



## **SRS Citizens Advisory Board**

### **Environmental Remediation and Waste Management Subcommittee**

#### **Meeting Record**

**August 25, 1998**

**Aiken Federal Building in Aiken, SC**

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The SRS CAB ER&WM subcommittee met on August 25, 1998, at the Aiken Federal Building in Aiken, SC. Bill Lawless opened the meeting with introductions. CAB members present included, ER&WM subcommittee Co-Chairs Bill Lawless and Kathryn May and CAB member Karen Patterson. Todd Crawford, Technical Advisor for the CAB was in attendance. Mike Schoener, SRS CAB Facilitator presided. Attending from DOE-SR were William Noll, Virgil Sauls, Larry Ling, Ray Hannah, Mike Simmons, Les Germany, and Donna Germany. Attending from EPA Region IV were Julie Corkran, Jeff Crane and Ken Feely. Craig Mariner attended for SCDHEC. WSRC/BSRI/BNFL attendees included Welford T. (Sonny) Goldston, Gerry Stejskal, Robert Hinds, Kim Wierzbicki, Nordette Lawrence, Ron Steve, Stephani Fuller, Mary Flora, Paul Huber, Phil Crotwell, Paul Sauerborn, and Helen Villasor. Whit Gibbons attended for SREL. Public attendees included Jim Pope, Mike French, Jerry Devitt, Russ Messick, Bill McDonell, Sam Booher, Eric Nelson, and Steve Holt. Gerri Flemming attended as the Associate Designated Deputy Federal Official (ADDFO).

During the public comment period, Larry Ling provided an update on the DOE- requested Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) closure methodology in reference to Draft Order 435.1. Mr. Ling also addressed the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) petition. Bill Lawless suggested that the High Level Waste Division respond to an Augusta Chronicle article on the tank closure issue and provide it to the CAB.

Bill Lawless passed out a draft schedule of future meeting topics and requested that the attendees review the draft and provide formal responses either at the final public comment period of the evening, or to WSRC public involvement personnel via telephone or e-mail.

Sonny Goldston presented DOE Draft Order 435.1, which will replace DOE Order 5820.2A. The new order is now available for public review and comment. Helen Villasor was asked to inform the attendees about public participation on the new draft order, which included placing copies of the directives and manual in the DOE Reading Rooms, a general mailing to members and the public on the ER&WM Subcommittee mailing list and the preparation of an article that appears in the August 17, 1998 issue of the SRS Environmental Bulletin. Mr. Goldston explained that the new order is being driven by the Defense Nuclear Safety Board (DNSFB) Order 94-2, and comparisons to NRC regulations. Examples of changes in the new order include data quality

objectives applied to characterization and requirements for composite analysis and DOE-approved Waste Management Basis. Forms of waste included are transuranic, low level, and high level waste. The schedule for the new order is the release of the document for public review on August 6, 1998, issuance of the order later this year with a 3-year implementation period and full implementation by October 1, 2001. Other items of importance discussed on 435.1 include:

- regulatory involvement in reviewing the document
- cost of implementation, which is estimated at approximately \$4M
- extension of public comment period to September 30, 1998 in response to the formal request made by the subcommittee to DOE-HQ, EM-35

Bill Lawless asked that SCDHEC and EPA provide comments to the draft order, or alternatively, to the draft motion that the subcommittee will submit to the full Board.

Bill Lawless introduced the topic of disposal of CERCLA waste in the SRS Low-Level Waste (LLW) Disposal Facility. Dr. Lawless spoke of DOE methodology to regulate the management and disposal of low-level radioactive waste generated by DOE under the authority of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (as amended); that the LLW disposal facilities do not require either a State of South Carolina, EPA or NRC permit or license; that DOE Order 5820.2A establishes requirements, policies and guidelines for management of LLW including a radiological performance assessment to ensure long-term protection of human health and the environment; and that the SRS LLW Disposal Facility has received a CERCLA Off-site Acceptability Determination from EPA (which allows receipt of LLW generated as a result of a CERCLA remedial or removal action). This means that EPA has determined through a review of the SRS Low Level Waste Facility Trenches and Vaults, that the SRS LLW disposal facilities are acceptable to EPA for disposal of CERCLA waste that might be sent from a CERCLA site (sent off of the CERCLA site) for disposal. EPA did review the SRS LLW Disposal Facility trenches and vaults and approved them as acceptable to dispose of waste from a CERCLA unit. Under CERCLA regulations if a waste disposal site, such as the SRS Low level Waste Disposal Facility trenches, expects that they may be requested to receive waste from a CERCLA unit for disposal (in other words, the waste from a CERCLA unit is planned to be sent off of the CERCLA unit site for disposal at some other site), EPA must review and approve that waste disposal site as acceptable to receive CERCLA generated waste for disposal. This is called the "CERCLA Off-Site Rule determination". Bill Lawless then requested that the subcommittee meet again on September 14, 1998, with the regulators for a roundtable discussion to develop a path forward on the CERCLA waste issue. EPA said it could not address this issue without a specific remedy on the table. Bill Lawless stated it was his understanding with Camilla Warren or EPA Region 4, that the Board would accept the separation of the SRL Seepage Basins wastes as long as EPA and SCDHEC would agree to work with SRS and the Board to find a solution to the disposal of CERCLA wastes in the SRS slit trenches.

Paul Huber provided an update on the SRL Seepage Basins and said that both regulators have agreed to a simple revision process to minimize time and work effort. A Short List has been reduced to two remedial selections, both of which will remove all principal threat material. The first is to dispose of all material at an off-SRS facility and backfill to original grade with clean soil (alternative S-5B). The other is to dispose of highly contaminated soils at an off-SRS facility

and backfill to original grade with clean soil (combines alternative S-5A and S-7B). Mr. Huber said that the three agencies will be meeting on August 27, 1998, to scope the preferred remedy and to establish a schedule to remedial action start. Bill Lawless said that the Board believed that the preferred remedies are not the best solution to the SRL Seepage Basins waste, and that it would accept the remedies preferred by SRS and the regulators only if there were a path forward to the disposal of CERCLA wastes in the SRS trenches.

Whit Gibbons of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL) made a presentation on DWPF and Rainbow Bay. Rainbow Bay is an isolated seasonal wetland located within the Rainbow Bay Amphibian Reserve Set-Aside Area, in the center of SRS. When the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) was constructed, Sun Bay was eliminated; however, Rainbow Bay, which is close beside it, was then established as a set-aside area. Dr. Gibbons said that important products of Rainbow Bay include student research, public education/outreach, animals for education, publications and findings. The questions Rainbow Bay pose are:

- is continuation of the area study important
- how can the project help DOE directly

Dr. Gibbons said the reasons to continue Rainbow Bay research include baseline tracking of regional biodiversity; indication of DOE commitment to environmental stewardship; and strength of maintaining regional environmental expertise. Dr. Gibbons concluded by providing options for the future of Rainbow Bay, which are to stop the study, reduce scope of study, acquire outside funding or have DOE continue funding the study. Because many publications discussed at the meeting have been authored by Dr. Gibbons, or the SREL staff, it was suggested that members of the public interested in obtaining copies, contact Dr. Gibbons by telephone at (803) 725-5733, or by e-mail at gibbons@srel.edu. As a teacher by profession, Kathryn May expressed her appreciation to Dr. Gibbons for the many times that his staff members participated in educational outreach in public schools and endorsed the continuation this research because of the positive and long-lasting effects it has on students.

Les Germany provided a presentation on the Time Critical Early Removal Action at the L-Area Burning/Rubble Pit, which is about a half mile northwest of L Reactor. Mr. Germany said that a Unit Assessment proposed full characterization of the Operable Unit (OU). One element of the characterization included trenching in the pit to visually observe what was present. It was during the trenching that more than 950 back-up power batteries, believed to have come from all SRS reactors were discovered. A Removal Site Evaluation Report was prepared and submitted for the time critical action which was initiated on July 20, 1998. A public notification period is now in progress. To date, 950 zinc-mercury and lead-acid batteries have been removed and the removal action (including waste disposition) is 80% complete. The zinc-mercury and the lead-acid batteries are being recycled offsite. The completion of the Early Removal Action is forecast for September 30, 1998. It was noted that because of the excellent cooperation by the regulators and DOE to reach a quick and positive solution to this early action, the subcommittee will most likely submit a letter of commendation to all at the next full Board meeting.

During the final public comment period Bill Lawless:

- reminded the attendees to provide comments on the draft schedule of future meeting topics
- requested the regulators to identify presenters for a September 14 roundtable discussion meeting
- requested either Brendolyn Jenkins or Karen Patterson present a motion
- at the September 30, 1998, full CAB meeting on the ranking of the low- level waste preferred alternatives from the Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement
- requested that Kathryn May present the SRL Seepage Basin motion at the next full Board meeting
- requested that May Elfner present the SREL Rainbow Bay Study motion at the next full Board meeting

Bill Lawless closed the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

For copies of the meeting handouts, please call 1-800-249-8155.

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**Attachments:**

***E-MAIL DATED SEPTEMBER 2,1998, JULIE CORKRAN, EPA REGION 4***

Helen:

Thanks for forwarding the draft Rev. 0 ER&WM summary notes for review and comment. I found the comments offered by EPA during the Off-Site Rule/LLWDF and SRL Seepage Basins Decision update discussions to be underrepresented in the minutes, particularly in light of the expanded discussion of these issues which has been provided in the most recent draft of the minutes (9/1/98 versus 9/2/98). Please add the following points which were made by Jeff Crane and myself during the discussion:

Off-site Rule/LLWDF paragraph

1. EPA indicated that discussion of the issue should take place either in the context of a specific remedy on the table or in the context of continued discussions of the need for a soils consolidation facility at SRS (folks in attendance will recall Jeff's excellent presentation of the history of stakeholder evaluation of the consolidation strategy to date and the relevance of this strategy to the LLWDF issue).
2. EPA emphasized that the Board should not expect a decision regarding this issue from EPA at the September 14th Subcommittee meeting or even in the month of September.
3. EPA stated the shared position of the regulators and DOE-SR that remedy selection for the SRL Seepage Basins Operable Unit and utilization of the LLWDF for CERCLA remedial wastes are issues which have been severed from one another.

SRL Seepage Basins Decision paragraph

4. EPA reiterated the shared position of the regulators and DOE-SR that remedy selection for the SRL Seepage Basins Operable Unit and utilization of the LLWDF for CERCLA remedial wastes are issues which have been severed from one another.

Your incorporation of these points will be appreciated and will provide a more balanced representation of the discussion that took place among the stakeholders on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information or clarification (404/562-8547).

Julie Corkran

***E-MAIL DATED SEPTEMBER 3, 1998, JEFF CRANE, EPA REGION 4***

Helen:

In review of the two drafts of the 8/25 ER&WM Subcommittee meeting minutes you forwarded 8/27 and 9/2, I have found that EPA's position regarding the SRS LLRWDF stated during the meeting was not captured. Here is a summary of what I stated for your inclusion in the meeting minutes:

EPA has stated in writing that the use of the LLRWDF for some low radionuclide concentration CERCLA waste being generated by early actions under DOE's removal authority is acceptable. The SRS LLRWDF was evaluated under CERCLA's Offsite Rule to determine whether disposition of the removal generated waste was acceptable, and was deemed acceptable, thereby facilitating the removal actions.

Analysis of a centralized soil consolidation facility was performed to consider attainment of site-wide cleanup objectives of reducing footprint of contamination by combining operable unit derived waste into a single operable unit. The alternatives for such a facility included a "LLRWDF-type" operation (not the existing LLRWDF). The CAB did not support a centralized facility and recommended that in-place remedial action for operable units would be consistent with the future land use expectations for the nuclear industrial use areas. Consistent with this recommendation, EPA/DHEC/DOE-ER are pursuing a streamlining strategy for in-place engineered closure of a number of units under a single decision document referred to as the plug-in ROD. Therefore, use of a LLRWDF is no longer relevant to any current site cleanup strategy expressed by the DOE-ER Program. If DOE-ER wishes to use the existing LLRWDF for a given operable unit or set of operable units, then the ER&WM Subcommittee's proposed discussion may be useful in that context. However, EPA sees no reason to discuss use of the existing LLRWDF for disposition of CERCLA derived waste if the DOE-ER program has no explicit expectation for its use.

In the future, please give me a call if you have any questions in preparing the draft meeting minutes regarding any comments I made during the meeting so that our feedback can be properly recorded. Thanks Jeff Crane

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