



Hanford Advisory Board

**Executive Summary
December 3-4, 1998
Richland, Washington**

TANK WASTE VITRIFICATION

The Board received an update on the workplan and activities of the Tank Waste Treatment Ad Hoc Committee. The bulk of the committee's efforts are focused in the next six months around the issues of Readiness to Proceed, Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) negotiations, technical costs, and an important decision point in February, 1999. The issues are weighty enough to consider issuing press releases. Two months ago, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has sent the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) a draft Agreement-in-Principle outlining short-term milestones and privatization efforts. DOE expects to respond soon. The agencies are significantly apart conceptually. Board members expressed outrage at the lack of progress in the TPA negotiations.

The Board discussed concerns regarding the lack of clear DOE decision making authority and decision processes. There are over 70 major deliverables due in the next two years, most of which have a 30-day DOE review turnaround. Board members expressed concern with DOE's ability to respond to these deliverables when it has not yet made a decision on the Agreement-in-Principle. BNFL invited stakeholders to attend its business and management meetings. BNFL has no intention of withholding information, except that which would be of value to its competitors.

The Board had a lively discussion of both proposed advice and an associated press release. The two major issues of significant debate were possible additional waste streams that could be generated if the Fast Flux Test Facility were to be restarted and the TPA public involvement process. The Board adopted and issued a press release and advice to the TPA agencies. The advice contained a notation that consensus was not achieved, and a minority opinion was attached to the advice before transmittal to the agencies.

SPENT FUEL

The Board was updated on the spent fuel project and its new high confidence baseline. Baseline change requests, contingencies, expenditures, training, procedures development, and progress on TPA milestones are all being tracked in light of an increased emphasis on accountability.

The Board inquired about what mechanisms were in place to ensure that people are up front about program progress and potential difficulties. EPA noted that it has more confidence with the new management processes. Board members expressed concern with the adequacy of the contingency, believing it may be too low. The Health, Safety, and Waste Management Committee (HSWM) identified the key issues it is following, including management improvements, progress on project management controls, milestones, project cost, and safety control. Other concerns include operation and maintenance staffing and training.

OPENNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board received an overview of four openness workshops held during fiscal year 1998. Five fact sheets were compiled and a report containing 51 recommendations was produced. The report was

received favorably by the Site-Specific Advisory Boards. This was all done for approximately \$10,000. The major conclusion of the workshops was that openness is about fostering and maintaining an open decision making process. DOE has approved five more workshops to be held in fiscal year 1999.

Board members discussed contractor performance measures related to openness with some expressing a concern that the recommendation for incentive fees may be micromanagement. Others noted that many of these recommendations tracked the Board's advice on other performance measures. Another concern was raised in relation to DOE's ability to maintain openness if Hanford were to take on a production mission in the future. One member raised serious concerns about the openness report, including a strong concern that the culture of secrecy is being perpetuated. The Board adopted consensus advice that affirmed that increasing and maintaining openness is important to the Board.

RAILROAD USE STUDY

The Dollars and Sense Committee presented draft advice. However, additional information came to light at the meeting. The Board decided to send the draft advice back for consideration by both the Dollars and Sense and Environmental Restoration Committees.

TANK WASTE REMEDIATION SYSTEM (OFFICE OF RIVER PROTECTION)

Two executive search firms are currently recruiting for the three or four key positions in the Office of River Protection (ORP). The official organizational structure should be in place by December 6, 1998. The final selection of an office head should be made in January, 1999. The organizational structure and logic for the program will be included in the 90-day plan submitted to Congress.

Board members expressed the hope that ORP would have a close working relationship with the Board. Members also expressed concern about the coordination and integration of ORP with the rest of the Hanford site, including the potential splitting of programmatic authority on waste and budget decisions and the Integrated Priority List. Board members also expressed an interest in receiving copies of the 90-day plan as soon as possible.

The Board adopted consensus advice on the ORP functions, operations, and its 90-day plan.

TPA AGENCIES REPORT ON PROGRESS

John Wagoner, Randy Smith, and Dan Silver made remarks regarding their perspectives on the state of the Hanford site. For John Wagoner and Randy Smith, this was their last opportunity to speak to the Board, as John Wagoner is retiring from DOE, and Randy Smith is moving on to a new management position within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10. John Wagoner enumerated many of the specific accomplishments on site in fiscal year 1998. Randy Smith focused his remarks on the changes he has observed during the 12 years he has worked with Hanford. Dan Silver reflected on the disputes between Ecology and DOE in 1998 and his hopes for 1999. All three expressed their appreciation for the Board and its work.

CHAIR'S PROGRESS REPORT

Merilyn Reeves reflected on the past year. The Board is a mirror of the complexities of the Hanford site and is unique among advisory boards due, in part, to the support it has had from agency managers like John Wagoner and Randy Smith. An important part of the Board's work is to communicate Hanford issues, activities, and accomplishments to a public that does not speak the technical language of

Hanford. The Board should look at unfulfilled commitments and should keep reminding the nation of what remains to be done at Hanford. During 1998, the Board was effective in getting this message out to other advisory boards and to Congress. In closing, she thanked John Wagoner for his support of the Board and for his advocacy for public involvement.

GROUNDWATER/VADOSE ZONE

Deliverables for this project fall into three categories: authority, budget, and content. Clear authority for the project should be established by December 18, 1998. An existing \$13.7 million has been allocated to activities on the site, and an additional \$5 million is expected to be added. Another \$10 million will pay for related basic science projects. A long-range plan is under development which will include schedules, costs, and project specifications. It will be out for a 60-day public review period in January, 1999. In addition, the Expert Panel is seeking stakeholder input into its work regarding identification and assessment of risks. There appear to be significant data gaps in this project.

Board members inquired how ORP and the Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS) would interface with this project. DOE indicated that ORP only covers TWRS groundwater/vadose zone issues. The integration team is trying to encourage the flow of information between different site staffs. This is a concern of some Board members. Members also expressed concern about stakeholder involvement in the groundwater/vadose zone project and the addressing of serious policy issues that appear to have been put on the back burner.

A question was raised regarding the relationships between this project, the Center for Risk Excellence, and the Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation (CRESP). The Board considered asking one of its committees to look into this issue. One Board member expressed concern that CRESP missed the whole point of including tribes in its risk assessment model.

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