

To: Citizen Task Force
From: Melinda Holland, Clean Sites
Subject: Summary of January 7, 1998, Meeting - **Revision 2**
Date: January 21, 1998

Next Meeting:

The next Citizen Task Force (CTF) meeting will be on:

Date: Tuesday, January 20, 1998
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Location: Ashford Office Complex
9030 Route 219, West Valley, NY

If you have questions or comments regarding the upcoming meeting or about this summary, please contact Melinda Holland at (864) 457-4202 or Tom Attridge at (716) 942-2453.

CTF Attendees:

Attending were: **Ray Vaughan**, Pete Scherer, Joe Patti, Warren Schmidt, Larry Smith, John Pfeffer, Barbara Mazurowksi (for Tom Rowland), Paul Piciulo, Pete Cooney, Eric Wohlers, Tim Siepel, Murray Regan, and Rich Tobe. Not attending were: Lana Rosler, Bill King, Elaine Belt, Blake Reeves, and Nevella McNeil.

Regulatory Agency Attendees:

Jack Krajewski, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

Attending via conference call:

Jack Parrott, Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
Tim Johnson, NRC
Joe Price, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)

January 7 Meeting Summary:

Tom Attridge and Melinda Holland opened the meeting by reviewing administrative issues and the agenda. There were no corrections to the summary of the last meeting.

Eric Wohlers briefed the CTF on the Technical subgroup that met on December 16, 1997, to discuss the potential for a slurry wall around the Main Plant. Attendees included Eric Wohlers and Ray Vaughan, CTF; Tom Attridge and Mike Weishan, NYSERDA; Dan Westcott and Sonja

Allen, WVNS; Bob Blickwedehl, Dames & Moore; and via conference call, Joe Price SAIC, and Melinda Holland, Clean Sites. Mike Weishan presented a video on slurry wall construction/installation in the State-Licensed Disposal Area (SDA). A written summary of the technical work group meeting will be provided.

The summary of the CTF technical work group meeting stimulated discussion about the possibility that the pilings of the main process building present a vertical pathway through the Lavery Till into deeper groundwater zones. Horizontal pathways for contamination movement were mentioned as more troubling than vertical, but CTF members wanted more information about the possible problems created by the pilings. Discussion ensued about possible methods of detecting whether the installation of the pilings has created a current or potential groundwater problem. CTF members invited the site representatives to provide more information about the installation of the pilings. CTF members also concluded that further discussion is needed about whether existing monitoring wells around the main process building are adequate to detect problems and decided to schedule another technical work group meeting the week of January 12th. Discussion then shifted to methods of treating the North Plateau Groundwater Plume. A CTF member suggested accelerating cleanup of the plume from the main process building using a combination approach involving installing horse shoe-shaped slurry wall to surround the main process building contamination, combined with the injection of liquids to flush contaminants from soil particles into a collection well located in the narrows of the slurry walls. Site representatives mentioned that the primary contaminants in the plume [Strontium 90] would decay in approximately 300 years.

One CTF member questioned what would be the impact of flash flooding on the North Plateau Groundwater Plume. Site consultants answered by saying that if all of the contaminants in the North Plateau Groundwater Plume were to get into the surface water, the maximally exposed individual on Cattaraugus Creek would receive less than one millirem per year. It was also pointed out that the current natural background radiation exposure is about one millirem per day for this part of New York State. The CTF agreed to defer further discussion on possible approaches for treating the North Plateau Groundwater Plume for the technical work group meeting. Tim Siepel, Ray Vaughan, Pete Scherer, and Murray Regan volunteered to attend this meeting. The time and date will be coordinated by telephone. A verbal and written summary will be prepared for this technical work group meeting.

Discussion of Waste Management Area 3, High Level Waste Tanks/Vitrification Facility

Next the CTF discussed general issues, questions, and concerns about the closure of the high level waste tanks, then each member summarized their initial preferences for closure of the tanks. Both parts of the discussion are summarized below. This discussion was prefaced by a CTF member requesting increased candid dialogue back and forth with site representatives. The need for the CTF to be able to consider alternatives or combinations of alternatives beyond those described in the DEIS was also stressed.

Concern was raised that if the tanks were filled with grout (under Alternative III), it would need to be done in a way that did not preclude future exhumation of the tanks. The possibility of collapsing the tanks to reduce the volume which would need to be filled with grout was discussed, but site consultants explained that it would be extremely difficult to do because of large numbers of internal pilings and structures. Site representatives explained that due to high concentrations of gamma-emitting radionuclides, the tanks would have to be cleaned using remote robotic technology, unless they were left in place for 300 years to allow decay of the gamma-emitting substances. However, the tanks would not last 300 years, thus under the modified Alternative III, the tanks would be filled with a special grout, capped, and surrounded by slurry walls to prevent wastes from leaving or groundwater from entering the tanks. The grout has low compressive strength and would be relatively easy to exhume in the future. In 300 years when the gamma-emitting radionuclides such as Cesium 137 (i.e daughter product Barium) have decayed, the tanks could be exhumed using regular earth moving equipment without robotics or remote-handling procedures. CTF members expressed concern over possible future difficulties in exhuming the grouted tanks and over relying on institutional controls to protect and maintain the site for 300 years. A site representative reminded the group that the CTF has not yet had a presentation or discussion on the use of institutional controls and suggested that it would be useful to have that discussion soon. Site representatives also stated that institutional controls will be needed wherever the wastes are shipped, but a CTF member disagreed stating that institutional controls are not supposed to be needed after 100 years if the disposal site meets the requirements of 10 CFR Part 61. A site consultant questioned whether any sites exist which meet this criteria.

A CTF member stated that his concerns with Alternatives I or II included the difficulties and risks of exhumation and transportation and the fact that sending the wastes off-site merely relocates the problem somewhere else. He also was more concerned about the risk of a tornado hitting an above-ground storage structure than the risk of groundwater transporting contaminants from a below-ground structure. The possibility of terrorist sabotage was also raised as a concern by another member for the high level waste tanks, but others felt that West Valley was an unlikely terrorist target due to low population density. Some felt that Alternatives I or II would be the safest approach but others disagreed stating that you need to look at safety both at this site, in transit and at the final disposal site which may make Alternative III the safest overall.

A CTF member ~~felt~~ indicated that the group ~~should be~~ has been looking at alternatives that fall between I and II. He complained that the site has not been forthcoming with information which would support Alternatives I or II, **and especially alternatives that fall between I and II**, such as additional information he requested on the use of remote/robotic technologies for exhumation. He feels that all of the site's efforts are going into improving Alternative III. He raised the decommissioning of Fort St. Vrain as a successful example of the use of remote/robotic technology. Another member mentioned an article about remote decommissioning by Siemens. Site representatives agreed to inform the CTF of the status of WVNS's efforts to gather information on robotic exhumations and cleanups and to provide that information as soon as it is available.

A discussion ensued over the differences of exhuming the tanks compared to exhuming the SDA and NDA. A CTF member felt it would be easier to exhume the SDA and NDA than the tanks. However, site consultants disagreed stating that the SDA and NDA wastes and soils would have to be remotely exhumed and packaged using robotic technology.

A CTF member reminded the group that based on the state's current large budget surplus, it would be better to clean up the site now which also allows the use of the existing skilled workforce. A NYSERDA representative responded that they will have to compete for the surplus moneys and that any recommendation for cleanup must be justified to the Governor as a wise use of state funds. Cost effectiveness is one key consideration in having the site's recommendations approved and funded. He reminded the group that we have not had a CTF discussion about cost/benefit and how it needs to be factored into the government's decision.

The interrelationship between closure approaches for the various units needs to be kept in mind, reminded a CTF member. If one unit is closed as a monolith or retrievable storage will that decision pre-dispose other units to be closed similarly?

Individual CTF Member Recommendations on WMA 3

At the end of the meeting each member summarized their current preferences for closure of the high level waste tanks. Each persons statements are summarized below without attribution.

- ◆ Prefer Alternative II (exhume and store on-site) until a better site becomes available for permanent disposal. Alternative III not well thought out yet, the re-engineering work for the tanks is still very preliminary. 300 years only deals with gamma emitters not the remaining long-lived radionuclides. Gully growth and risks from earthquakes are still concerns.
- ◆ Could go either way as of now (exhume or stabilize in place) but lean towards leaving the tanks in place and grouting. Above-ground storage faces risks from extreme weather conditions.
- ◆ Want to hold off on a decision at this time until reviewed notes and information more fully. But based on tonight's discussion, leaning towards filling tanks with grout.
- ◆ State surplus dollars are available now so it might be better to do something now. Almost every roll-up graph that addresses fatalities seems to favor Alternative II, costs are not too much higher, and employment figures are best for Alternative II. But personally still leaning towards installing a slurry wall, grouting the tanks and keeping them in the ground for now. Difficulty of exhuming grouted tanks is still a concern.
- ◆ The effort/costs required to exhume the tanks would not be justified by the benefits. Prefer grout and leave in ground but not as a permanent solution and do not see that approach as a risk to health and environment. Above-ground storage would be more vulnerable to problems like tornados and terrorism. NRC's decision on the decommissioning criteria is key; much is left in the air until we hear about that.
- ◆ Not comfortable leaving the tanks in the ground so favor Alternative II, store where it can be watched.

- ◆ CTF needs to look at what is best for the entire site and needs to consider the NRC's limits for the site. Prefer alternative III at this time, until better technology available.
- ◆ Prefer getting it out of the ground now; but could be convinced otherwise.
- ◆ Role of CTF is to provide site with feedback from the community. Thus we should not be intimidated by costs at this point and should state what we prefer. Are we talking about 300 years or 250,000 years; if focus is 300 years feel we can deal with it in the ground with grout.
- ◆ Alternative III is good if it can be considered an interim solution.
- ◆ Uneasy with keeping tanks in ground yet concerned with difficulties of remote exhumation. CTF seems to be thinking of both alternative II and III as interim solutions, but we need to deal with final solutions also. Remembers Love Canal where the waste was capped and people later forgot the site restrictions and breached the cap releasing the wastes. If we leave the tanks in the ground how can we be assured that these questions are raised and addressed in 300 years?

NRC responded to a question from the CTF on the status of a decision on decommissioning criteria for West Valley by stating that the staff-level draft recommendations are being reviewed up the chain of command at NRC. NRC staff proposes to give the Commission the full range of options available for West Valley and let the Commission make a decision. They anticipate that it will be at least a month before a draft paper is ready for review by upper level NRC management. Do not know at this time when it will be sent to the Commission for their review and decision. A CTF member asked NRC how they will consider the requirements of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act (WVDPA) and whether Alternative III is allowable under the WVDPA. NRC responded that their Office of General Counsel is interpreting the words of the WVDPA broadly to allow selection from a wide range of criteria.

Site representatives agreed that the time issues raised by CTF members need to be discussed, such as implementing an interim remedy now and doing something else later on. A CTF member suggested that the group not be constrained to the alternatives as described in the DEIS and feel free to create new or hybrid remedies. Another member also suggested that we need to have a discussion about NYSERDA and DOE institutional controls. One member suggested that the site provide the CTF with a straw man based on input received from CTF members to date.

Observer Comments:

In reference to the article in *The Buffalo News* regarding shipping high-level waste (HLW) canisters to the Savannah River Site (SRS), has the decision been made to ship the HLW canisters or was it a recommendation from the SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB)? The SRS CAB approved a recommendation that HLW canisters from West Valley be shipped to SRS for interim storage pending shipment to a geologic repository, but no decision has been made by the site or the State of South Carolina.

The same observer asked if the waste shipment to Idaho Falls is still on schedule for 2001. The DOE representative confirmed that is still the current plan.

Next Steps

Warren Schmidt reported difficulties identifying a specific date for Representative Houghton to participate in a teleconference call with CTF members. One of Rep. Houghton's staff suggested that the CTF send a letter to the Mr. Houghton requesting a meeting in February. Rep. Houghton's staff also suggested involving some of Senator Moynihan's top people as well. Warren Schmidt will prepare a draft letter for the CTF to review before the next meeting. A CTF member suggested that the group ask Rep. Houghton about the chances of amending the WVDPA to conform to the CTF recommendations for the site.

A CTF member requested that DOE and NYSERDA provide the CTF with a "reality check" or feedback on what the CTF has recommended or raised as concerns for the SDA, NDA, main process building and tanks. He would like to hear how CTF recommendations will be used. Another member also said he would like feedback on how much of the agencies decision will be based just on cost and funding. The CTF agreed that it would like to use the next meeting to receive this feedback from DOE and NYSERDA and for discussion.

On Monday, January 19th at 7:00 pm CTF members are invited to an informal session to work with the site exercise or game developed by Clean Sites and to provide feedback on its potential usefulness as a tool for the CTF in its deliberations. This session will be held in the usual meeting room at the Ashford Office Complex. Melinda Holland will facilitate this session. Please call her at [864] 457-4202 with any questions.

Action Items

- ◆ Provide additional information on the installation of the pilings in the main process building
- ◆ Provide additional information on the use of robotic remote handling technologies for cleanup of areas like the SDA, NDA and the tanks
- ◆ Provide a copy of Zintars Zadins report on subsurface geology under the main process building
- ◆ Provide a written summary of the last technical workgroup meeting
- ◆ Set up a technical work group meeting for the week of January 12th
- ◆ Provide information on the constituents of the leak from the process building which created the North Plateau Groundwater Plume
- ◆ Warren Schmidt to draft a letter to Rep. Houghton for the CTF to review prior to its January 20th meeting