

To: Citizen Task Force  
From: Melinda Holland, Clean Sites  
Subject: Summary of January 20, 1998, Meeting - **Revision 2**  
Date: January 27, 1998

**Next Meeting:**

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

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 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, Nevella McNeil, John Pfeffer, Tom Rowland, Paul Piciulo, Tim Siepel, Blake Reeves, Murray Regan, and Lou Brehm (for Rich Tobe), Bridgit Wilson (for Elaine Belt), Bob Potter (for Bill King). Not attending were: Lana Rosler, Bill King, Elaine Belt, Rich Tobe, Pete Cooney, and Eric Wohlers.

**Regulatory Agency Attendees:**

Jack Krajewski and Tim Rice, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

Attending via conference call:

Jack Parrott, Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)  
Tim Johnson, NRC  
Jim Hammelman and Patti Swain, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)

**January 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting Summary:**

Tom Attridge and Melinda Holland opened the meeting by reviewing administrative issues and the agenda. Corrections to the summary of the last meeting were provided by a CTF member. A corrected summary of the January 7<sup>th</sup> meeting is attached.

Ray Vaughan briefed the CTF on the Technical workgroup that met on January 15, 1998, to discuss the pilings under the main process building, the adequacy of existing monitoring wells to detect releases from under the building, methods of treating the North Plateau groundwater plume, and bedrock valley aquifer issues. Attendees included Murray Regan, Tim Siepel, and Ray Vaughan, CTF; Carol Mongerson, observer; Tom Attridge and Paul Bembia, NYSERDA; Craig Repp, Bob Steiner, and Sonja Allen, WVNS; Bob Blickwedehl and Zintar Zadins, Dames & Moore; and via conference call, Melinda Holland, Clean Sites. A written summary of the technical workgroup meeting will be provided.

On January 19<sup>th</sup> Joe Patti, Pete Scherer, and Larry Smith came as CTF volunteers to test the site exercise or “game” developed by Clean Sites. They briefly summarized their experiences with the exercise as a very useful vehicle to discuss the alternatives for cleaning up Waste Management Areas (WMAs) 1, 3, 7 and 8. They also felt that the exercise helped them to begin discussions and to understand the various approaches for closing those waste management areas. A CTF member questioned the accuracy of the numbers and assumptions used in the exercise. A site representative indicated that they were based on DEIS information for all the WMAs except WMA 3, which incorporated updated information. Those who had played the game stated that they assumed that the data was accurate and felt the game provided a general way to look at the process and to narrow the focal point for discussions. They strongly recommended that all CTF members do the exercise as a way to further the Task Force’s process of development of recommendations. The CTF agreed to work with the exercise at its February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. A member reminded the group that they need to start planning how they want to develop recommendations and that further exploration of a modified Alternative III - one that could be reversed - would be useful. Another member stated that doing the site exercise is the best way to accomplish both.

At the January 7<sup>th</sup>, meeting the CTF 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 plant, and tanks. As a result, the January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting was devoted to feedback and dialogue between site representatives and CTF members.

The NYSERDA representative began by stating that he understands the CTF concern about long-term institutional controls and the need for a viable government presence to assure that those controls work correctly. The CTF’s preference for exhumation of the SDA and NDA is understood, but the government must justify its cleanup recommendations based on buying the most protection for the dollar spent and must show that it is spending those dollars wisely. The first job is to protect public safety and the environment, but funds are limited. Thus, for example, if two alternatives offer the same level of protectiveness, the government will chose the lower cost of the two. He also stated that NYSERDA believes that a government presence will be here over time to maintain the necessary institutional controls. NYSERDA will continue to request and receive the funds necessary to close and maintain the site.

The DOE representative agreed with the NYSERDA representative’s statements. He stated that DOE will start with the basic premise that there will be a government here to manage the site

over time. The public needs to decide what it wants from the government for this site. The public ultimately determines how the government spends its money through the electoral process. If the community wants a continuing federal presence at this site, legislation will have to be adopted to create that outcome.

A CTF member responded that he feels it is unrealistic to assume that there will be a long term government ~~responsiveness to presence~~ at this site. ~~Changes in social priorities~~ social stresses may result in a change in ~~commitments~~ priority for spending and attention over time. He feels we should deal with the problem in a manner that does not ~~assume~~ require society ~~will~~ to revisit the problem over time. Another CTF member responded that it is unrealistic to expect government to spend \$3 billion or more on the disposal areas when the same or better levels of protection can be obtained for approximately \$500 million. Yet another responded that he began this process feeling that plutonium was the biggest problem and since it would be around for many thousands of years, he doubted government's ability to last that long. Now, however, he feels confident that the government can be expected to be around for another 200 to 300 years which is the time needed for decay of Cesium-137 and Strontium-90 which he currently understands to be the primary problem substances. Another member agreed that a 300 year period is doable and felt that the key is maintaining institutional controls and erosion controls. Money should be set aside in a fund which cannot be touched to pay for institutional controls over the 300 year period. He suggested that the CTF should decide whether they want the state and federal governments to both remain at the site. Another member stated that he did not feel that the government would forget West Valley given the other huge nuclear waste sites which must also be maintained over time and the public's concern over nuclear wastes.

A CTF member inquired about the possibility of West Valley continuing as a demonstration project for innovative technologies and asked what technologies are currently being demonstrated. The CTF member felt that the success at West Valley might be built upon for additional demonstration. A DOE representative responded that the vitrification of high level liquid waste is the primary technology being demonstrated at this time. However, it is also being deployed on a much larger scale at Savannah River and West Valley would have to compete with the other National Laboratories for money. If this approach is desired by the community, it would have to be initiated by the legislative process, not by DOE. To succeed at this, West Valley would need something unique to offer. A proposal could be put together by the CTF and offered to the legislative delegation. Ms. Holland suggested to the group that they think about having a separate work group meeting to discuss this further in the future.

A CTF member stated that the national nuclear policy has not been based on health and safety or protection of the environment and that the real issue is what will be done when institutional controls are lost. A NYSERDA representative responded that he felt we are making good strides in cleaning up the nuclear problems and that the future work can be done safely. West Valley's demonstration of vitrification is an example.

## **Observer Comments:**

An observer mentioned her concern about the reliance on computer technology. Computer science is changing so rapidly it could result in a loss of continuity of information for long term projects like maintaining institutional controls at West Valley. For example, what happens if all the site information is in a program which becomes obsolete and cannot be read by future computers.

Another observer cautioned that the puzzle pieces used in the exercise only reflect the costs of rail shipment. He also raised concerns over the proposal to close the rail line to the site. A DOE representative responded that DOE is working on keeping that line open as long as it may be needed to ship waste from the site. DOE would also inspect (and repair as necessary) the entire line for safety before any wastes are shipped. DOE is also working with the Seneca Nation on transportation issues and examining alternative rail routes as a backup. The observer also asked how the New York State Department of Health was being kept informed of the CTF's activities. A NYSERDA representative responded that Steve Gavitt with NYS DOH is on the CTF mailing list.

## **Next Steps**

The CTF agreed to work with the site exercise or game at the February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Any CTF members who cannot attend that meeting but would like to work with the exercise should contact Tom Attridge at [716] 942-2453.

Warren Schmidt drafted a letter from the CTF to Congressman Houghton encouraging him to participate in a teleconference with CTF members. A discussion ensued on whether the Congressman should be asked to address the group in person rather than through a videoconference. The CTF agreed that a videoconference was a good starting point. CTF members agreed that the letter should be sent with all CTF members names listed. Warren Schmidt will transmit the letter to Tom Attridge who will see that it is mailed and copies sent to all members. CTF members also requested an opportunity to meet with Senator Moynihan.

## **Action Items**

- ◆ Mail the CTF letter to Congressman Houghton as soon as Warren Schmidt's edits are received
- ◆ Provide information on the assumptions underlying the DEIS numbers used in the site "game"