

To: West Valley Citizen Task Force  
From: Melinda Holland, Holland & Associates  
Subject: Summary of January 9, 2001, Citizen Task Force Meeting  
Date: February 2, 2001

**Next Meeting:**

The next Citizen Task Force (CTF) meeting is scheduled as follows:

Date: **March 6, 7, 13 or 14, 2001 (Date TBD)**  
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
Location: Ashford Office Complex  
9030 Route 219, West Valley, NY

A meeting announcement and draft agenda for the next meeting will be circulated before that meeting. 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: Tim Siepel, John Pfeffer, Ray Vaughan, Pete Scherer, Alice Williams, Lee Lambert, Eric Wohlers, Paul Piciulo, and Joe Patti. Not attending were: Bill King, Larry Rubin, Nevella McNeil, Lana Redeye, Bridget Wilson, Warren Schmidt, Larry Smith, Murray Regan, and Pete Cooney.

**Agency Attendees**

Jack Krajewski, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

Attending via video-conference: Amy Snyder and Bob Nelson, U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

**January 9 Meeting Summary:**

*New Management Changes at NYSERDA and DOE*

Alice Williams announced the appointment of Spencer Abraham as the new Secretary of Energy. Mr. Abraham is a one-time senator from Michigan, who lost his bid for re-election in 2000. Ms. Williams stated that Mr. Abraham's first agenda item will be dealing with the energy issues that have gained national attention in the recent past. She also reported that there are no new political appointments anticipated at the Ohio Field Office and that Dr. Carolyn Huntoon, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management at DOE Headquarters, is expected to remain in her current position, at least in the near future.

Paul Piciulo followed with the recent changes in the NYSERDA organization, announcing that President Bill Valentino retired as of December 20, 2000. Mr. Valentino was replaced by Bill Flynn, who previously held the position of Vice President of Intergovernmental Relations and Treasurer. Mr. Flynn is originally from Western New York and is very familiar with the WVDP.

### *Update on the NYSERDA/DOE Negotiations*

Alice Williams reported that the draft agreement was carefully reviewed by many layers within the DOE as well as the Office of Management and Budget. On December 26, 2000, DOE transmitted the draft agreement to NYSERDA for their consideration. There is a meeting scheduled for January 11, 2001, between DOE and NYSERDA to continue their discussion.

Paul Piciulo reassured Task Force members that, although there are still some long-term responsibility issues to work out, the process is moving forward. After being asked by one of the CTF members, "How close are you really?", Dr. Piciulo replied that the agencies are going to take the time necessary to work the outstanding issues to completion.

One of the Task Force members asked whether or not the agencies could share some of the topics of the agreement, specifically whether there would be a clear-cut preferred alternative that would evolve from these negotiations. The CTF member also asked if the responsibility of the NRC license (currently in abeyance) is included within the scope of current negotiations. Dr. Piciulo and Ms. Williams both responded that, due to the sensitive nature of negotiations and confidentiality issues, they were unable to discuss that kind of detail until negotiations have concluded.

When asked when the last negotiation session was held between DOE and NYSERDA, Ms. Williams reported that the last meeting was held in late August, followed by a series of telephone conference calls between the two agencies, with subsequent meetings among DOE agencies.

### *WVDP Update*

John Chamberlain, West Valley Nuclear Services, provided an update on current activities at the WVDP. Topics included:

*Remote-Handled Waste Facility*—Construction of the facility is well underway, with a 600 cubic yard concrete placement scheduled for January 11, 2001. This facility will be used to safely prepare WVDP radioactive waste for shipping and disposal. A CTF member asked for clarification that this facility would then become contaminated itself and would become another waste management area that will need to be decontaminated. Mr. Chamberlain affirmed that, stating that the facility is being built because it's necessary to have a large, shielded building to handle some of the large, radioactively-contaminated materials. He went on to say that decontamination of the RHWF is being considered in the design of the building, using many of the same concepts that were used in the construction of the Vitrification Facility (e.g., stainless steel lining that can be more readily decontaminated).

*High-Level Waste Tank Cleanout*—Work continues toward evaluating remaining radioactive waste levels and cleaning out the residual high-level waste (HLW) in the underground tanks, using new sampling tools and techniques. A decision has not yet been reached on when to end the cleanup of the tanks and shut down the vitrification facility, though this question is now being studied. The site is using the vitrification facility to provide data to the Savannah River Site and Hanford on how concentrations of noble metals can cause the melter to short out during the longer time frames anticipated at those sites. In response to a CTF member question, noble metals include palladium, rubidium, and rhodium. In response to another question, Mr. Chamberlain responded that running the vitrification facility for another year at West Valley would not be a problem due to the low volumes of waste being processed.

*Decontamination Projects*—Current decontamination activities are focused on cleaning out cells in the Main Plant, including replacing shield windows, placing cameras inside contaminated cells for visual access to facilitate removal and/or decontamination of equipment.

*Low-Level Waste (LLW) Shipping*—The waste currently being shipped by rail (slightly contaminated soil

and debris) is classified as Class A LLW. The contamination levels are so low, Department of Transportation regulations do not require the transport cars to have radioactive materials placards.

Recent activities have highlighted the change in shipment mode from truck shipment, to a combination of truck and rail shipments, with the most recent shipments being made by rail directly from the WVDP. The first rail shipment was made on September 22, 2000, and the latest shipment (four rail cars) was made in late November 2000. The next LLW rail shipment is expected sometime in May 2001 (six boxes). In August, the WVDP plans to make use of a different kind of shipping container called a gondola. This shipment would include six gondola cars, capable of holding about 25,000 cubic feet of radioactive dirt and debris.

In response to questions regarding LLW disposal at Envirocare in Utah, Mr. Chamberlain replied that the waste shipped to Envirocare is buried in an NRC-licensed disposal facility. In response to a question on why Utah is better than West Valley for disposal, Mr. Chamberlain responded that the Utah site is a more geologically stable disposal site than West Valley, has little rainfall, and has very low population in the area. Further discussion regarding the radioactive constituents of LLW are mostly from Cesium-137, which has a half life of around 30 years. One of the CTF members cautioned that, although he agrees this waste is only slightly contaminated, serious consideration needs to be given to the other radioactive constituents besides Cesium-137, especially alpha-emitting radionuclides.

*Spent Nuclear Fuel Shipping*—Preparations are well underway for the shipment of the remaining 125 spent nuclear fuel assemblies currently in storage in a pool at the WVDP. Current plans indicate one full-load shipment of all 125 assemblies in the spring or summer of 2001 to Idaho. The WVDP is working with: 1) NRC for re-certification of the two WVDP shipping casks, and 2) States and tribes along the transportation corridor to ensure adequate emergency preparedness and route considerations.

*Other Activities*—The WVDP had a very successful food drive this fall, providing about 77,000 pounds of food to nine area food pantries. The site also earned charter status in the US Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Achievement Track initiative, the environmental equivalent of the DOE Voluntary Protection Program Star Status. This past fall 46 WVNS employees retired, taking advantage of a WVNS-sponsored early retirement incentive plan. Additionally, several WVNS employees have left the WVDP to work on the Hanford Vitrification contract that was recently awarded to Washington Group International (in partnership with Bechtel National). Washington Group International is the parent company of WVNS. Currently, WVNS has 723 employees.

Elizabeth Lowes, DOE, reported on the formation of the Vitrification Completion Team, which met for the first time on January 8 and 9, 2001. This team, comprised of DOE, NYSERDA, WVNS and NRC staff, is tasked with providing recommendations to senior site management regarding the optimum time to permanently shut down melter operations. Part of this team's charter is to consider the technology to remove as much waste from the HLW tanks as possible, while sequencing events to be in a position to pro-actively turn off the melter before it becomes nonfunctional. In response to a question, Ms. Lowes stated that the team's goal is to have a process and schedule which will result in completing HLW vitrification by the end of 2002. A CTF member requested the results of assessments of what's left in Tank 8D-1 and the "bathtub" ring and bottom of Tank 8D-2.

When asked about the status of Yucca Mountain, Ms. Williams replied that the EIS is still outstanding.

#### *Update on Environmental Impact Statement*

Dan Sullivan, DOE-WV EIS Project Manager, provided a status of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) de-scoping initiative. DOE continues to work on de-scoping the current EIS for completion of the WVDP and closure and/or long-term management of the Western New York Nuclear Service Center into two EISs. The first EIS will address operational decontamination of facilities and low-level waste

shipment, and the second EIS will address site decommissioning. Discussions with the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes are continuing regarding Coalition concerns that de-scoping impacts portions of the 1987 Stipulation of Compromise Settlement. Development and approval of Federal Register Notices for the two EISs is in process.

In response to CTF member questions, DOE officials responded that the first Draft EIS, on decontamination and waste management, contains things which need to be done now and has no relationship to the negotiations between DOE and NYSERDA. The EIS on decommissioning does relate to some of the topics under negotiation and, if the negotiations are successful, will make development of the second EIS easier. In response to a question on whether the delay in completing the decommissioning EIS violates any laws, site officials responded that it does not.

### *General Discussion*

At the beginning of the meeting, CTF members asked the NRC participants about the status of the Draft Policy Statement. NRC responded that the NRC Staff recommendation has been forwarded to the Commission and is currently under Commission review. The document in its current form is not yet available to the public and there is no definitive schedule for completion at this time.

One of the CTF members asked about the status of the Government Accounting Office (GAO) Report. Ms. Williams reported that DOE is waiting for the report. The CTF member requested a copy of the report when it is issued.

Another CTF member asked about the status of the draft of the Long-Term Stewardship Study that was distributed to members for their review. Mr. Sullivan agreed to check the status of the Study and to relay that information to the CTF.

Pete Scherer and Lee Lambert shared their observations from participating in the High-Level Waste Tank Conference held at West Valley in October 2000 and answered CTF member questions.

### **Next Steps**

These discussions focused primarily on the possibilities for continued future participation of the CTF. DOE and NYSERDA both indicated a desire to continue to receive input from members of the community, and expressed a willingness to hear feedback from CTF members on how they would like to see that evolve. Those present agreed that the CTF has provided valuable feedback, and most members indicated they would like to continue in some form. At Ms. Williams offering, Mr. Chamberlain agreed to research DOE Citizen Advisory Boards (CABs) and provide that information to the CTF in a future meeting. Some members of the CTF expressed an interest in receiving a summary of Mr. Chamberlain's findings and others were interested in reviewing any guidance on CABs.

CTF members also requested an explanation of what additional benefits would result if the CTF became a DOE CAB and questioned whether it was worth the additional bureaucracy. Another member suggested that the CTF consider developing a new charter/mission to deal with new issues facing the Task Force and the site. A member suggested that due to lack of pressing issues, the CTF is currently in "hibernation" and suggested not changing until new issues are ripe for CTF involvement. Another member requested that the site provide the Task Force with information on what future site activities would benefit from CTF review and comment.

The Task Force decided it would like to meet again in March. Melinda Holland agreed to contact all CTF members to pick a date that all or most could attend.

### **Observer Comments**

Mr. Jack Krajewski, NYSDEC, offered encouragement to the CTF in their public participation role, praising the CTF for their continued, effective efforts.

### **Action Items**

- ▶ Provide information on developing DOE Citizen Advisory Boards, and list of potential public input opportunities for the West Valley site. Prepare presentation on DOE CABs for next CTF meeting. (Action assigned to John Chamberlain.)
- ▶ Quantify the radioactivity currently remaining in three areas in the HLW tanks: 1) "Bath tub ring" in 8D-2; 2) Bottom of 8D-2; and 3) 8D-1. (Action assigned to John Chamberlain.)
- ▶ Provide copies of the GAO Report, when issued. (Action assigned to Sonja Allen.)
- ▶ Provide status on the draft Long-Term Stewardship Study. (Action assigned to Dan Sullivan.)
- ▶ Contact CTF members to pick a date that all or most could attend. (Action assigned to Melinda Holland.)