



Hanford Advisory Board

Revised Meeting Summary

February 3-4, 2000

Kennewick, Washington

Tank Waste Treatment

A significant part of the February Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) meeting focused on the many issues related to obtaining tank waste treatment at Hanford. Todd Martin, chair of the HAB Tank Waste Treatment Ad Hoc Committee, provided an overview of the history and issues surrounding treatment, including a visual demonstration of the capacities of various vitrification facilities around the world in comparison to what is proposed for Hanford. The Board discussed technical and management issues; regulatory frameworks, and funding and financing alternatives.

Board members expressed concern about the probability of obtaining adequate Congressional funding for the project, the risks of aging infrastructure in the tank farms, and the frustration that even if the current contract succeeds, only 10% of the waste will be treated in the first phase of the project. The Board adopted a strong statement supporting implementation of tank waste treatment at Hanford that was to be distributed to all members and alternates for their individual signatures before being forwarded on to the Secretary of Energy. The final statement was approved and signed by 27 Board members, and 14 Board alternates. All Board seats were represented with the exception of the Yakama Nation and the Lower Columbia Audubon Society. This statement was mailed on February 15, 2000 to the Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives from Washington and Oregon states, DOE-RL, DOE-ORP, Ecology, and EPA.

Public Involvement regarding Off-Site Waste

The Board discussed the importance of national and regional public involvement concerning the recent DOE decision to dispose low-level waste (LLW) and mixed low-level waste (MLLW) in the states of Washington and Nevada. The HAB adopted Advice #102 regarding the importance of public involvement regarding the importation of off-site waste to Hanford.

Burial Ground Characterization and Waste Importation

The Board discussed the issue of whether Hanford's LLW burial grounds are correctly permitted and regulated. If the LLW burial grounds actually contain MLLW, they are not properly permitted and regulated. The Board adopted Advice #103 that encourages regulators to accurately characterize the burial grounds as either LLW or MLLW before adding any imported waste to the burial grounds.

Openness

The Board discussed the recent Hanford Openness Workshop (HOW) report for 1999. The Public Involvement Committee presented draft advice similar to that adopted in 1998 that encourages DOE to continue to work to improve agency openness. Some HAB members expressed concern about Board endorsement of specific HOW recommendations. The HAB adopted Advice #104 which encourages DOE openness but does not specifically endorse any HOW recommendations. Gordon Rogers, Public-at-Large, and Charles Kilbury, City of Pasco (Local Government) opposed this advice. Susan Leckband, Non-Union, Non-Management Employees (Hanford Work Force) abstained from this advice.

DOE Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2002

The Board discussed the current DOE budget prioritization and budget allocation process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 in light of the three distinct budgets at the Hanford site: Richland, Office of River Protection, and tank waste treatment privatization. The HAB adopted Advice #105 that outlined key criteria and stakeholder values that should be incorporated into DOE's budget development for FY2002. Jeff Luke, Non-Union, Non-Management Employees (Hanford Work Force) abstained from this advice.

Cleanup along the Columbia River

The HAB discussed its ongoing concerns regarding an Inspector General report on cleanup along the Columbia River. Members felt that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) response to the Board's December 17, 1999 letter did not adequately respond to the Board's concerns. The HAB adopted a second letter specifically asking if DOE-Richland planned to adopt and implement the Inspector General's report recommendations in cleanup activities along the river.

Idaho High-Level Waste Environmental Impact Statement

Staff from the DOE Idaho National Environmental Engineering Laboratory (INEEL) and representatives from the Citizen Advisory Board attended this HAB meeting. They held an informal evening meeting to discuss INEEL's draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on treatment and disposition of INEEL's HLW. One of the EIS alternatives is to send this waste to Hanford for treatment in the proposed vitrification plant. The Board agreed to send a draft letter regarding the EIS to the HAB Health, Safety, and Waste Management Committee for review. The letter would then be distributed to the full HAB for comment before finalization. The proposed letter contained the message that until Hanford had an operational vitrification plant, it was premature to comment on the alternatives in the INEEL draft EIS. This letter was approved and mailed to the DOE- Idaho Operations office on March 7, 2000.

Update on Tritium Levels in Groundwater

Mike Thompson informed the HAB that a tritium reading of eight million pico curies per liter had been detected at a monitoring well at the 618-11 burial ground. In January 1999, a reading of 1.8 million pico curies per liter was found at the same site but the finding was not brought to anyone's attention for nearly a year. DOE plans to take samples throughout the area to determine the nature and extent of this contamination. It is estimated that it will take the tritium three to 30 years to reach the Columbia River.

Board members expressed strong concerns and frustration about how this contamination was not detected from monitoring samples in a timelier manner and how this new information will affect significant intergovernmental work that had focused on possible redevelopment of the area near the burial ground.

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/feb2000.htm>
Last Updated: 01/26/2001 10:35:39*