



Recommendation No. 150

April 23, 2002

Cleanup Reform Appropriations

Background

Within DOE, the Environmental Management (EM) program has the responsibility for cleaning up 114 sites. These include both large and small DOE sites. At the beginning of FY 2002, cleanup had been completed at 74 of these sites. However, the bulk of these sites represent the easiest and smallest sites to be cleaned up, while the larger sites still remain an enormous challenge. The three largest sites (SRS, Hanford, and INEEL) have such long-term completions dates (between 35 to 70 years) that estimates for cleanup costs and schedule are highly uncertain. EM estimates the current life cycle costs for the cleanup program at \$220 billion and believes the cleanup program cost estimate could easily increase to more than \$300 billion (Ref. 1).

Since the current cleanup plan takes too long and costs too much the Secretary of Energy, directed that a Top-to-Bottom review be performed. An independent review team was formed to conduct the review. The review team identified a major flaw in the approach taken by EM. The EM's major emphasis has been on managing risk, rather than actually reducing risks to workers, the public, and the environment. They recommended that EM adopt an accelerated, risk-based cleanup program (Ref. 2).

This strategy was incorporated in the FY03 budget process. In addition to the baseline cleanup budget, DOE established a Cleanup Reform Appropriations account. This \$800 million account allows for funding above the baseline budget for initiatives that can actually accelerate cleanup and reduce risks. DOE sites are required to submit proposals outlining their initiatives to receive funds from this new account. Hanford has already been identified as a site that will receive \$433 million in FY03 from this new account (Ref. 3).

Under the SRS Environmental Restoration program, three initiatives were identified that accelerate risk reduction and cleanup. One involved the accelerated closure of the Old Radioactive Waste Burial Ground, another one accelerated contaminant reduction in Fourmile Branch, and the third initiative accelerates risk reduction through innovative technologies and improved processes (Ref. 4).

Comment

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) provided input on the initiatives during its combined committee meeting on February 26, 2002. SRS incorporated the CAB comments, as appropriate, in the revised proposal to DOE-HQ. In addition to the Cleanup Reform Appropriations account, the SRS CAB would have liked to have a FY03 baseline budget at a level at least equal to FY02. While the SRS CAB agrees that there is a need for a change in the DOE business model, equity within the DOE complex is a concern (e.g., Hanford receiving funds before SRS has submitted its proposal).

Recommendation

The SRS CAB supports the SRS initiatives and offers the following recommendations concerning the Cleanup Reform Appropriations:

1. DOE-HQ approves the SRS Environmental Restoration (ER) Division's funding proposal requests under the Cleanup Reform Appropriations (CRA) as soon as possible to accelerate all ER priority cleanup efforts (e.g., ORWBG).
2. SRS provide a plan of action and milestones on all planned accelerated risk reduction and cleanup projects consistent with site worker and public safety.
3. SRS provides to the SRS CAB an early opportunity to review the Integrated Priority Lists with cost estimates and any/all in-scope revisions to the SRS Environmental Restoration cleanup effort and its future out-year budgets beginning with FY2003 and FY2004.

References

1. Top-to Bottom Review of EM Program, February 4, 2002, www.energy.gov/enviro/index.html.
2. EM Top to Bottom Review, presentation to the SRS CAB Committees by Bill Levitan, February 26, 2002.
3. The Environmental Management Top to Bottom Review and Cleanup Reform Appropriation, presentation to the SRS CAB Committees by Greg Rudy, February 26, 2002.
4. Accelerate Environmental Restoration Risk Reduction and Program Completion, presentation to the ER Committee by Paul Huber, March 18, 2002.

Agency Responses

Department of Energy-SR