



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Risk Management & Future Use Subcommittee Meeting

Meeting Summary

March 11, 1997

Hephzibah, Georgia

The Risk Management and Future Use Subcommittee of the Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) met on March 11, 1997, at 7:00 p.m. at the Hephzibah Community Center, Hephzibah, Georgia. Virginia Gardner, Department of Energy Savannah River Operations Office (DOE-SR), was the Associate Deputy Designated Federal Official (ADDFO). Gerri Flemming and Jim Buice, DOE, and Walt Joseph, SRS CAB facilitator, also attended. The members of the public who attended were Trish McCracken, Lee Poe, Dennis Withers, Richard Cutler, Willie Copeland, Alma Bland, and Murray Riley. Westinghouse Savannah River Company attendees were Gail Jernigan, Mary Flora, Gary Percival, and Clay Jones.

Gail Jernigan welcomed the participants to the meeting and participants introduced themselves. Jim Buice opened the meeting by explaining that the meeting purpose was to discuss DOE's proposed fiscal year (FY) 1998 budget that was recently submitted to Congress for review and approval. He also said that he would discuss the relationship of the proposed SRS FY 98 budget and that Gary Percival would explain how SRS prioritized activities for the Ten Year Plan. (Copies of the handouts used during these presentations are attached to these minutes.)

Buice explained that DOE Assistant Secretary Al Alm's vision is for the Environmental Management Program to complete cleanup at most DOE sites within a decade. At a small number of DOE sites, including SRS, operations will continue past the ten years. Buice said that this vision will drive budget decisions, the sequencing of projects, and the actions that are taken to meet program objectives. Additionally, this vision will be implemented with input from regulators and stakeholders. The goals of the Ten Year Plan are to reduce the most serious risks first, reduce the mortgage and support costs associated with cleanup, and meet regulatory and safety requirements.

In describing the proposed SRS FY 1998 budget, Buice explained that the actual numbers for the budget have not been finalized. Additionally, the proposed FY 1998 SRS budget for Defense Programs "has changed" to \$140 million from \$154 million. This change reflects a reduction in the scope of the tritium program. In response to several questions about the tritium program, Buice explained DOE is pursuing a dual path to determine how to create tritium for the country's weapons program. One option is to build an accelerator. If this option is chosen, the accelerator may be located at SRS. Another option being considered is using a commercial light water reactor. Several commercial nuclear power plants have shown interest in serving as one of the commercial light water reactors to be considered, if that option is chosen. There was a recent announcement that the Fast Flux Test Reactor located at Hanford would be evaluated as another

option. The final decision on which option is preferable will be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement.

In response to a question about the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), it was explained that there had been a recent announcement about TVA blending highly enriched uranium with depleted or natural uranium to create a fuel for the TVA reactors which generate electricity. This program is to reduce the DOE's supply of highly enriched uranium which is considered as "weapons-usable" uranium, and therefore a security risk.

One participant asked which facilities would be decommissioned. Buice said the Heavy Water Component Test Reactor (HWCTR) and a tritium facility were being considered. The proposed FY 1998 budget contains about \$4 million to continue the work on the HWCTR. He further explained that the funding for decommissioning projects usually has a low priority. Buice also said that SRS is pursuing funds through the Asset Management Pilot Program. With this program, which is granted by Congress with strict controls, SRS could apply revenues generated at SRS for SRS projects. Currently, revenues generated at SRS, such as through the sale of timber, return to the national Treasury. Another example could be the sale of SRS excess heavy water. Revenues from the sale of heavy water could be used for SRS decommissioning projects at SRS.

SRS currently participates in the Facility Reuse Program which releases DOE equipment and facilities to private companies through sales or lease agreements. Revenues from this could be used to prepare other facilities for release for sales or lease agreements. One citizen wanted to know what safeguards are in place to ensure equipment, which could be used for weapons, would not be sold to terrorists. It was explained that there is a national policy not to sell equipment that could be used to produce weapons. Most SRS equipment sold includes lathes, presses, pipes, metal extrusion equipment, etc. In addition, there are SRS procedures that place strict controls on equipment no longer needed to support SRS operations.

Buice went on to explain that the Ten Year Plan is the basis for the SRS FY 1999 budget submittal; therefore, it is considered as budget document as well as a planning document. Buice reviewed the Ten Year Plan schedule and Virginia Gardner noted that an April 15 national video conference is tentative and as additional information is available, it will be distributed.

Lee Poe voiced several comments, as described below. · Poe expressed concern on the transuranic waste stabilization's priority in the budget submission. He wants adequate assurance that the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) will open and accept SRS's waste and that there will be adequate funding to send this waste to WIPP. He believes this is one of the highest risks at SRS, and said that motions from the SRS Citizens Advisory Board have shown their concern for this type of waste. · Poe's next concern is the low priority on decommissioning projects. While many facilities may not be an immediate risk, SRS has thousands of facilities that will need to be decommissioned some time in the future. While SRS is waiting to decommission these facilities, surveillance and maintenance costs for these facilities continues, costing the U.S. taxpayer millions of dollars over the long term.

· Poe's comment on the Ten Year Plan goals is that the third goal, meeting regulatory and safety requirements, may not be a goal. If activities that support safety at SRS are the most serious risk, they should be funded as a serious risk, as described in the first goal, reduce most serious risk first. If regulatory-required activities pose the most risk, then they should be funded as a serious risk. If the activity is being proposed as a safety or regulatory requirement and does not pose a risk, then it should be a low priority on the list of tasks to be funded.

· Poe said he was extremely disappointed that the SRS Ten Year Plan was not available. At the February 18, 1997, public meeting, SRS representatives said that SRS would send the draft SRS Ten Year Plan to DOE-HQ on February 28, 1997, and he expected the draft SRS Ten Year Plan to be available at this subcommittee meeting. It was explained that the SRS Ten Year Plan will be released to the public with the national plan, scheduled for March 31, 1997. He suggested that SRS should invite interested stakeholders to a workshop to review the draft SRS Ten Year Plan and the national Ten Year Plan prior to the proposed national video conference. The purpose of this workshop would be to brief stakeholders on the issues in the plans and provide an overview of the plans. He recommended that this workshop be held approximately two weeks prior to the national video conference so that stakeholders would have time to review the documents.

Buice concluded his presentation by saying that SRS would benefit most from stakeholders' input into the action plans. (Action plans are part of the issue resolution process for issues that are controversial, cross several sites, require an explicit policy or decision, or affects the path forward for the Ten Year Plan.) He reminded the audience that there are numerous opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Gary Percival opened his presentation noting that SRS must prioritize its tasks in the face of ever decreasing DOE budgets. While one of the goals of the Environmental Management Program is to reduce risks, the SRS's budget is continually decreasing. Therefore, activities or projects for SRS must be prioritized. Walt Joseph, CAB Facilitator, reviewed the results of the subcommittee's work on budget prioritization. He said that the top four stakeholder criteria in most locations the subcommittee visited were public health and safety, worker health and safety, safeguards and security, and environmental protection. The other five criteria, (regulatory compliance, mission viability, current mission impact, cost effectiveness, and social/cultural/economic impacts), varied in the rankings, depending on the perspectives of the participating stakeholders. For example, in meetings in the Beaufort and Savannah areas, mission viability and current mission impact ranked lower than in meetings in the Aiken-Augusta.

Percival reviewed the prioritization process, method, and description. He then explained that the SRS Ten Year Plan Project Priority List is formatted differently than the Stakeholder Priority List developed in 1996. This is because last year SRS divided many of the tasks into numerous separate activities whereas in the Ten Year Plan list, activities are combined. As an example, in the Ten Year Plan prioritization, F-Area Stabilization showed up as a single project. In 1996 the various tasks in this project showed up several times as such tasks as Nuclear Facility Surveillance and Maintenance and Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board activities. Another change is that some Environmental Restoration activities have moved up on the priority list since there are specific regulatory requirements driving these activities.

Poe told the SRS representatives that, while he did not want the SRS to break any laws, he did want to re-examine the Federal Facility Agreement (FFA). He feels that there may be tasks on the FFA lists which may not reduce risk. He cited the cleanup of the Ford Building Waste Site as an example. He said that he disagrees with the proposal to spend \$500,000 over several years to remediate the Ford Building Waste Site, as he does not believe that this facility poses any risks. He would prefer that these monies be used to reduce “real” risks. It was explained that as the Environmental Restoration Program has evolved, the regulatory agencies have agreed to focus on the higher risk waste units. However, there are varying perceptions of risk on many of the waste units at SRS and that it is difficult for all stakeholders reach a consensus.

Poe asked whether the current process for ranking projects is different than the process used in 1996. He reminded the participants that 1996 SRS’s process was different than the process used by DOE-HQ and that SRS’s process showed more sensitivity to changes and stakeholder concerns than DOE-HQ’s process. He recommended that DOE-HQ be notified that the SRS process is better and should be used by the other DOE field offices. It was noted that SRS will continue to use its priority system, as DOE-HQ is not dictating which process each site should use. If SRS is compared to other DOE sites, then this sensitivity is lost. However, the Risk Management and Future Use Subcommittee is preparing a recommendation on prioritization and it was suggested that this issue could be included in the recommendation.

Poe asked whether those involved in the prioritization process received any formal training before they prioritized budget activities. Clay Jones noted that the same assessors participated in the Ten Year Plan prioritization and the 1996 process. However, he agreed that a formal structure may be needed in the future for training new assessors.

Poe also asked which activities would not be funded if the funding is reduced in the future. It was suggested that this should be part of the workshop that Poe recommended to discuss the Ten Year Plan. The suggestion was that various budget scenarios should be discussed at the workshop. These scenarios should include tasks that will have a delay in funding and tasks that will not be completed due to budget limitations.

One participant asked if an Environmental Restoration waste unit posed little or no risk, would it be taken off the Federal Facility Agreement. It was explained that the regulations allowed for no further action for those types of waste units. Another participant asked about areas where coal was stored. Jones explained that SRS is trying to solicit vendors that would retrieve the coal for potential resale.

One participant suggested that since the overhead slides showed the funding level since 1992, SRS representatives should explain to the stakeholders what was accomplished with that amount of funding. With this the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting handouts may be obtained by calling the SRS CAB toll free number at 1-800-249-8155.