



## SRS Citizen's Advisory Board

# SRS Citizens Advisory Board

## Waste Management Committee

### Meeting Summary

April 25, 2000  
North Augusta Community Center  
North Augusta, SC

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The Waste Management Committee (WMC) met on Tuesday, April 25, 2000, at 1:45 p.m., at the North Augusta Community Center, North Augusta, SC. Attendance was as follows:

#### CAB Members

Wade Waters\*  
Lola Richardson\*  
Karen Patterson\*  
William Willoughby  
William Lawrence  
P.K. Smith  
Georgia Leverett\*\*  
Rebecca Gaston-Witter\*\*

#### Stakeholders

Bill McDonell  
Rick McLeod  
Lynn Waishwell  
Lee Poe

#### DOE/Contractors

Becky Craft, DOE  
Tom Treger, DOE  
Randy Ponik, DOE  
Dale Ormond, DOE  
Larry Ling, DOE  
Ray Hannah, DOE  
John Reynolds, DOE  
Don Scott, DOE  
Elmer Wilhite, SRTC  
Ki Kwon, WSRC  
Jerry Morin, WSRC  
Sonny Goldston, WSRC  
Kelly Way, WSRC  
Helen Villasor, WSRC

#### Regulators

Shelley Sherritt, SCDHEC  
Keith Collinsworth, SCDHEC

\*Denotes committee member

\*\*Denotes absent committee member

Wade Waters opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees and asking for introductions.

#### Review of CAB Recommendation 97 – "The Shipment of Pu-238 Wastes to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant"

Karen Patterson, motion manager for this CAB Recommendation reviewed the current pending status and noted that if an agency response had been received, then the status of this recommendation could be moved from pending to closed. A copy of the DOE-SR response was not available at the meeting; however, it was later confirmed that there was a DOE-SR response (Greg Rudy letter to Ann Loadholt dated 10/7/99), as well as an update on PU-238 Waste provided to the Waste Management Committee (WMC) by Brent Daugherty on March 9, 2000. Therefore, Ms. Patterson requested the Recommendation be moved officially to the "closed" status.

**Review of CAB Recommendation 94 – "Solid Waste Division System Plan Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal"**: Karen Patterson, motion manager for this CAB Recommendation reviewed the current pending status and noted that it be moved to the "closed" status with a caveat that information on disposal of Environmental Restoration (ER) Job Control Waste from CERCLA sites to E Area needs to be provided in a presentation format to both the WMC and Environmental Remediation Committee (ERC) as soon as possible. Wade Waters, WMC Chair agreed with the action requested by Ms. Patterson; therefore, the status of the recommendation was moved officially from pending to closed. Mr. Waters added further that the committee may consider working on the development of a draft motion regarding the disposal of ER Job Control Waste from CERCLA sites to E-Area issue.

**Transuranic Waste Update**: Dale Ormond presented a briefing on a safe and efficient resolution of a potentially significant problem at SRS – Transuranic (TRU) waste. Mr. Ormond noted that the project has been completely accomplished, the retrieval and venting of the TRU drums conducted safely, and for less than the estimated cost and two years ahead of schedule. Early in the 1970s, the Atomic Energy Commission promulgated the definition of TRU waste and directed it be buried for storage, but in a manner that allowed for retrieval at a later date. SRS commenced retrievable storage in 1974 and continued until the mid-1980s. TRU drums were not vented during the period of buried storage and due to radiolytic decomposition, the drums were expected to build up significant concentrations of hydrogen gas. As part of the retrieval project, SRS identified the need for a safe, fast, and east method to vent the hydrogen and other potentially explosive gases. A Vendor Forum was initiated in 1994 and a minority owned and operated company submitted a proposal to build a Drum Venting System (DVS). DVS uses a filter vent with a drill bit welded to the end that automatically drills into a drum lid, samples the gases, purges with nitrogen as required, and one deemed safe, seals the vent. SRS contracted with NFT, Inc. and a successful demonstration was performed on a small number of drums. Mr. Ormond concluded that ultimately, SRS operated two DVS machines, and over the length of the project, 11,260 drums were safely vented. In retrieval operations project, 8,809 drums were retrieved from the TRU pads and transported to the DVS machines for venting.

*Issues*: None.

*Actions*: Invite Mr. Ormond to the full CAB meeting in Savannah to present this success story to the Board. The CAB technical advisor was asked to develop a draft motion/commendation on the good stewardship for public safety in the management of the TRU Vent and Purge and Retrieval projects for presentation to the CAB on May 22, 2000 in Savannah, GA.

**Consolidated Incineration Facility (CIF) Update**: Ray Hannah, DOE-SR, presented the CIF current status to the committee. Because of a lack of waste streams, and the resultant high cost to treat PUREX only, DOE has opted to suspend CIF operation with a possible restart in FY05. DOE is also evaluating alternative treatment options for PUREX and non-PUREX waste streams.

*Issues*: The committee voiced several concerns. The first concern was available funding for an alternative treatment. Mr. Hannah stated DOE-SR is looking for alternative funding, but reiterated it is more cost effective to look for an alternative treatment than to run CIF—\$18M saved a year. Another concern was leaving mixed waste with no path forward. Mr. Hannah stated that SR is developing and negotiating closure standards with South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC). He added that SRS has evaluated the possibility of bringing a vendor on site (privatization) and bringing in commercial wastes. Neither the CAB, nor SCDHEC were receptive to these possibilities. Another issue raised by the committee was the possibility of looking at other alternatives while operating the facility. Once again, Mr. Hannah cited that this would not be a cost-effective solution. Karen Patterson voiced a concern that if the cost of running CIF would be reason alone to close the facility, why all the discussion to find reasons to make it look ineffective? The group was reminded that CIF has not operated that long; therefore, operation of the facility is a learning process. A Blue Ribbon Committee has been tasked to look at a path forward if incineration is no longer an option.

*Actions:* The CAB technical advisor was asked to prepare a draft motion reflecting the WMC's noted concerns on CIF to be presented at the full Board meeting in Savannah, GA on May 22, 2000.

**High Level Waste Tank Closure Plan Revisions:** Larry Ling briefed the committee on the status of the Closure Plan revisions. DOE provided the revisions to SCDHEC for review on March 20, 2000. The regulators requested that DOE conduct public meetings to discuss the revisions and provide opportunities for public comment. The regulators agreed to provide comment to DOE-SR by June 23 to support the submittal of the plan to DOE-HQ for approval. Two public meetings have been planned - May 22 in Savannah, GA; and May 30 in Aiken, SC.

*Issues:* Rick McLeod voiced concern about the short turn around from SCDHEC comment to the public meeting/comment period time. DOE will have only seven days to make the SCDHEC suggested changes. Mr. Ling stated that DOE planned to attach any changes to the plan. DOE has a commitment with the regulators not to go public until SCDHEC has seen and commented on the plan. When Mr. Ling commented that Tank 19 was scheduled for closure in 2001, the committee raised the issue of closure two years early. The question was also raised if there were a risk with leaving empty tanks sitting before filling with grout and closing. Mr. Ling pointed out that presently DOE-SR has CAB, regulator, and DOE-HQ support for closure of tanks. Jerry Morin, SRS-HLW, noted that the Tanks Focus Area (TFA) has provided funding for closure. He also noted that if SRS can close a "4-pack" and the 1F Evaporator, then a control room can be closed as well, thus achieving a cost savings. Mr. Ling expressed hope that HQ would release the EIS within the next month. Rick McLeod asked about the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) petition. Mr. Ling explained that the first petition in 1998 requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, (NRC) regulate the SRS tanks. NRC plans to deny the NRDC petition, as the agency has no regulatory authority over DOE High-Level Waste. The second NRDC petition involves the DOE Order 435.1. The NRDC believe the order is arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to law and plan to ask the Ninth Circuit Court to set it aside. The committee expressed a concern that this would affect closure. Mr. Ling assured the group it would not affect ongoing Tank 19 waste removal re-closure activities. However, Mr. Ling noted that should the Court agree with the petitioners and set aside the order, DOE may not have a radioactive waste management order since 435.1 canceled the previous order. If this were to happen, Mr. Ling stated that closure could possibly still occur using existing laws, regulations and standards, which was the case when Tanks 20 and 17 were closed prior to implementation of DOE Order 435.1.

*Actions:* A briefing on the clean-up of double walled tanks, the technical merit of cleaning, and the status of Tank 16. Provide copies of the General Closure Plan to the WMC in order that they will have time to review and comment on the document.

**Salt Processing Focus Group Status:** Lee Poe provided the committee with the Focus Group's (FG) objectives. The Focus Group's goal is to review and understand the Salt Processing decision process, schedule, technology, and issues. In turn, the FG provides the WMC and/or CAB with briefings, technical assistance and recommended actions to allow the CAB's timely response to Salt Processing activities. Mr. Poe outlined the membership and the background of the group. The group has studied each of the four possible alternatives in order to understand the management approach for selecting the technology as well as the budget and schedules for decision and implementation.

*Issues:* Regarding the evaporator, Ki Kwon, SRS-HLW, voiced a concern that the Type Tank 30 cooler is highly ineffective. The cooling capacity is so low that the salt can't be evaporated. The 23-year-old heat exchanger in H-area is a huge problem. If it goes unresolved, the evaporator efficiency goes down and space gain will not be realized.

*Actions:* None.

**Salt Processing Project Path Forward:** John Reynolds presented the new management concept for technology development and selection. A Technical Working Group comprised of DOE-HQ and DOE-SR,

has been established to manage the technology development of the treatment alternatives. Two teams report to this group, a Technical Advisory Group that will review and endorse planned R&D Roadmaps, and the Tanks Focus Area which will provide execution management for technology development activities for research and development.

According to the present schedule, the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will be issued by January 2001, an alternative selection will be complete by June 2001, the Final SIES issued by July 2001, and the Record of Decision issued by October 2001. Mr. Reynolds pointed out that these dates are ahead of the CAB Recommendation #112.

The Request for Proposals will be worked in parallel with these scheduled activities with the contract award to follow the technology selection. Mr. Reynolds outlined the risks for each alternative, Caustic Side Solvent Extraction, CST Non-Elutable Ion Exchange, and Small Tank TPB Precipitation, but summarized by saying that only eight high-risk focus areas remain (reduced from an original 100+). The research and development supports cross-cutting issues such as alpha removal, which is common to all the technologies. Mr. Reynolds concluded his briefing with a short status: Roadmaps and Work scopes are defined and issued, experimentation requirements are established and issued, the R&D task planning and design of experiments are complete, an integrated detailed program schedule is complete, and R&D experimentation has started.

*Issues:* None.

*Actions:* None.

**Focus Group's (FG) Conclusions and Recommendations:** Lee Poe followed with the FG's conclusions. The FG is concerned that the Salt Processing schedule is overly optimistic and believes schedule slippage is inevitable.

*Issues:* Mr. Poe would like for the following to occur:

1. Quarterly schedule updates to the FG from DOE
2. A contingency plan to illustrate how schedule slips will be accommodated
3. Incorporation of NAS, NRC, and DNFSB considerations into schedule
4. Briefings to FG from Tanks Focus Group

*Actions:* The CAB's technical advisor was requested to prepare an amendment to include a HLW Contingency Plan to CAB Recommendation 112 for presentation to the CAB at its full Board meeting in Savannah, GA on May 22, 2000.

**Public Comments:** During the public comment period, Lee Poe expressed his dissatisfaction of the CAB pilot meeting format where all four committees meet at the same time. Mr. Poe, a member of the public is affiliated with two focus groups and had to work in his presentations for two committees at a time convenient for everyone concerned. While Mr. Poe notes that there might be some benefit to holding one-day meetings, he said the weaknesses were too significant to ignore. Mr. Poe recommended that the CAB pay closer and smarter attention to this problem since future participation from members of the public would be diminished. Mr. William Willoughby, a new CAB member said he raised the same question during his orientation program. He believes that with this non-standard approach, it becomes difficult for new members to identify the committee on which they would like to serve. He also noted that with the board's and focus group's diversity, serving will be more than one thing, one subject. Mr. Wade Waters, CAB member and WMC Chair noted that there are several issues that crosscut the committees; therefore, he also does not support the new format. However, Mr. Waters said that he would do all that he can to try and make the system work. Noting that the CAB frequently lacks enough technical expertise and background required to properly address site issues, Mr. Waters thanked the focus group for their

hard work and technical support. Mr. Waters also expressed his appreciation to the site technical and staff support personnel for the kind manner and attention they provide, often without enough notice. Lola Richardson, CAB member, and member of the WMC offered her approval and support of the new meeting format and asked that the public try to work with the new schedules. In closing, Ms. Richardson asked that everyone should try to make the new system work.

Wade Waters adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

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