



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Nuclear Materials Management Subcommittee

Meeting Summary

January 27, 1997

Hilton Head Island, S.C.

The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Nuclear Materials Management (NMM) Subcommittee held a meeting on Monday, January 27 at the Hilton Hotel in Hilton Head, SC. Subcommittee members attending were Tom Costikyan, chairperson, Bob Slay, Ed Tant, Brendolyn Jenkins and Arthur Belge. Savannah River Site resource personnel attending included Donna Martin, Westinghouse Savannah River Company, and Jay Bilyeu, Associate Designated Deputy Federal Officer, Department of Energy-Savannah River. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control was represented by Clint Sheely.

Introduction

Costikyan, NMM chair, presented two draft recommendations for the subcommittee to discuss and refine for presentation to the full Board. The first recommendation focused on providing comments on the scope of the SRS spent nuclear fuel environmental impact statement (EIS). The second addressed a new EIS on sending Rocky Flats plutonium residue to SRS for stabilization.

SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel EIS

Costikyan said the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS on treating spent nuclear fuel at SRS contained wording that limited the chemical processing alternative to rigid boundaries. He said the primary goal of the recommendation was to ask that DOE consider chemical processing equally with other non chemical treatments.

Bob Slay, Board chair and subcommittee member, said the most frustrating issue with the spent nuclear fuel is the manner in which DOE dances around the issue of chemical processing. He emphasized that DOE has not given satisfactory answers to why processing is not being fairly considered as a treatment method while various cost and technical studies have rated processing as the most viable option for treating spent nuclear fuel.

Brendolyn Jenkins said the wording in the recommendation should be more proactive and state specifically what the Board would like to be considered in FRR decisions.

Slay said the Spent Fuel Educational Forum being planned for June would be a good avenue to hear views of the public and of state and local politicians. However, he said the chemical processing issue is so controversial, politicians are also having difficulty getting explanations from DOE on the processing issue.

Jenkins said the major issue is no one wants spent nuclear fuel in their state. Costikyan said he is not opposed to bringing the fuel to SRS for temporary storage provided DOE takes a strong position on how the fuel will be stabilized while at SRS and decisions on a federal repository are made.

Ed Tant asked if it is possible to tell DOE to move the spent nuclear fuel out of South Carolina if it is not processed. Costikyan pointed out the state made several attempts to block shipments of the foreign fuel destined for South Carolina but to no avail.

Costikyan then said the public still has a few opportunities to give DOE input on spent nuclear fuel treatment decisions. The current opportunity is to comment on the EIS through scoping meetings, although he added that DOE-SR has already stated stronger wording of chemical processing as an alternative would be used in the draft document.

Jay Bilyeu, DOE-SR, explained that the Notice of Intent does not accurately reiterate DOE's position in the Foreign Research Reactor Spent Nuclear Fuel Record of Decision which states processing will be considered if another viable technology is not identified by 2000.

Slay said the biggest factor in the entire issue is that DOE's decision not to process has never been publicly discussed. Costikyan said a possible driver behind not processing is a potential conflict with the United States' commitment to uphold nonproliferation standards, although most European countries openly reprocess spent nuclear fuel from commercial reactors. Slay added that some people are philosophically opposed to processing, even though separated material can be blended down to meet nonproliferation standards.

The subcommittee agreed to take Costikyan's draft recommendation forward but added a new bullet which states processing has never been debated openly in public. (See attached SNF recommendation #29 approved by the CAB). The subcommittee also agreed to suggest to the full CAB that the recommendation be forwarded directly to the Secretary of Energy rather than to local DOE-SR officials.

A suggestion to send the recommendation to the President of the United States and other politicians was also discussed. Slay said he would bring the issue up during the Board meeting, although he had concerns such an effort would move the CAB out of its role as an advisory board and into the political arena.

Rocky Flat Plutonium Residue and Scrub Alloy EIS

The second draft recommendation was one addressing the Rocky Flats Plutonium Residue and Scrub Alloy EIS. The Notice of Intent in the EIS listed SRS as a potential location to receive some of the plutonium residue from Rocky Flats. Costikyan said the recommendation he drafted basically said the CAB would support bringing the material only if DOE committed funding, resources and facilities to stabilize the residue (See attached Recommendation #30 approved by the CAB).

Costikyan then asked Jay Bilyeu to explain the difference between plutonium residues and weapons grade plutonium. Bilyeu said metals and oxides contain greater than 50% plutonium while residues contain concentrations of less than 50% plutonium.

Arthur Belge asked if SRS was already stabilizing Rocky Flats residue. Costikyan explained the SRS had historically reprocessed the residue since the 1960s. Stabilization activities stopped with the end of the Cold War.

In final discussions, the subcommittee chose to take both recommendations forward to the full CAB with only minor changes to the recommendation on spent nuclear fuel.

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