To: West Valley Citizen Task Force
From: Melinda Holland
Subject: Summary of June 18, 2003 Meeting
Date: July 1, 2003

Next Meeting

The next full Citizen Task Force (CTF) meeting will be held as follows:

C Attendeesng

Date: Wednesday, July 16, 2003
Time: 7:00 - 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,

Meeting Summary

Administrative Announcements

The CTF met at 6:30 p.m. on June 18, at the West Valley site for an extensive site tour and discussion. Melinda Holland briefly reviewed the agenda and then the CTF proceeded on tour.

NRC - Licensed Disposal Area and State-Licensed Disposal Area

The site tour began at the NRC - Licensed Disposal Area (NDA) and the State-Licensed Disposal Area (SDA). NYSERDA provided an overview of the history of both facilities. In response to a question, the NYSERDA representative explained that the waste characterization for the NDA was based on historical site records, the NDA Characterization Report is the result of the review of those records. She also explained that waste analysis could not be performed without digging up the waste, which is not feasible. A DOE representative explained that the records kept by NFS were very good.

Another CTF member asked about capping and water infiltration problems in the NDA and SDA. The NYSERDA representative explained that there is no water level monitoring conducted in the NDA and that it would be good to cap the NDA for long-term maintenance. She explained that the South Plateau area where the NDA and SDA are located is a heavy, impermeable clay all the way to the surface, thus water that gets into the trenches tends to accumulate there and fill up like a bathtub. This is what happened in 1975 in two of the SDA trenches which caused them to overflow and led to cessation of operations of the disposal facility. A Task Force member stated that there are some sand lenses in the clay in two of the SDA trenches which contributed to the releases. A NYSERDA representative explained that each of the SDA trenches has a monitoring sump where trench water levels are routinely measured. In the late 1970s and early 1980s leachate was pumped from the trenches and treated at the Low-Level Waste Treatment Facility (LLWTF). The clay caps and grass covers were maintained, but did not solve the water infiltration problem. NYSERDA assumed management responsibility of the SDA in 1983. In the early 90's, a membrane cover was placed over the entire SDA to stop the vertical flow of precipitation from entering the trenches. A bentonite clay slurry wall was built along the west side of Trench 14 to stop lateral flow of groundwater into the trench. The expected life of the membrane cover is 15 - 20 years. The cover is 10 years old and holding up well. The cover surface will be tested for integrity this summer. In response to another question about solvents in the NDA, site representatives explained that some organic solvents such as tri-butyl phosphate and n-dodecane (used in the fuel reprocessing operations) were disposed of in the NDA. It was also pointed out that the monitoring of plants and wild animals is also conducted on a yearly basis.

A Task Force member asked why some facilitates at the site are DOE's responsibility, and others, like the SDA, are NYSERDA's. Site representatives explained that the West Valley Demonstration Project Act (WVDPA) did not transfer responsibly for the SDA to DOE, thus the state of New York retained that obligation as owner of the property. The SDA was initially a

state-regulated low-level radioactive waste disposal facility, and states have traditionally had responsibility for Low-Level Waste (LLW). Congress worked very deliberately to achieve what they believed to be an equitable split of responsibilities between New York State and DOE - but it was ultimately a Congressional decision. A NYSERDA representative mentioned that some waste from DOE and other federal facilities were disposed of at the SDA.

In response to a CTF question, a NYSERDA representative stated that there is less that 5% Greater-Than-Class-C waste (GTCC) by volume, but 45% GTCC waste by curies in the SDA. Another Task Force member stated that there is an uncertainty factor of about two regarding the number of curies in the SDA due to the nature of the records which were used as the basis these estimates. A NYSERDA representative explained that the SDA received waste from a wide range of sources, including hospital, government, utilities, military, universities, commercial, etc. However, the disposal records had limited information, so categories of waste were used to extrapolate the numbers. NYSERDA estimates that 40% of the waste came from federal government sources.

When asked about the long-term plan for the SDA, a NYSERDA representative stated that it does not make sense from a cost-benefit perspective to dig up and remove the contents of the SDA. License, monitor and maintain may be the best approach for the SDA. A CTF member asked how long it would take for the SDA wastes to decay to safe levels. A NYSERDA representative estimated that it would take 1,000s of years.

Drum Cell

Next, the CTF viewed the Drum Cell building. In response to a question about the drum conveyor system, a DOE representative stated that the conveyor system may need maintenance before it is used again, but as most of the conveyor mechanicals are not within the shielded portion of the building, so it should not be too difficult to repair. A DOE representative explained that the concrete drums in this building meet the Waste Acceptance Criteria for shipment to the Nevada Test Site (NTS) and will be shipped after completion of the Final Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision has been issued. No residual contamination is expected to remain once the building is empty, so it will be taken down to reduce the site 'footprint'. A Task Force member asked why the site appeared less well maintained than on a prior visit. A DOE representative responded that they are focusing their resources on clean-up activities and make decisions on site maintenance based on various factors, including how long a facility is going to be operational.

Main Plant and Vitrification Facility

The CTF toured the Main Plant building observing the interim HLW canister storage cell (it used to be know as the Chemical Process Cell) and the vitrification facility. When asked how DOE plans to clean up this building, a DOE representative stated that they will clean the contaminated cells to the point of meeting the License Termination Rule (LTR) criteria. A NYSERDA representative pointed out that the LTR requires the cells be cleaned as much as possible, or As

Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA). How to decommission the entire Main Plant building is a more difficult decision. DOE site representatives believe that NRC's decommissioning criteria would be satisfied by reducing the building to rubble, then filling it with grout, but current DOE management is rethinking whether capping this facility is the best approach. NYSERDA and the public do not favor capping. A final closure decision has not been made for the Main Plant. Task Force members asked how the building's integrity would be maintained over 100 or more years if it is not removed or rubblized. A DOE representative responded that the building was very well constructed and should last with proper maintenance. A NYSERDA representative explained that water management over time is a concern; e.g. keeping the sump pumps working, the roof and floors secure from water. A DOE representative indicated that ice can cause problems on the flat roofs and sometimes the drains cannot handle the water. Another issue is what to do with the tall stack if the building is to be left in place. NYSERDA reiterated that the Main Plant cannot meet the LTR criteria by just cleaning out the cells, adding that DOE would have to rely on grout or some other barrier over the long term.

In response to a CTF member question, a DOE representative explained that the residual contamination in the building came from years of reprocessing operations and includes Plutonium, Neptunium, Technicum, Strontium, and Cesium. Some isotopes of these elements have half lives of 1,000s of years or more, while others like Cesium has a 30 year half life. A CTF member noted that these materials may remain dangerous for longer than recorded history, questioning how we can expect our government to remain stable for 200 plus years.

High Level Waste Tanks

A Task Force member asked about the viability of the vacuum method for removing more of the tank residuals. A DOE representative stated that they have a vacuum system designed for Tank 8D-1, if needed. There are an estimated 350,000 curies left in both tanks combined. Most of the radioactive materials are Cesium and Strontium which have short half lives of around 30 years.

The tour concluded with a description and drive-by of the Cesium Prong, Remote Handled Waste Facility, Chemical Process Cell Waste Storage Area, Lag Storage Area, LLW Treatment Facility, Lagoons, North Plateau Groundwater Plume (including a brief review of site geology) and the Fuel Receiving and Storage building.

During the discussion of the North Plateau Groundwater Plume, a CTF member questioned whether water is flowing around, instead of through, the permeable treatment wall. A DOE representative stated that some groundwater flows around the wall, and that the wall has not performed as well as hoped. She noted that the pump and treat method has removed only four curies of source material out of an estimated total of 100 curies (mostly Strontium). In response to another question, she noted that the plume has been moving over a 35 year period and continues to move slowly.

Next Steps

Tom Attridge briefly described the written materials that were disseminated at the meeting (see the list at the end of the summary).

The next CTF meetings will be held on July 16 and August 20, 2003.

Draft comments on the Waste Management EIS were prepared by two CTF members. The Task Force agreed to review the draft and respond to Melinda Holland by COB Monday if they had any concerns or edits to suggest. If no one submits comments the document will be submitted to the agencies on behalf of the CTF.

Observer Comments

There were no observers at this meeting.

Action Items

Action	Assigned to	Due Date
Mail draft CTF comments on the Waste Management EIS to CTF members not present at the 6/18 meeting	T. Attridge/S. Allen	6/19/03
Transmit any CTF member comments/edits on draft CTF comments on the Waste Management EIS	M. Holland/T. Attridge	6/23/03
Submit CTF comments on the Waste Management EIS to DOE	M. Holland/T. Attridge	6/30/03

Documents Distributed

Document Subject	**Document Description**	**Generated by–Date (if applicable/known)**
06/18/03 CTF Meeting Agenda Meeting Agenda	Agenda describes the site tour itinerary	
CTF Site Tour Briefing Book	Book provides photographs and brief descriptions of the facilities	
CTF *Revised* Work Plan for Calendar Year 2003	Work Plan describes the topics scheduled for each monthly meeting in calendar year 2003	

Document Subject	Document Description	Generated by–Date (if applicable/known)
Comments on Waste Management EIS	One page draft describing issues of concern on the Waste Management EIS	Ray Vaughan and Lee Lambert - June 2003
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Review of the Department of Energy at Savannah River High-Level Waste Tank Closure Methodology	A report on NRC's method, conclusions, and recommendations for closing the HLW tanks at the Savannah River Site	NRC

For copies of any of the above documents, please contact Sonja Allen at (716) 942-2152.