



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Strategic & Long Term Issues Committee

Meeting Summary

June 27, 2000
Holiday Inn
Beaufort, SC

The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) held a joint committee meeting on Tuesday, June 27, 2000, at the Holiday Inn, Beaufort, SC. The Strategic and Long Term Issues (S<I) Committee was the host of the joint committee meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Water Quality Downstream, hear a downstream perspective on water quality, receive a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) status update and hear about Courtesy Notifications to Offsite Agencies. The first three topics were presented in the morning session starting at 8:30 a.m. and the last topic was scheduled to start the afternoon session at 1:15 p.m. Those in attendance were:

CAB Members

Mel Galin*
Bill Adams*
Bill Vogle*
P.K. Smith*
Jean Sulc
Beaurine Wilkins
Maria Reichmanis
Perry Holcomb
Beckie Gaston-Dawson
Charleen Townsend
Bill Willoughby
Kathryn May
Murray Riley
Georgia Leverett
Jimmy Mackey
Wade Waters
Carolyne Williams**

Stakeholders

Keith Collinworth, SCDHEC
Thomas Rolka, SCDHEC
Brent Allen, SCDHEC
Sandra Threatt, SCDHEC
Christine Steadman, SCDHEC
Jim Laplander
Rick McLeod
John Phillips
Howard Dawson
Ed Saxon
Tony Tucker
Brandon Haddock
Bob Newman
Lynn Waishwell, CRESP

DOE/Contractors

Virgil Sauls, DOE
John Knox, DOE
Julie Petersen, DOE
Gerri Flemming, DOE
Clay Jones, WSRC
Jim Heffner, WSRC
Bob Steadman, WSRC
Mary Flora, WSRC
Helen Villasor, WSRC
Paul Sauerborn, WSRC
Jim Moore, WSRC

* Denotes S<I Committee Members

**Denotes S<I Committee Members not present

Mel Galin, S<I Committee Chair, welcomed those in attendance, asked everyone to introduce themselves and reviewed the agenda for the day. He then introduced Jim Heffner as the first speaker.

Water Quality Downstream: Jim Heffner, Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC), stated that he focused his presentation on the water quality downstream since he felt that most people in the Beaufort/Savannah area would be most interested in the condition of their water quality. He stated that the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control classify the Savannah River Site (SRS) streams and the Savannah River as freshwaters. Freshwaters are defined as surface water suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, drinking water source after treatment, propagate balanced indigenous aquatic community, and are used for fishing and industrial and agricultural uses.

The purpose of surface water surveillance is to identify degradation from SRS discharges (or show that there is no degradation), determine any degradation from inadvertent releases, and compare SRS contribution of pollutants with background.

Mr. Heffner reviewed the nonradiological locations of surveillance and sampling frequency. He stated that there is insignificant difference between the data sampled upstream of the SRS, at SRS, and downstream of SRS. He noted that all measurements are well below the drinking water standards.

Mr. Heffner also reviewed the radiological locations of surveillance and sampling frequency. He stated that while there is some difference between the readings upstream of the SRS and those at and below SRS, the increases are insignificant. Tritium, which is the primary radioactive contaminant released by SRS to the Savannah River, is well below the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) drinking water standard. The average tritium concentration at River Mile 120 through June 6, 2000 was 934 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) versus the EPA drinking water standard of 20,000 pCi/L. The annual downriver drinking water dose is about 60 times lower than the EPA standard.

An Enhanced Tritium Monitoring Program was set up to provide timely notification to downriver consumers of significant changes in levels of tritium in the river. Tritium levels are measured at six on-site stream locations. If data show that the river will exceed 5,000 pCi, then the site will notify the downstream water system operators. This trigger level is 25% of the EPA annual drinking water standard. All data are shared for confirmation of accuracy between the downstream consumers, DHEC and SRS.

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (ANSP) has been conducting biological and water quality studies on the Savannah River and its tributaries since 1951. The studies were designed to assess the potential effects of SRS contaminants and warm-water discharges on the general health of the Savannah River. The ANSP results show no significant difference in indicator versus reference stations, indicating no real impacts of SRS operations on the Savannah River. Long-term data suggest a relatively steady increase in the aquatic insect population in the Savannah River over the past 35 years.

The drinking water dose at Beaufort-Jasper, South Carolina, and Port Wentworth, Georgia, is .07 millirem.

The actions at the SRS in reducing the risk of accidental release include the reduction of inventory, more secondary containment, removal of moderators from the reactors, the sale of heavy water, the shutdown of the D-Area distillation process and the closure of some waste sites.

Mr. Heffner stated that there would be some slight increases in tritium released to the river over the next two to three years due to the stabilization of the legacy reactor assembly rods. The increases are not expected to exceed the 5,000 pCi/L trigger level. After cleanup is completed, there will be less risk for significant releases from this source. Mr. Heffner stated that DOE and WSRC are committed to environmental protection and to open communications with local stakeholders.

During discussions, Tony Tucker stated that when the river is low, the tritium concentrations are higher. Mr. Tucker suggested the site look at their operations and try to reduce activity when the river is low. Mr. Heffner stated that the site was working on scheduling activity based on river status when practical.

Downstream Perspective: Mr. Galin introduced Jimmy Mackey to talk about the downstream perspective of water quality. Mr. Mackey stated that the DHEC 2000 Fish Advisory is available. He stated there was interest to include saltwater fish in the Advisory. He stated that the Low Country Outreach Plan was now out in draft form. Mr. Mackey reported that there has been no decision from the courts on postponing the start date for initiating the EPA requirement of the Total Maximum Density Load (TMDL) for mercury. Mary Flora commented that EPA is planning on having a public meeting in North Augusta soon to discuss the TMDL. She said the board would be notified of the meeting date and time.

NEPA Status Update: Mr. Galin introduced John Knox, DOE, to give the quarterly NEPA status update. John Knox explained that he was presenting in place of Drew Grainger, the NEPA Compliance Officer.

Mr. Knox reviewed the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) of which there were four. They are listed below with the expected completion date:

- SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel Management
 - - Approval expected early July with the Record of Decision (ROD) expected in late July.
- SRS High Level Waste (HLW) Tank Closure
 - - The Draft EIS is expected in July 2000
- SRS Salt Disposition Alternatives
 - - The ROD is expected in September 2001
- Geologic Repository for Spent Nuclear Fuel
 - - The final EIS is expected in 2001

Upon being asked for clarification on the subject, Mr. Knox explained the NEPA process as simply as possible in the limited amount of time available. He then re-reviewed the EIS's giving more detail.

There are three Environmental Assessments (EA). They are:

- Offsite Transportation of Certain Low-Level and Mixed Radioactive Waste
 - - Draft EQ expected July 2000
- Construction and Operation of the Highly Enriched Uranium Blend-Down Facilities
 - - Draft EA sent in April 2000
- Evaluate an Alternative Approach for the Defense Waste Process Facility (DWPF) Glass Waste Canister Storage Facility
 - - The EA was put on hold for reevaluation of contracting strategy

Public Comment: Mr. Galin asked for public comment. Since there was none, the meetings continued.

Courtesy Notifications: In the afternoon session, Mr. Galin introduced Bob Steadman, WSRC, to talk about courtesy notifications. Mr. Steadman stated that the site had no problems with regulatory and emergency notifications. He reviewed the offsite agencies that receive courtesy notifications. There had been problems in courtesy notifications. In June, 1995, a sampling team was dispatched offsite for confirmation purposes without prior offsite coordination. Notifications were initiated three hours into the event. From that episode, a meeting was held with state and local emergency management/environmental health officials from South Carolina and Georgia to modify the procedures. Since that time, the procedure has been working well. Mr. Steadman explained the thirteen various events that trigger courtesy notifications. This year, there have been only seven courtesy notification events. They were:

- Stack Alarms (3)
- RAP Team Response
- Suspicious Package
- Illegal dumping
- Workers splashed with chemical

Mr. Steadman introduced Sandra Threath, SCDHEC. Ms. Threath stated that at the last CAB meeting on courtesy notifications there were questions asked regarding why DHEC was putting the site through these activities. Ms. Threath explained that receiving courtesy notifications was not unusual, but a standard. Both DHEC and the Governors Office would rather receive accurate and immediate information from the site than read it in the newspapers or receive a call and be unaware of the situation. Usually courtesy notifications are those events that would interest the public or media. In addition, if there were a series of events, such as the stack alarms, DHEC would want to know why and would ask the site to do an evaluation. Ms. Threath stated that DHEC and other state agencies would issue a press release if SRS did not.

Public Comment: Mr. Galin asked if there was any public comment. Mr. Bob Newman referenced the following articles in the news: Tritium Release, Los Alamos hard drive incident, SRS sale of computers to China, January site exercise where a third of the people failed to show up at the site. He recommended that a good procedure program be incorporated at SRS to protect the worker, the public and national security. Mr. Newman reviewed his experience and job history. He stated that his concern for procedures on criticality issues at Hanford resulted in his losing his job. He suggested that if DOE and WSRC are sincere, they should look at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to oversee the SRS.

With no other public comment, the meetings of the Waste Management and Environmental Remediation Committees were continued.

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