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Advisory Board*

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RECOMMENDATION 15-04: Portsmouth (PORTS) Environmental Management (EM) Site Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) Recommends DOE Develop A Plan And Funding Profile For PORTS D&D Project

BACKGROUND: The PORTS EM SSAB has long been concerned with the erratic manner in which the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant is funded. In recent years a pattern has been established where the U.S. Congress has to work feverishly, often in the final days and hours of the budget process, to rescue the project – and this community’s workers – from the president’s budget requests.

Further, the project leans heavily on the controversial barter program where the site’s D&D contractor receives uranium material in exchange for work on the project. Clearly, as the price of uranium fluctuates, so too does the budget of the PORTS D&D Project, resulting in an inability to move the project forward with any sense of confidence.

These two problems – a lack of commitment from DOE and the president in the budget process, and the reliance on the uranium barter program – have placed our project, our workers, our business community and our region in a vulnerable position. To further complicate the matter, the recent Secretarial Determination has reduced the amount of uranium material that can be bartered, which has resulted in a potentially devastating impact to the project and the local workforce for fiscal year 2016 unless lawmakers can once again find a remedy.

RECOMMENDATION: The PORTS EM SSAB recommends the U.S. Department of Energy put forth a plan that shows how the D&D Project can align with the community’s future goals, including a detailed schedule. This effort should also include an explanation for how the Portsmouth site is weaned off the barter program in the years ahead as the uranium inventory diminishes, and how the funding profile exhibits project health and worker continuity until DOE completes its cleanup obligations.

Such an approach will instill confidence from the community that DOE has a genuine commitment to expediting the project, which will save taxpayers billions of dollars in the overall project cost. In short, the PORTS EM SSAB believes the recent scrambling for PORTS funding dollars is haphazard and inevitably unproductive. Having a plan that DOE and the community can point to as the pathway to mutual success is the clear answer to this growing problem.

These funding issues do not diminish the PORTS EM SSAB’s belief that local DOE representatives are working hard to assist this community as we move forward. As always, we appreciate those efforts and look forward to working with DOE in the years ahead to complete this project safely, efficiently and in the best interests of southern Ohio residents.