



Hanford Advisory Board

Executive Meeting Summary

September 9-10, 1999

Seattle, Washington

Tank Waste Treatment

The Tank Waste Treatment Ad Hoc Committee outlined its key areas of focus for the next few months, including Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) negotiations, readiness to proceed, technical issues, DOE decision-making, and the schedule leading to the August 2000 target date for the Authorization to Proceed. The Committee shared its frustration with the lack of progress in TPA negotiations for tank waste treatment. It introduced draft advice that follows up on Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) Advice #90 and #93 and expresses the Board's continued disappointment in the progress of the negotiations.

A representative from the Government Accountability Project (GAP) announced his intention to block consensus on this and all pieces of advice proposed at this meeting based on its strong opposition to the possible restart of the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF). The Chair ruled that GAP cannot block consensus, nor can it attach a statement in opposition to FFTF to this piece of advice because the advice addresses an issue that does not directly relate to GAP's opposition to FFTF. There were no objections to the Chair's ruling.

The Board adopted Advice #99 with one dissent from GAP.

TPA Agency Processes for Responding to Board Advice

The Public Involvement Committee introduced draft advice encouraging agencies to respond to HAB advice in a timely and comprehensive manner. The advice requested that in those instances when an agency cannot respond in a timely manner, the agency communicate the reasons for delay to the Board. In addition, the Public Involvement Committee recommended that the Board allow time for discussion of agency responses in full HAB meetings. The representative from Washington State University requested that the advice be retracted on the grounds that the advice was condescending, insulting, and simply restates what is already agreed to in the HAB Charter and Operating Groundrules. Other Board members viewed this advice as valuable in light of the significant turnover in agency leadership and HAB membership.

Again, the representative from GAP announced his intention to block consensus on this and all pieces of advice proposed at this meeting based on its strong opposition to the possible restart of the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF). The Chair ruled that GAP cannot block consensus, nor can it attach a statement in opposition to FFTF to this piece of advice because the advice addresses an issue that does not directly relate to GAP's opposition to FFTF. There were no objections to the Chair's ruling.

The Board adopted Advice #100 with one abstention from Washington State University and one dissent from GAP.

HAB Process for Reviewing Agency Responses to Advice

The Public Involvement Committee also introduced a draft procedure outlining how the Board should review TPA agency responses to HAB advice. Board members discussed the value of tracking,

reviewing, and discussing agency responses. Committees were charged with reporting to the HAB on their review and evaluation of responses to advice. Since the Executive Committee is primarily charged with overseeing Board processes and procedures, the Board decided that follow-up letters or advice in response to agency responses to advice should be considered and adopted by the full HAB, not just the Executive Committee. The Tank Waste Ad Hoc Committee's follow-up letter, which was adopted as Advice #99, was seen as a good example of the proposed process.

The HAB adopted this procedural change to the Board's operating groundrules.

Independent Review for Alternative Financing

Gerry Pollet introduced draft advice developed in response to Carolyn Huntoon's letter responding to Advice #95. Advice #95 requested that the HAB nominate two independent technical experts for the expert panel reviewing alternative financing for tank waste treatment. Ms. Huntoon denied the request.

HAB members expressed a variety of thoughts and opinions about this advice. Some were concerned that although the advice had been discussed on a conference call prior to its drafting, it had not been through the Dollars and Sense Committee in the normal fashion. A number of HAB members emphasized the importance of HAB involvement in the alternative financing analysis and the urgency of addressing this issue in a timely manner.

Norm Buske did not repeat his earlier threats to block consensus on this piece of advice, unlike his prior statements that GAP intended to block consensus on all advice proposed at this meeting on the basis of GAP's objection to the possible restart of FFTF.

The HAB asked the Dollars and Sense Committee to stay involved in this issue and continue work on this advice.

Executive Committee Update

The Executive Committee met on September 8-9 to discuss the focus of the HAB for 2000, Board operating procedures, and its upcoming meeting with Carolyn Huntoon. Ken Bracken has been tasked with drafting a Statement of Principle for the HAB which will be presented to Ms. Huntoon at her meeting with the Committee on September 20th.

In its discussions, the Executive Committee identified three key areas of focus for any policy issue that comes before the HAB: understanding the problem, where are we going?, and

management strategies for success. The Committee also identified important policy issues for the HAB, including adequate cleanup budgets, tank waste treatment, spent nuclear fuel, 100 Area cleanup, the future of the Central Plateau and 200 Area, 300 Area cleanup, and stabilization of the Plutonium Finishing Plant. Finally, the Committee outlined the process framework to guide how both the committee and the full HAB will operate. Board members emphasized the importance of framing HAB activities around key policy issues and the TPA.

Public Comment

Nine individuals presented comments to the HAB at this meeting. All expressed opposition to the possible restart of FFTF.

Board Business – Vice Chair Election

George Kyriazis is stepping down as vice chair of the Board at the end of September. The HAB elected Shelley Cimon and Ken Bracken co-vice chairs. The Board gave George a standing ovation in appreciation of his service and commitment to the HAB.

Environmental Restoration Committee Update

The Committee is involved in a great many issues, including the Plutonium Finishing Plant and Tank 241-Z-361, miscellaneous underground storage tanks, 100 Area cleanup, the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project, 200 Area cleanup and waste management scenario, stewardship, and contaminant pathways from the tank farms to the river.

Update on Tritium Levels Found in Local Groundwater

Elevated levels of tritium have been found in wells in the North Richland well field. Although these levels are well below the drinking water standard, they are significantly higher than historical trends. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is working with the City of Richland, the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Health, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to further investigate the situation. The Yakama Nation is also concerned about test wells on tribal burial grounds.

100 Area Burial Grounds

There are 45 burial grounds in the 100 Area that contain both radiological and chemical contamination. A draft Focus Feasibility Study identifies the cleanup options for these sites. The preferred option is removal, treatment, and disposal of material in all burial grounds. A recent Inspector General report recommended that DOE amend interim Records of Decision (RODs) for cleanup and to challenge future RODs containing cleanup objectives that are inconsistent with projected land use. EPA emphasized that if the burial ground contaminants are left in to ground, the land would not be safe for any future use. EPA plans to make cleanup decisions on both the 100 and 300 Areas by the end of the year. It would appreciate HAB input into these upcoming decisions. Board discussion included concerns about DOE allowing itself only a single chance for cleanup, about the need for cleanup to be protective for future generations as long as materials are hazardous, and about the location of wastes in light of the possibility of dam removal on the Columbia River. Updates were also given on the recent 100 Area workshops in Portland and Hood River and on Norm Buske's sampling activities. A final concern was raised about information sharing with the HAB and its committees. The Environmental Restoration Committee noted that important information is not always reaching the Board, and this hampers the Board's work and effectiveness.

Health, Safety, and Waste Management Committee Update

The Hanford solid waste environmental impact statement (EIS) will evaluate shipment of waste to and from the site and management of most solid radioactive and mixed waste from routine operations, including low-level waste, mixed low-level waste, transuranic waste, transuranic mixed waste, and contaminated equipment and materials. The draft EIS will not cover high-level tank waste, spent nuclear fuel, reactor compartments, environmental restoration waste, and non-radioactive waste. Management activities covered by the draft EIS include treatment, storage, disposal, on-site transportation, and decontamination. It will contain three alternatives. The Yakama Nation has been a cooperating agency in this effort. Gerry Pollet raised a concern highlighted in HAB Advice #98 regarding the relationship between charging waste generators for the life cycle costs of waste treatment and disposal and waste volume reduction.

An important issue now under consideration in the Environmental Management (EM) Integration process is the possible consolidation of cesium and strontium in the DOE Complex. Hanford has most of this material. There is both a national trade study addressing technical alternatives and a local Hanford white paper regarding commercialization possibilities currently being developed. In addition, DOE Headquarters has issued additional guidance regarding stakeholder involvement in EM Integration which tasks the sites to engage stakeholders and brief them on EM Integration activities.

The current challenges for the spent nuclear fuel project are staffing, project cost and schedule control, getting people hired and trained, quality assurance, safety analysis, and meeting TPA milestones, including beginning fuel movement in November 2000.

Site-Specific Advisory Boards (SSABs)

The chairs of the DOE Complex Site-Specific Advisory Boards (SSABs) will be meeting at Hanford on September 21-23. A major topic will be the recently-formed Transportation Working Group. In addition, the chairs will be meeting with newly-appointed Assistant Secretary Carolyn Huntoon.

Sounding Board on DOE-Richland Reorganization

The Board reviewed the proposed organization chart for the Richland Operations Office and held a Sounding Board to air the thoughts and concerns of Board members. Key concerns that were raised included the rationale behind the reorganization, DOE leadership and performance, reorganization costs, functionality of the medical surveillance system, emergency response, the location of the Office of External Affairs, and impacts on workers and their morale.

Hanford Home Page | HAB | Summary List

For questions or comments, please send [email](mailto:Hanford_Advisory_Board@rl.gov) to the Hanford_Advisory_Board@rl.gov

URL: <http://www.hanford.gov/boards/hab/execsum/9-9-10-99.htm>

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