The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) held a meeting on June 5-6, where it developed and approved two recommendations and one letter to DOE.

- The first recommendation was the result of a workshop that focused on the practice of capping waste sites. The HAB was presented with the opportunity to provide agencies with criteria for making decisions regarding whether or not to cap waste sites.
- The second recommendation provided advice on standardized, cross-site training for all workers. In light of Hanford's three new contracts, there is a safety concern when workers move from contractor to contractor, especially when training procedures are not necessarily uniform.
- The letter to DOE requested increased funding for the HAB in order to accommodate rising travel costs.
- The second of three major site contracts, the PRC contract, was recently awarded to CH2M Hill.
- The site's tank operation contract was awarded on May 29 to a team led by the Washington Group.
- The HAB approved its operating procedures/bylaws.

#### **Nevada – Dave Hermann**

- The Nevada Test Site (NTS) CAB recently welcomed a number of new members who were appointed by the Assistant Secretary.
- The NTS CAB will begin holding its public meetings at the Atomic Testing Museum.
- The local EM staff is working on an update to its waste transportation plan, which was previously requested by the NTS CAB's Transportation and Waste Committee.
- Recently, NTS CAB members attended an Underground Test Area Technical Working Group meeting. This working group is concerned with the placement of testing wells, which is still an ongoing process.

#### **Paducah – Allen Burnett**

- As previously discussed by Ms. Gelles, EM recently issues a draft EA regarding the disposition of nickel at the Paducah and Oak Ridge sites. The Paducah CAB sees this as a very positive step and hopes that EM can move forward with this strategy in the future.
- EM is currently evaluating a number of waste disposal options in Paducah, including the creation of a CERCLA cell for onsite disposal. The Department presented these alternatives to local stakeholders through its public involvement plan.
  - The Paducah CAB has drafted recommendations on the specifics of this plan to encourage improved public involvement.
- DOE is working with regulators from Kentucky to identify potential offsite disposal areas. There does not appear to be any evidence of radiological contamination at this point, but the Department has agreed to develop a plan for characterizing these offsite disposal areas and performing radiological surveys.

- The Paducah CAB is in the process of developing recommendations on the recycling, reclamation, and reuse of waste generated during the D&D of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant and burial ground excavation. The board had previously made a recommendation on a similar strategy, which was discussed during the last Chairs' meeting in Richland.
- The Paducah CAB has initiated its most extensive recruiting plan to date.
  - Although the official recruitment program is not scheduled to begin until October, one of the board's new members has indicated that they have identified as many as five individuals interested in service.

### **Northern New Mexico – JD Campbell**

- The Northern New Mexico (NNM) CAB has continued to work with DOE to track the implementation of its recommendations.
  - Unfortunately, the Department is still slow to respond to the board's correspondence and recommendations.
- The NNM CAB has established three ad hoc committees to address findings from its recent membership surveys and recommend improvements in the board's operation.
- New NNM CAB members will have the opportunity to visit WIPP in August.
  - Background and preparatory information will be discussed during the board's July meeting.

### **Oak Ridge – Lance Mezga**

- The Oak Ridge SSAB (ORSSAB) is in the process of appointing and reappointing a number of new members.
- The ORSSAB's EM Committee has continued to focus on reviewing and developing recommendations for the East Tennessee Technology Park, formerly known as the K-25 Site.
- As a result of an effort initiated by the ORSSAB's Oral History Subcommittee, the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History has been established, which will compile and preserve a central repository for local histories.
- With regard to public outreach activities, the ORSSAB has remained very active.
  - On June 21-22, the board staffed an information booth at Oak Ridge's annual Secret City Festival, which draws nearly 30,000 people.
  - The board also staffed an information booth at the city's Earth Day events in April to discuss community issues and collect stakeholder surveys.
  - The ORSSAB's Public Outreach Committee has continued to give presentations on the board's functions and issues to numerous local schools and organizations.
  - The ORSSAB will hold a workshop on risk management in July to improve understanding and dialogue regarding the risk assessments and conditions associated with remedial actions.
  - Additionally, the board is preparing to publish the summer edition of its newsletter, The Advocate.

- In June, five members of the ORSSAB participated in tours of the NTS, an EnergySolutions' disposal site in Clive, Utah, and WIPP.

### **Closing Remarks**

Ms. Nielson and Mr. Mezga shared that the EM SSAB will have the opportunity to participate in the 2009 Waste Management Symposium in Phoenix, AZ. The symposium is scheduled to take place on March 1-5, 2009; information is available at [www.wmsym.org](http://www.wmsym.org). The EM SSAB panel, tentatively titled "DOE EM SSAB – Public Involvement Makes a Difference," will be included in the symposium's Public Communications, Involvement, Education, and Training session. Abstracts for the symposium are due by August 31, and Sonny Goldston, the session sponsor and organizer, can be reached at [sonny.goldston@srs.gov](mailto:sonny.goldston@srs.gov) for further information.

Ms. Nielson reported that EM was moving forward with the establishment of an EM SSAB for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. Members were nominated by the site and their names were submitted to DOE-HQ for appointment. Ms. Nielson also reminded the conference call participants that federal employees are not eligible for EM SSAB service.

Lastly, the EM SSAB Chairs' recommendations webpage was recently redesigned to improve its layout and make it more user-friendly.  
<http://www.em.doe.gov/stakepages/ssabRecommendations.aspx>.

Ms. Nielson thanked the participants for their time.

The next EM SSAB Chairs' conference call is scheduled for August 7, at 3:00 p.m. EST.