



Hanford Advisory Board

**Executive Summary
February 11-12, 1999
Kennewick, Washington**

Tank Waste

The Ad Hoc Committee has been focusing efforts on the February go/no-go decision, the completion of the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP), and public involvement issues. The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has responded to Advice #90. Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) milestones have not yet been determined, and Ecology suggested opening public involvement paths to push the agreements ahead.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is putting together a cross-organizational team to review the February decision criteria. The committee expressed frustration that it appears DOE has started making recommendations to DOE Headquarters (DOE-HQ) on the decision criteria before the cross-organizational team is up and running. DOE promised that the team would be constructed in the immediate future and assured the Board that plenty of time remained to collect valuable input from stakeholders.

The Board discussed the Office of River Protection (ORP) and how it fits into the greater context of the entire Hanford site. Members expressed concern that ORP was not well planned, would hurt the cleanup budget, and was hindering development of TPA milestones because its structure was not yet established.

Budget and Performance Fee

The Board received an overview of the status of the budget and performance fee for fiscal year 1999 (FY1999) and FY2000. Key issues of concern showed that the Environmental Restoration (ER) budget is steadily shrinking each year. A compliance gap of \$107 million is expected by FY2001 mainly in the ER area. Several Board members and agency representatives attended a meeting with the Congressional appropriations staff in Washington, DC recently. They learned that the site budget for the coming years would be flat, and Congress does not see room for negotiation on that point.

The status for the reprogramming needs for the site was explained to the Board. The reprogramming request was sent to DOE-HQ in December and is now awaiting Congressional approval. The site needs the reprogramming due to unforeseen expenditures on tanks and salt well pumping activities. The exact dollar amounts were not provided to the Board, but it was explained that the request was to transfer funds from construction projects that prepare for privatization to tank waste operations.

The Board expressed concern that DOE should have a contingency plan in case reprogramming is not approved by Congress. Discussion also highlighted the seriousness of the budget crunch in upcoming fiscal years. Budget advice will be drafted at upcoming Dollars and Sense Committee meetings and presented for adoption at the March Board meeting.

Groundwater/Vadose Zone

The Board was updated on the draft project specification long-range plan for the groundwater/vadose zone project. DOE is focusing on assembling the pieces across the site into a framework that is

supported by science, peer reviews, and public involvement. A great deal of work is being done to clarify the system assessment capability (SAC) and to define the project at the Hanford site.

Additionally, the Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment (CRCIA) team has continued to meet to act as a watchdog for the project. Board members expressed concern that with the budget issues and great needs across the site, programs need to be defined in a holistic manner.

The Board held an official Sounding Board in which speakers gave the perspective of the group they represent on the Board. Many members felt that the CRCIA template was a worthwhile objective, but that more work was needed to bring it into context with the entire site. DOE was urged to be forthright in dealing with the public on groundwater/vadose zone issues. The Board supported the work done in the program and recommends that it should be funded.

Plutonium Finishing Plant

An informal evening session was held to discuss the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP), its mission, and the future path to stabilize plutonium-bearing materials. The Board learned that many key decisions have yet to be made at PFP, including procurement of equipment, classification of waste, and transfer of plutonium between sites. The facility was scheduled for decommissioning in the 1970s and poses a serious health and safety threat to workers and the environment.

The Environmental Restoration and Health, Safety, and Waste Management Committees drafted advice on PFP which was brought before the full Board. Small group discussions were held, and the advice was revised, approved, and sent to the Tri-Party agencies. The following statement expresses the concerns of the Board and the general recommendations for moving ahead on the issue. HAB advice #91 states, "... DOE should resolve the dispute over 'material' versus 'waste.' This issue has blocked progress on developing a set of TPA milestones for PFP. The Board finds it imperative that the TPA agencies enter negotiations and work out a solution that removes obstacles to regulation and ensures independent oversight of RCRA chemical hazards."

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