To: Citizen Task Force

From: Melinda Holland, Clean Sites

Subject: Summary of July 2, 1997, Meeting

Date: July 8, 1997

Next Meeting:

The next Task Force meeting will be on:

Date:	Tuesday July 15, 1997
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.

Task Force Attendees:

Attending were: Pete Scherer, Joe Patti, Ray Vaughan, Nevella McNeil, John Pfeffer, Elaine Belt, Paul Piciulo, Tom Rowland, Rich Tobe, Bill King, Eric Wohlers, Warren Schmidt, and Pete Cooney. Not attending were: Lana Rosler, Dick Timm, Blake Reeves, and Larry Smith.

Agency Attendees: Jack Krajewski, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

Attendees via Videoconference:

Jack Parrott and Tim Johnson, NRC; Randy Tormey, DOE-OH; Karen Guevara, Patty Bubar, and Mark Rawlings, DOE-HQ; Jim Hammelman and Joe Price, SAIC.

July 2nd Meeting Summary:

Tom Attridge began the meeting by addressing administrative issues. Melinda Holland reviewed the agenda with the Task Force and requested comments on the meeting summary.

North Plateau Groundwater Contamination Issues

At its June 17th caucus meeting, the Task Force drafted a memorandum expressing concerns with the efforts to date to respond to the North Plateau groundwater contamination at the site. In response to the CTF memorandum, NYSERDA and DOE addressed responsibilities for the North Plateau, and WVNS gave a presentation on the North Plateau groundwater plume history, investigation, analysis, and containment efforts.[1] They stressed two main points. First, the actions currently being taken to contain the contaminated groundwater are protective of health and safety. Second, based on the analysis of the problem and potential long- term solutions, it would be best to make the decision on final remediation of the plume when a decision is made on remediation of the site as a whole because some remedies for the North Plateau plume, such as in-situ fixation or pump and treat would not be compatible with some of the site cleanup alternatives.

Responses to CTF member questions and issues raised at this meeting are discussed below.

DOE and NYSERDA stated that they agree that DOE is conducting the day-to-day management of the Project premises and for protection of public health and safety and they agree that they have done this on activities leading up to vitrification and with actions taken to limit releases from the North Plateau. However, based on differing interpretations of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act (the Act) and the Cooperative Agreement, the agencies do not agree as to which agency is ultimately responsible for the remediation of the North Plateau contamination. DOE and NYSERDA explained that mechanisms exist for resolving the disagreement between them but they cannot at this time say when the issues will be resolved. NYSERDA and DOE reiterated their intention to address responsibility issues after a cleanup approach has been selected for the whole site. A CTF member raised a concern that a regulatory vacuum exists due to DOE's interim jurisdiction under the Act which prevents NRC from taking an active role in regulating the area. DOE disagreed with this interpretation.

CTF members expressed concern that the longer final remediation of the North Plateau contamination is postponed, the further it migrates, contaminating a larger area. Concern was also expressed over the fact that concentrations of contaminants have not decreased or have risen in some of the monitoring wells in the North Plateau area, indicating that the pump and treat system is not containing the plume as well as it should be. Site representatives stated that monitoring results show that there have been some fluctuations but that over time the concentrations found in the wells that monitor performance of the pump and treat system appear to be leveling off or decreasing.

Due to the location of the plume and depth in the soil, initial investigations into the source of the plume focused on determining if the leak was originating from the fuel storage pool. Several tests were performed, and it was determined that the leak was not originating from the pool.

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[1] For copies of documents distributed at this or prior meetings, please call Sonja Allen, WVNS, at (716) 942-2152.

After investigating further, it was ultimately determined that the leak which created the plume occurred in an acid recovery line near the off gas cell of the main process building during the tail end of reprocessing operations in the late 1960s to early 1970s. The leak flowed down an expansion joint into the soil then moved under the fuel storage pool and continued horizontally in a northeast direction. The static elevation of groundwater below the process building is about 15 feet and it is possible that the majority of the contamination still resides in that vadose zone (the area of soil above the groundwater). The contamination under the building will need to be addressed in the final site remedy. In the interim, efforts are being made to divert surface water/storm water away from that area to try to reduce the amount of water moving through contaminated soils.

The contamination in groundwater is not expected to reach the deeper Kent Recessional sequence because an impermeable clay layer (Lavery till) underlies the sand and gravel unit and acts to confine the contamination. Instead, the contaminated groundwater tends to flow horizontally until it exits as surface water. Based on data from the monitoring wells, the deeper Kent Recessional soil unit is not contaminated. The monitoring wells placed in the Kent Recessional were completed in a manner which prevents contamination from traveling down along the well casing from shallower layers to the deeper, uncontaminated zones. A CTF member requested further information on well construction, and another requested clarification and diagrams of the geology of the North Plateau showing the sand and gravel unit and how it interacts with till sand deposits. The highest concentration of contaminants in the groundwater is moving very slowly, based on current calculations, at a rate of about five to ten feet a year. Contaminants at the leading edge of the plume are moving more rapidly due to groundwater flow and diffusion. A CTF member questioned the basis of the 100 curie estimate for the total contamination present in the North Plateau and requested that further clarification be provided on the amount and isotopes.

Additional geoprobe sampling of the eastern lobe of the North Plateau groundwater plume will begin next week. CTF members suggested that if contamination levels are not falling as expected, the site should consider doing a broader geoprobe investigation of the North Plateau including the main lobe of the plume.

In response to an inquiry about the existence of other areas of groundwater contamination on site, DOE indicated that, in the 1980s, the NRC Licensed Disposal Area (NDA) had some migration of contamination and an interceptor trench was installed to control the problem. In addition, low level (parts per billion range) of organic contamination in a couple of wells on the North Plateau were discussed.

In conclusion, some CTF members stated that this presentation was very helpful and that they felt the health and safety concerns had been adequately addressed for the present but some still questioned whether the best management approach is being followed. CTF members stated that they would like to discuss the North Plateau further among themselves.

CTF Schedule Discussion

Next, NYSERDA proposed changing the CTF meeting schedule from two meetings per month to one meeting per month. While NYSERDA, DOE, and their contractors are developing presentation materials and responding to requests for additional information, they are also performing engineering reviews and technical analyses to support the development of a Supplemental EIS. To complete this work and provide the CTF with the most recent information, NYSERDA stated that the agencies need more time to prepare.

Most of the CTF members expressed reluctance to meet only once a month for many reasons. An alternative approach was suggested which is to have a presentation on a monthly basis and have the following meeting be a caucus or working session where the CTF discusses, questions, and analyzes the information presented in the prior meeting and other topics of interest. NYSERDA agreed to take the Task Force's suggestions under advisement and return with a proposed schedule. CTF members also requested that dates be picked for presentations on the remaining Waste Management Areas and that those dates remain fixed.

Observer Comments

One observer commented that the CTF has a grave responsibility to the public and that it is not proper that the CTF hold private meetings [caucuses] where members agree to not share what was discussed. The CTF was chosen to represent the public and the meetings should be public. A CTF member suggested that the Task Force could experiment with more public discussion sessions.

Another observer reminded the agencies that the comments from the CTF indicate how much the Task Force values clean water and asked the agencies to bear this in mind as they make choices.

Next Steps

- Provide additional clarification on the estimated number of curies and isotopes present in the North Plateau soils and groundwater
- Provide diagrams of the geology of the North Plateau showing the sand and gravel unit
- Provide a copy of the report analyzing the in-situ fixation technology and its potential application to the North Plateau
- Provide a copy of the NRC commission paper for West Valley as soon as it is available
- At the July 15th CTF meeting, have DOE representatives available to answer CTF questions on the Programmatic EIS and the accelerated Cleanup Plan