SRS Citizen's Advisory Board

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Strategic & Long Term Issues Committee

Meeting Summary

July 24, 2000
Sheraton Augusta Hotel
Augusta, GA

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board (SRS CAB) Strategic and Long Term Issues (S&LTI) Committee held a meeting on Monday, July 24, at the Sheraton Augusta Hotel. Topics on the agenda included US Forest Service Wildland Fire Control at SRS, the SRS Budget Review and Environmental Management Life Cycle Cost Estimates.

CAB Members	Stakeholders	DOE/Contractors
Mel Galin	Mike French	Steve Baker, DOE
Bill Adams	John Stockwell, EPA	Jim Buice, DOE
Bill Vogele	Thomas Rolka, SCDHEC	Tom Treger, DOE
P.K. Smith*		Donna Martin, WSRC
		Clay Jones, WSRC
		Matt Zimmerman, WSRC
		Debra Shea, US Forest Service
		Dan Shea, US Forest Service
		Dave Wilson, US Forest Service

*Indicates a committee member not in attendance.

USDA Forest Service Savannah River Site Wildland Fire Program

Following individual introductions of meeting attendees, Mel Galin, S&LTI chair, introduced the first speaker, Dan Shea, USDA Forest Service, to discuss fire control at SRS by the USDA Forest Service. Shea, who has served with the US Forest Service since 1979, started his career in California and moved to SRS in 1993. The general approach by the Forest Service is natural resource management as a whole, not just fire management. The goal is to prevent fires before they happen.

The initial task of the Forest Service, started in 1952, is to plant trees, Shea said. About 800 to 1000 acres of timber is harvested per year from SRS. The Forest Service's fire management plan includes protecting site employees, facilities and natural resources from wildland fires, conducting prescribed burns for approximately 12,000-15,000 acres annually, and assisting with fires and other emergencies in almost every state, as well as locally. Shea said firefighters routinely go west to help with fires; one employee was currently helping out west.

Shea said SRS has low tolerance of smoke on facilities and as a result, wildland fire suppression and prescribed burns are rigorously planned, evaluated, and executed. Training for such activities is conducted onsite using federal policy and qualification requirements. The program components include the following: preparedness, suppression, prescribed fire and prevention.

The Forest Service employs several detection activities to assist in preparedness, Shea said. The Wackenhut helicopter is used as is the South Carolina Forestry Aerial Detection Service. In addition, the SRS Forest Service Dispatch has a direct communications link with the SRS Emergency Operations Center. Key to preparedness, however, are forecasts from the National Weather Service and the WSRC Weather Center.

Suppression is one of the most important firefighting components of wildland fire management. About 10 – 25 fires occur per year on SRS, with 60% caused by lighting and 40% caused by humans. The fires range in size from 10 ft by 10 ft to 20 acres. A large fire in 1999 burned 230 acres. Shea said suppression is not as difficult at SRS because the Forest Service focuses on a quick initial attack that is achieved over an excellent road system. The Forest Service maintains 17 fulltime firefighters and 13 backups. The groups offer multiple coverage and can do so in five-minute "get-aways." In addition to the Forest Service coverage, the WSRC Fire Department provides water handling equipment and logistical support for SRS. If the fire goes beyond the initial attack, additional resources can be ordered from state cooperators and through the National Fire Fighting Mobilization managed by the Forest Service Dispatch System.

Shea said a prescribed fire is used to reduce fuel, improve wildlife habitat, to restore native ecosystems, to improve habitat for threatened or endangered species and for research. He also described the difference in how fuel is reduced in mature pine timber and young pine plantations. Prescribed fires were also used to assist in rejuvenating the red-cockaded woodpecker population on SRS.

Prevention is accomplished a numbers of ways. The Forest Service performs risk assessments around facilities and by inspecting land clearing and industrial burn pits. Public education and awareness programs also aid in prevention. Site-wide announcements during burning restrictions and high fire dangers are used specifically at SRS to aid in prevention.

In conclusion, Shea said that SRS is not likely to have a large wildland fire unless extreme conditions like drought and high winds occur for several reasons:

- Forest fuels are less volatile
- SRS has different weather, terrain and fire behavior (moderate/temperate) than out west (arid/dry).
- SRS has an excellent road system that enables quick response.
- Two mean of aerial detection are maintained by the Forest Service
- A full-time wildland fire organization is staffed seven days a week

In answer to several questions from the audience, Shea said the highest fire danger months for SRS are May and June. Concerning using water from Par Pond, Shea said the Forest Service has approval to dip water from the area around the dam. And finally, if a radiological fire occurs, a joint command among SRS personnel trained in fighting hazardous and radiological fires and the Forest Service will convene.

Savannah River Operations Office Budget Overview

Steve Baker, DOE-SR Planning and Budget Division, presented information on the Savannah River Operations Office Budget Overview. He began by showing a graph of various budget scenarios from 1999 to 2002, then focused primarily on the 2001 budget. The February 2001 Congressional Submittal totaled $1,266,885. A proposed amendment to the budget does not change the total, but it does suggest a different allocation of the money. The amendment suggests $48 million be moved from four different programs: $10 million from the Environmental Restoration (ER) program, $18 million from the Solid Waste Program (Consolidated Incineration Facility, CIF), $10 million from the Nuclear Materials Stabilization program (Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Blend Down Project), and $10 million from the High Level Waste (HLW) program.

In part, SRS is recommending reallocating some of the $48 million FY2001 funds to support Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) commitments. The largest allocation would be for plutonium

3013 stabilization capability to include modification of existing facilities to provide capability to stabilize, package, and store plutonium pursuant to DNFSB 2000-1 Recommendation.

Baker explained there are about 80 projects on SRS that have dedicated funding. During the budget process, SRS personnel reviewed all of the projects to identify sources for extra money. Stopping operation of the CIF, ($18 million) is the most controversial of the four sources, he said. Another $10 million source would be from the Four-Mile Branch project. Delay in project starts (HEU) and reduced operations (HLW sludge removal) would potentially allow SRS to move $20 million additional to DNFSB commitments. The reallocated $48 million would then be applied to the 3013 capability, stabilization of americium and curium and to support transfer low level and hazardous waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Bill Vogele said DOE should go forward to Congress and the President as recommended by the DNFSB 2000-1 Recommendation and ask for more money instead of taking money from other SRS programs. Baker said there are some concerns about SRS getting all the money it needs because 235-F is a departure from the original plan to build the Actinide Packaging and Storage Facility, a more robust and technically advanced facility to package and store plutonium. DOE's response to the DNFSB recommendations was documented in the Implementation Plan. Baker said the 2001 budget prepared is consistent with DOE's Implementation Plan.

According to Baker, the $48 million amendment was presented in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House did not support the full amount, agreeing only to $38 million. The site has just received the Senate marks, and is presently working to understanding them. It appears, however, that the Senate has added an additional $10 million for DNFSB work. The House and Senate will come to Conference and make decisions regarding the FY 2001 budget mark-ups around mid-September.

The 2002 budget is currently at DOE-HQ in the CFO office. Baker said the target SRS budget is $1,176,962, however, SRS submitted a FY 2002 budget that is $80 million over the target request. DOE-HQ has shown support for the over target request. The FY 2002 budget request (including the over target amount) includes infrastructure upgrades at SRS. A few key assumptions of 2002 include the following: No pension contribution will be required, $35 million of efficiency improvements are incorporated in the cost estimates, the WSRC workforce is reduced to 11,800 and the HEU blenddown project is funded by Materials Disposition (HQ).

Environmental Management Life Cycle Cost Estimates

Matt Zimmerman, WSRC Program Integration Department, said the purpose of his presentation was to update the CAB on SRS Life Cycle Cost for Environmental Management (EM) Clean Up. Since the FY 1999 Site PtC was not issued (only the National PtC), he compared the FY 1998 Accelerated Clean Up Plan (the last published Site Plan) cost estimates with the 1999 update to preserve continuity with the last published cost estimate and conclude with a comparison the FY 1999 cost estimates to the FY 2000 Life Cycle Baseline.

Zimmerman also stressed that the public needs to understand the basis for the published estimates which include the following: (a) DOE complex-wide versus SRS Cost; (b) Constant Year Dollars (constant buying power tied to a base year); (c) Current Year Dollars (inflated dollars to maintain a constant buying power); and (d) EM Liability (constant year dollars left to spend to complete the EM clean up). Zimmerman said he would compare changes to life cycle costs in constant year dollars to show how the estimates have changed on a real cost basis (i.e., buying power).

The comparison of the 1998 estimate to the 1999 estimate (in constant year 1999 dollars) showed an increase in cost up to $6.1 billion dollars as a result of $3.7 billion in scope increases and updated estimates for solid waste management, facility disposition, high level waste processing, and nuclear material stabilization.

The changes from FY 1999 to FY 2000 resulted in a $2.4 billion decrease (six percent), driven primarily by cost improvement in high level waste ($1.7 billion), solid waste management ($0.6 billion) and spent nuclear fuel ($0.24 billion). Cost reductions were offset partially by cost increases in facilities deactivation and infrastructure preservation. The EM mission end date had changes from end of FY 2038 to end of FY 2047.

In conclusion, Zimmerman stated that the cost reductions in the latest estimate are an indication that the Site has a better handle on work scope (especially for facilities disposition and the high level alternate waste salt processing), and that cost efficiency initiatives that were implemented since 1998 (the last published Site data) are being recognized.

Conclusions

In final discussion, Galin said the Long Term Stewardship Report comments were due by July 31, although a request for an extension will be made. He said the committee might also consider sponsoring a working group to review the report.