



Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board

Recommendation 193 Public Dissemination of Waste Disposition Information

Background

The Department of Energy (DOE) has been working on a Savannah River Site (SRS) modified waste disposition strategy to meet the 2019 end state goals (date when all non-compliant tanks are closed). This strategy for high level waste disposition at SRS includes a large scale Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF), a near-term deployment of cesium and actinide treatment for limited low curie salt disposal to Saltstone, and advance staging of SWPF feed material prior to facility start-up. DOE has been working with the SRS contractor (WSRC), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and the South Carolina Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council (NAC) on a strategy that is acceptable to all parties (Ref. 1). One major obstacle to implementing the modified strategy has been the court decision against DOE in the Waste Incidental to Reprocessing (WIR) lawsuit. However, recent legislative action (amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005) by Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) has been proposed to rectify the waste disposition roadblock. If this legislation is enacted, the modified strategy can be implemented and resumption of tank closure activities can resume. Based on the Congressional Record, Senator Graham's amendment (No. 3170) received considerable discussion from both sides – those in favor and those against (Ref. 2). However, the amendment did proceed and is awaiting Senate and House reconciliation of the defense bills.

Comment

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) supported the legislative process and encouraged DOE to begin negotiations with DHEC to move forward with the waste disposition process (Ref. 3). The SRS CAB specifically stated that it wanted the regulators and the stakeholders to share in the decision making process. DOE has involved DHEC and NAC in the early discussions. They have also received independent scientific support on the proposed strategy from the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB). DNFSB is concerned about the significant safety consequences of delaying high level waste disposition at SRS (Ref. 4). The SRS CAB is concerned about the involvement and education of other stakeholders, the public. Many recent newspaper articles about the amendment have been filled with disjointed and misleading information. Those in opposition to Senator Graham's amendment quoted several of these articles in the Congressional Record and even identified an unsubstantiated report (Ref. 5) that had not been through an independent scientific peer review process. The SRS CAB is concerned about the credibility of information and wants to participate or assist in a process using credible resources, to disseminate factual information to the media and public.

Recommendation

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) is interested in factual information reaching stakeholders and media and therefore recommends the following:

1. DOE-SR provide a detailed agenda with presenters and potential dates for an educational forum on the waste disposition and tank closure strategy.
2. DOE-SR provide access to pertinent reports and articles under a special Waste Disposition and Tank Closure section on the SRS CAB web site with links to credible, third party sources such as DHEC, NAC, and the DNFSB.
3. DOE-SR provide rapid news releases, background point papers, or fact sheets to clarify misleading and/or non-factual information in the media or in public debate.

References

1. Update on Accelerated Cleanup Activities at SRS, presentation to the WM Committee by Terrel Spears, June 22, 2004.
2. Congressional Record S6395-S6421, June 3, 2004.
3. Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation No. 173 (adopted September 23, 2003), "High Level Waste Classification."
4. Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, Staff Issue Report "Safety Impacts of Suspending Salt Disposition at the Savannah River Site" transmittal letter from John Conway, Chairman, June 18, 2004.
5. "Nuclear Dumps by the Riverside: threats to the Savannah River from Radioactive Contamination at the Savannah River Site (SRS)", Arjun Makhijani, President, Institute for Energy and environmental Research, March 11, 2004

Minority Report

Submitted by Cassandra Norman Henry: "I am not familiar with the court's decision against DOE in the waste incidental recommendation (WIR) lawsuit. Additionally, I did not support the decision to exclude comments made from the public stakeholder, Ms. Glynn Carroll. I believe that her comments should have been given consideration before a vote was taken."

Agency Responses

[Department of Energy-SR](#)