



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

OCT 24 2008

Ms. Donna Antonucci, Chairperson
Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
8601 Creighton Place West
Savannah, GA 31406

Dear Ms. Antonucci:

SUBJECT: Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 258 – Transuranic (TRU) Waste Disposition Program Follow-up (Your letter, 9/25/08)

Thank you for your recommendation on the Savannah River Site (SRS) TRU waste disposition program, as well as for the congratulatory comments in your letter regarding the Savannah River Site's (SRS) success to date in dispositioning legacy TRU waste drums to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The Department of Energy (DOE) also views the progress of the SRS TRU waste program as a significant success, but recognizes, as pointed out in your recommendation, that challenges remain as we work toward dispositioning the remaining legacy TRU waste inventory.

As you are aware, SRS is currently under a Continuing Resolution (CR) that limits available funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. While we will continue to work hard to successfully complete TRU disposition, you should recognize that until a budget for FY 2009 is enacted, our near term progress may be impeded by limited funding. In addition, the technical challenges noted in your letter pose significant risk that must be resolved to enable dispositioning the remaining SRS legacy TRU waste. The Department's responses to the five parts of Recommendation Number 258 are as follows:

Part 1 – Ensure the SRS funding for FY 2009 is at a level that continues to address the highest risk reduction activities to complete the removal of all legacy TRU waste no later than FY 2013: and

Part 2 – Provide a FY 2009 budget update to the CAB when it is known and assess the plans for disposition alternatives for all SRS legacy TRU waste with the goal of disposition of all waste by 2013.

We have combined Parts 1 and 2, since our response addresses both parts. The Department's goal for FY 2009 is to reduce risk by shipping the remaining shippable drums in the SRS legacy TRU waste inventory to WIPP. If completed, DOE will consider this a significant accomplishment that cumulates nine years of WIPP shipments and the safe disposition of over 31,000 drums. While we are finalizing our FY 2009 execution strategy at this time, the Department believes that this can be accomplished within the funding provided by the FY 2009 CR. If additional funding becomes available later in the FY, SRS will continue to balance TRU waste disposition as a key risk reduction activity in our Integrated Priority List, along with the other high priorities, including maintenance of safe operations, regulatory compliance, infrastructure preservation, etc. We will update the CAB on our FY 2009 budget situation at your convenience. Given the budget uncertainties at this time and near term technical risks that must be resolved, the Department is not in a position to establish a goal for accelerated completion of legacy TRU waste disposition as you recommend.

Part 3 – The CAB requests that DOE-SRS provide an update to the Committee and the Board on the status of TRU Pad 1 disposition scope and schedule.

As always, DOE is pleased to update the CAB on our cleanup effort at SRS. As you request, we will work with the Waste Management Committee to schedule briefings on the status of TRU Pad 1 disposition activities.

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Part 4 – Provide assurances that the efforts are in place to step up obtaining the NRC license for the TRUPACT-III; invite the NRC to brief the CAB on obtaining the necessary license; and inform the CAB about what it can do to assist in resolving technical issues with TRUPACT-III to ensure meeting the 2013 end date.

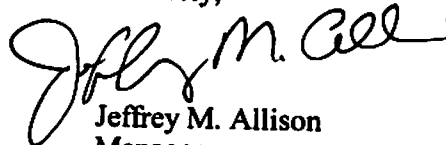
The Department is working diligently to obtain a license for the TRUPACT-III shipping container. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has recently requested that DOE drop test a production unit of a TRUPACT-III to support additional reviews of the license application, and a production unit is currently being fabricated to drop test in late spring 2009. The NRC and the DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) have been attentive toward resolving technical challenges and pursuing licensing of the TRUPACT-III. We will work with the CBFO to invite the NRC to brief the CAB as you request.

Part 5 – Define completion date of WIPP certification of large box NDA and NDE systems and invite Carlsbad (WIPP) to discuss and outline steps with the CAB Waste Management Committee and Board and the appropriate regulatory parties to resolve technical issues with large box NDE ensure meeting the 2013 end date.

DOE continues to make progress in overcoming the technical challenges associated with safely dispositioning the remaining legacy TRU waste at SRS. The SRS is currently working to initiate operations of the large box Non-Destructive Assay (NDA) unit, a predecessor step to certification of the unit. At this time, SRS forecasts certification of this unit in the first quarter of FY 2009. In addition, SRS is resolving imaging issues with the Large Box Non-Destructive Examination unit, and will be scheduling a WIPP certification audit of this unit when these technical challenges are resolved. We will be happy to update the CAB and to invite CBFO to discuss the certification process as you request.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Terrel J. Spears of my staff at (803) 208-6072.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey M. Allison
Manager

WDPD-09-003