



## **SRS Citizens Advisory Board**

### **Nuclear Materials Management Subcommittee**

#### **Meeting Summary**

May 20, 1999  
Holley House  
Aiken, SC

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The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Nuclear Materials Management (NMM) subcommittee held a meeting on Thursday, May 20, Holley House, Aiken, SC to discuss the DOE 2001 Fiscal Year (FY) budget for the Savannah River Site (SRS), with focus on nuclear material activities.

#### CAB Members

Tom Costikyan  
Murray Riley  
Brendolyn Jenkins  
Ed Tant  
Jimmy Mackey  
Ken Goad

#### Stakeholders

Mira Malek, SCDHEC  
Mike French  
Bill McDonnell  
Lee Poe  
Mike Cosica  
C.E. Sessions  
Gene Rollins

#### DOE/Contractors

Jay Bilyeu, DOE  
John Anderson, DOE  
Gerri Flemming, DOE  
Mark Dupont, WSRC  
Vince Minardi, WSRC  
John Dickenson, WSRC  
Donna Martin, WSRC  
Jim Moore, WSRC

Tom Costikyan, CAB NMM chair, welcomed those in attendance and asked for introductions. Costikyan said this subcommittee meeting was called to hear greater detail about the FY 2001 budget as a result of discussions during the April 27 CAB NMM subcommittee meeting on the DOE Nuclear Materials Integration (NMI) project. Costikyan said he and the other subcommittee members were concerned about a disconnect between recommended NMI actions and potential funding for program activities.

John Dickenson, Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC), then provided a presentation focused on nuclear material stabilization activities likely to be impacted by the current FY2001 budget target case. Dickenson said his role as the Defense Board Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) 94-1 program manager requires him to ensure that materials in the DNFSB 94-1 recommendation are stabilized by 2005. In addition, he manages stabilization activities for materials brought in from other sites such as plutonium residue from Rocky Flats.

Dickenson emphasized early in the presentation that the FY2001 budget is not yet finalized, with several budget submittal iterations expected before the President submits the 2001 budget to Congress in early 2000. However, if the current level of funding for FY2001 remained the same, Dickenson said some nuclear material stabilization and storage activities could be delayed or deferred into outyears.

Dickenson said the Nuclear Material Stabilization and Disposition Program includes firm activities, proposed activities and potential missions. Spent nuclear fuel (SNF) identified in the SRS SNF EIS and plutonium residues at Hanford are included in the proposed missions category. Dickenson explained that materials proposed for stabilization at SRS are materials that were historically stabilized in F or H Canyons.

A description of the processing facilities in F Area and H Area followed. Dickenson said F Area contains the F Canyon, the dominant facility, and FB Line, a facility located on top of F Canyon. The main product from F Canyon and FB Line is plutonium metal, which is safely stored in a vault until final disposition. H Area consists of H Canyon and HB Line. The facilities in both areas are physically similar but configured differently. Plutonium oxide is the product from H Canyon and HB Line.

Tom Costikyan asked where the americium/curium destined for Oak Ridge was located. Dickenson said the am/cm solution would be vitrified in F Canyon. The small glass logs would be placed in containers suitable for transport.

Dickenson also said blending down highly enriched uranium (HEU) to low enriched for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to use in commercial reactors is a proposed mission. This activity would take place in H Area. Lee Poe, public, asked when does the ownership of the material transfer from DOE to TVA. Dickenson said TVA would take ownership when the material is loaded into trucks for transfer. TVA is responsible for shipment of the material as well.

Concerning the status of the 11-year 94-1 stabilization program, the following chart was shown:

- 4 & 1/2 years into the 11-year 94-1 program -- 41%
- 30 of 39 94-1 Implementation plan milestones complete -- 77%
- 16 of 26 operational restarts/startups complete -- 62%
- Fraction of current material scope completed -- 23%
  - 5% of SRS 94-1 material scope complete
  - 100% of emergent SRS material scope complete
  - 2% of Rocky Flats material scope complete

As discussion turned to proposed and future missions, including bringing material from other sites to SRS, Poe asked if stabilizing material from other sites doubled the work effort and prevented other SRS material to be stabilized. Dickenson first noted that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities must be conducted before any material can come to SRS or facilities for new missions are constructed. In addition, he said it would be easier for DOE to stabilize materials from other sites that are similar to the materials SRS is stabilizing while facilities are currently operating, rather than specifying that all SRS materials must be stabilized first. Facilities restarts, which are time consuming and costly, are required to stabilize many of the remaining SRS materials.

Poe said his biggest concern is that items will continue to be deferred until they extended beyond the planning case. As an example, Poe said the public had been stressing that am/cm should be stabilized, although it took five years for am/cm stabilization to be funded. Dickenson assured Poe that funding is available for am/cm and the increase in stabilization activities will not affect that stabilization program.

Poe added he is concerned that if one or both canyons are put on cold standby due to lack of funding, am/cm and other activities will slip. He is particularly concerned about how SRS will deal with additional materials from other sites if the canyons are shut down. Poe also emphasized SRS should not be a dumping ground and that SRS should receive some benefit for stabilizing material from other sites.

Dickenson then briefly explained that DOE is currently conducting the Nuclear Material Integration Project to develop an inventory of all nuclear materials in the DOE complex. DOE is identifying disposition paths for many materials with no previous disposition plan. In response to a question by Costikyan, Dickenson said not all of the material identified is "at-risk" material.

One material DOE does have major disposition concerns with is uranium-233 (U-233). Several people in the audience said the material, which had been produced at SRS but shipped to Oak Ridge, had been improperly stored. Dickenson said he could not speak to specific details of the disposition plans for U-233.

Returning to the topic of the current target funding for FY2001, Dickenson again stated that the budget is not final and will not be finalized until 2000. He reviewed the nuclear material stabilization activities on the Integrated Priority List (IPL), then emphasized that the activities at the top of the priority list deal with safe stewardship at SRS—the surveillance and maintenance of facilities. In addition, F Area activities within the target budget do include the am/cm stabilization and the 94-1 stabilization activities. H Area would be placed in operational standby if the budget remains at \$1.22 billion, he added. At the present target, an additional \$300 million would be needed to complete all the activities on the IPL.

Mike French, public, asked how the item "At Risk SNF" could fall below the target funding line. John Anderson, DOE-Materials and Facility Stabilization, said it was simply a term DOE used to designate the material. Although the SNF is stored in wet basins which could lead to fuel corrosion, Anderson said the fuel is safely managed in high clarity water under the surveillance and maintenance activities currently within at the top of the target budget. The SNF could be an "At Risk" item in the future, but currently it is not at risk.

Poe asked if the DOE-SR nuclear materials program would be concerned about a decision to consider operation of DWPF as more critical than conducting stabilization activities in F and H Canyons. Anderson said the FY2001 is not finalized and DOE will go through several processes to understand the true needs at SRS before they can be addressed. Many activities are interdependent on others within SRS. In addition, others sites will be vying for more money. The final budget decisions will be made at the national level.

Bill McDonnell, public, asked if money could be saved if SRS eliminated the stabilization of offsite materials. Dickenson referred to the slide that indicated only 16 of 26 facility restarts had been completed. To complete stabilization of the remaining SRS material, 10 additional restarts are needed. It is cost and time efficient to stabilize offsite material while existing facilities are operating.

Costikyan said the CAB would be alarmed if the budget failed to address a risk issue or if materials were coming to SRS but there was no money to fund the facilities. Poe said some of his concerns revolved around regulatory commitments that are not risk-based but required under the Federal Facilities Agreement. Poe also said money could be saved in maintenance and surveillance costs if DOE would stabilize the nuclear materials and close the canyons. Costikyan agreed that it would be economically prudent to complete the work and close the canyons.

Ken Goad, CAB, said the canyons are national assets, although many people want to shut them down. His concern focuses on the fact that the canyons have a finite life, yet DOE continues to push out the schedule through delays and deferrals. At some point, the canyons will not be useable and there will likely be materials remaining for stabilization.

Jimmy Mackey, CAB, asked about the many items that fall below the planning case. He referenced an article by the DNFSB that stated SRS needed around \$1.7 billion to conduct work. Anderson said all numbers are only part of a planning process. In the exercise, DOE-SR does consider those activities below planning. He emphasized, however, that the \$1.52 is the current number DOE-SR says its needs to keep programs progressing at commitment rates.

In response to a question of how concerned the CAB should be at this point, Vince Minardi, WSRC, said that it is not time for the CAB to be too alarmed at the budget. Historically, critical SRS activities have been funded as the budget process grew closer. Dickenson emphasized, however, SRS does need to stay engaged with the communities to inform them of the budget situation.

Costikyan asked about any grave concerns dealing with the delay of the Actinide Packaging and Storage Facility (APSF). Anderson said DOE suspended work on the APSF to reevaluate the design of the facility, especially since DOE made the decision to consolidate several plutonium missions at SRS. Anderson believes DOE will have a redesign and necessary funding after 2001.

At this point, Jimmy Mackey read a prepared statement to use as a strawman for a recommendation. Several attendees agreed that the CAB should endorse the items that are within the target budget, but should urge DOE to provide additional funding to meet activities in the planning case.

*Issues: Potential conflict with other recommendations on budget by CAB; a recommendation may be too early in the budget process.*

*Actions: Prepare draft recommendation from Jimmy Mackey for review and discussion by attendees; finalize recommendation at May 24 CAB NMM subcommittee meeting.*

***Meeting handouts may be obtained by calling 1-800-249-8155.***