



**Environmental Management
Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 19, 2013, 5:30 p.m.
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Committee Members Present

Jimmy Bell
Alfreda Cook, Vice-chair (via phone)
Susan Gawarecki
Bob Hatcher, Chair
Dave Hemelright
Bruce Hicks
David Martin
Norman Mulvenon
Bob Olson

Others Present

Dave Adler, Department of Energy (DOE)
Spencer Gross, ORSSAB support staff
Lorene Sigal

Absent

Jennifer Kasten
Dick Ketelle
Steve Kenworthy
Charles Jensen
Donald Mei
Gloria Mei
Lance Mezga
Tim Myrick
Curt Walker
Kevin Westervelt

Discussion of Recommendation on nickel for local and EM SSAB Chairs' Consideration – David Martin, issue manager

Mr. Martin said at the April Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) Chairs' webinar it was mentioned that a recommendation to DOE on nickel might be of interest to the Oak Ridge, Paducah, and Portsmouth SSABs. All three have inventories of nickel remaining from gaseous diffusion activities.

Mr. Martin drafted a possible recommendation (Attachment 1) but said the Oak Ridge SSAB may not be interested in a nickel recommendation or it may prefer to let the Paducah/Portsmouth SSABs take the lead since they have larger quantities of nickel in storage.

He said his one-page draft was simply a starting point of discussion. He said DOE has a large inventory of nickel and wants to do something with it, but it won't sell any nickel on the open market that has any amount of radioactivity above background levels. In 2011 there was a proposal to sell the nickel to industry that could use slightly contaminated nickel, but that proposal was pulled. DOE has issued an expression of interest seeking industry input on how to best dispose of the nickel.

Mr. Martin's recommendation says DOE should look for ways to reduce the cost of storing nickel by possibly consolidating stockpiles, declassifying, internment, or finding new uses for it (Attachment 1).

Ms. Gawarecki said when she was executive director of the former Local Oversight Committee that organization looked at every aspect of the disposition of nickel ever since a moratorium on the sale of nickel was issued in the early 2000s. A workshop was held and a conference call was held with decision makers who encouraged the moratorium. She said it was a political decision because many people fear any kind of radiation no matter how small. Ms. Gawarecki said the small amount of residual uranium radiation in the nickel poses no health threat. Some of the nickel was melted down into ingots because the nickel in its present form is classified. She said the ingots have minor levels of radioactivity that should be of no concern.

Ms. Gawarecki said she didn't think continued storage of the nickel was the correct approach. She proposed a reasonable volumetrically release standard be adopted based on good science and slowly release the nickel on the market. She said the nickel was a huge resource to DOE.

Mr. Olson disagreed. He said he didn't think DOE's policy would change any time soon. He thought it would be best to come up with ways DOE could save money over the next few years by finding economical ways to store the nickel.

Mr. Bell asked Ms. Gawarecki when the Local Oversight Committee worked the issue. She said it was over a number of years beginning in 2001. Mr. Bell said sometimes time makes a difference. Policy makers change and it might be a good time to try again if a practical use for the nickel could be found. He thought the best use for it would be to use in steel in shielding for nuclear reactors. It would still have to be melted down into slag, which would have manageable amounts of low-level radioactivity, he said.

Mr. Hicks said he had been studying the issue and had looked at some papers that had been written on the Paducah/Portsmouth nickel. He concluded that a concern of selling nickel on the open market would have a negative impact on the nickel commodities market was wrong. He said the U.S. imports most of its nickel and release of the DOE nickel would lower import costs. He said the last memo he saw on the subject put the issue with the National Nuclear Security Agency, which indicated it wasn't part of its purview. Mr. Hicks said he hasn't seen anything on it since.

Mr. Adler said DOE EM has some responsibilities to NNSA for cleanup and the nickel issue is an EM endeavor. He didn't think EM leadership would be open to permanent disposal because it feels there is potential for use. He said the issue is what re-use options are viable, both politically and economically.

Mr. Hicks said Oak Ridge has a small amount of the overall inventory and Paducah/Portsmouth has been working the issue for some time. He didn't think Oak Ridge should begin anything new but instead get on the Paducah/Portsmouth 'bandwagon.' (Paducah/Portsmouth has recommended to DOE that it look into ways to recycle nickel).

Ms. Gawarecki said any recommendation should ask DOE to study representative samples of nickel at all sites to determine risk assessments.

Ms. Cook said since Oak Ridge has the least amount of nickel, she didn't think Oak Ridge should take the lead, but should work with Paducah/Portsmouth in a joint effort. Mr. Martin said if the committee could agree on an initial draft recommendation it would be discussed with Paducah/Portsmouth and also share it with the other boards at the next EM SSAB Chairs' meeting. Ms. Cook said it's fine that Oak Ridge is discussing this, but felt Paducah/Portsmouth should take the lead.

Mr. Olson said it's a good idea to push DOE to do something and that the three sites should work together. In the interim, he repeated his support of Mr. Martin's draft because it saves money for

DOE. He suggested perhaps more emphasis on declassifying, which reduces security costs.

Ms. Gawarecki suggested the recommendation would be an interim step in the process to eventually release the nickel for sale.

Mr. Bell asked if the request for expressions of interest is still in effect. Mr. Adler said it was and some are coming in. He said a few look at the stockpile as a whole and others consider parts of it. Mr. Bell asked if the committee could attach itself to one of those. Mr. Adler said it would make more sense to keep the committee's input general.

Ms. Gawarecki said perhaps there could be short-term and long-term recommendation. Mr. Martin's draft would be a short-term recommendation that would include a statement to support DOE to release the nickel, which would be a longer-term recommendation.

Mr. Hatcher asked committee members to vote on the concept of Mr. Martin's draft. Eight voted 'yea' and Ms. Cook abstained. Mr. Martin said he would take comments made at this meeting and incorporate them into a revised recommendation. He asked committee members to send him other comments.

He will present a revised draft at the July 17 meeting.

Discuss potential of merging Stewardship Committee with EM

Mr. Adler discussed the possibility of merging the Stewardship Committee with the EM Committee. He said he had the same discussion with the Stewardship members the night before on June 18.

He said there is no intent on the part of DOE to diminish the focus of stewardship or to have ORSSAB's interest in stewardship lessen. He said there is a concern that the current committee structure may not be the best to have a viable, enduring stewardship focus.

Early on there was a lot of interest and participation in stewardship, but as policies were set and implementation began interest has waned.

Mr. Adler said there are areas of overlapping interest by the two committees. He said one benefit of consolidation is that EM usually has more committee participation and the issues of stewardship would reach a larger number of board members.

DOE supports consolidation because there is some overlap, but Mr. Adler said if discussions indicate two committees are needed it would support that as well.

Concerns that came out of the Stewardship Committee meeting was how best to maintain a focus on stewardship and if it would be too much of a work load added to the EM work plan. Corkie Staley, chair of Stewardship, wanted to make sure that resources, particularly travel funds, would still be available to Stewardship Committee members under a combined committee.

Ms. Gawarecki was not in favor of combining the committees. She said EM could meet twice a month and still not cover all of the issues. She, too, was concerned about added burden on EM. She recognized a problem of reduced participation on Stewardship, but wondered if the EM Committee meeting time would be extended to include stewardship issues. She suggested Stewardship meet every other month, but remain a separate committee.

Mr. Mulvenon said one idea of keeping a focus on stewardship is to have the EM chair lead EM activities and the vice chair lead stewardship.

Mr. Hemelright said since there is not much activity on Stewardship by board members combining the two would expose stewardship to a larger number of board members.

Mr. Hicks wondered if Stewardship and EM could be conducted back-to-back. Ms. Gawarecki said that would make for very long meetings and discourage participation. Mr. Olson said he often has to do additional homework outside of EM Committee meetings to prepare for topics of discussion. He wondered if adding stewardship to the issues to learn about would discourage participation, but overall he thought it was a good idea.

Mr. Martin said he saw little problem combining the two and if additional work came up ad hoc committees could be formed.

Mr. Hatcher was neutral on the idea but said if the two were merged there needed to be discussion on how it would be implemented.

Mr. Hemelright moved to poll the committee members present about the merger. Ms. Cook seconded. Five vote 'yea' (Mr. Bell, Ms. Cook, Mr. Hemelright, Mr. Mulvenon, and Mr. Olson), one voted 'no' (Ms. Gawarecki), and one abstained (Mr. Hatcher).

Mr. Adler said he will take what he has heard at the committee meetings to the Executive Committee meeting on July 24. The hope is to have a decision made prior to the August annual meeting so the board's FY 2014 work plan can be built around the committee structure.

FY 2013 Accomplishments

The committee reviewed the list of accomplishments compiled by staff (Attachment 2).

The committee suggested some revisions and the inclusion of the list of presentations to the committee during FY 2014 (Attachment 3).

The accomplishments will be used at the August annual board meeting.

Action Items

1. Mr. Martin will revise his draft recommendation on nickel based on comments at this meeting and bring it to the July meeting.
2. Mr. Adler will take what he has heard at this meeting and the Stewardship Committee meeting on combining the two to the July Executive Committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Attachments (3) are available through the ORSSAB office.

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