



Hanford Advisory Board

Executive Summary

June 3-4, 1999

Spokane, Washington

Spent Nuclear Fuel

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) described its proposed plan to treat sludge on-site as remote-handled transuranic waste. The public comment period for the proposal runs until June 28, 1999.

The overall project is still on schedule, however there are concerns regarding the completion of the Safety Analysis Reports and quality assurance. Completion and approval of the Safety Analysis Reports are behind schedule and have been complicated by the analysis of the possibility of dropping a cask into a loadout pit.

The Board was particularly concerned about quality assurance issues, including the discovery of defective welds and the recent U.S. Department of Energy fine of Fluor Daniel Northwest for Price Anderson safety violations. Other concerns include training and staffing and the renegotiation of contract terms between Fluor Daniel Northwest and its subcontractor for the spent fuel project, Duke Engineering. Board members expressed strong concerns that the project remain on schedule and within budget.

Tank Waste Treatment

The Agreement-in-Principle has been signed to begin Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) negotiations regarding milestones for tank waste treatment. The near-term focus will be financial closure and contingency commitments. The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has convened a public involvement steering group in response to Board advice to develop a plan and strategy to better inform and involve the public in tank waste treatment decisions. In addition, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Regulatory Unit is actively working with BNFL to approve safety documentation and hazard control strategies.

Board members remain concerned about the success of the TPA negotiations and continued progress towards obtaining tank waste treatment capacity at Hanford.

Office of River Protection

DOE reviewed the five major initiatives of the Office of River Protection (ORP) targeted at building a foundation for the new office to successfully manage the former Tank Waste Remediation System and obtain tank waste treatment for the site. The Board's Ad Hoc Committee developed an outline of key questions that address the emerging relationships of ORP with DOE-Richland, stakeholders, the tribes, and the public.

Board members are anxious to better understand how ORP will operate and what its working relationships will be with more familiar stakeholders and organizations. The Board adopted a letter to send to DOE asking for answers to four categories of basic questions that it hopes will assist in better understanding ORP.

The Board is also keenly interested in the ability to obtain financing for tank waste treatment. One of the areas of concern is the upcoming alternative financing review that will look at both financing and contracting options for treatment. The Board adopted advice requesting to name two members of an expert panel slated to evaluate DOE's alternative financing review, since it considers this a key step in obtaining tank waste treatment, and it does not feel it has adequate technical expertise to provide effective and meaningful input into the analysis at this time.

Hanford Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The Board discussed the revised Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Board adopted general advice on the plan, but was unable to come to consensus on endorsing any one alternative in the EIS. Six Board members abstained from the advice.

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board

The two Hanford site representatives of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) spoke to the Board about DNFSB's perspectives on the Spent Nuclear Fuel and Plutonium Finishing Plant projects. DNFSB shares the Board's concerns about keeping these important projects on schedule and adequately funded. DNFSB is also concerned about health and safety issues, as well as quality assurance.

Plutonium Finishing Plant

The Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) has the highest on-site plutonium-related hazards and the highest on-site routine worker exposure. Despite on and off discussions since 1997, there are still no TPA milestones for the project. Plutonium stabilization and disposition has been complicated by the defunding of a major storage facility at the Savannah River Site and the incompatibility of double-can packaging with the current PFP vault configuration.

DOE has recently been able to vent Tank 241-Z-361. It has also been able to begin some sampling and make a videotape of the interior of the tank. Further characterization of the tank contents is needed before a clean-up plan can be developed.

Board members are concerned that adequate attention and funding be available for this high-priority site project.

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