

To: Citizen Task Force  
From: Tom Attridge  
Subject: Summary of October 19, 1999, Task Force Meeting  
Date: October 28, 1999

**Next Meeting:**

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

**Date:** November 9, 1999  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Ashford Office Complex  
9030 Route 219, West Valley, NY

A draft agenda for the November 9 meeting is included in this mailing. 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, Elizabeth Lowes (for Barbara Mazurowski), Eric Wohlers, Lee Lambert, Paul Piciulo, Paul Kranz (for Rich Tobe), Pete Scherer, Joe Patti, Tim Siepel, Gayla Gray (for Lana Redeye), Nevella McNeil, Larry Smith, Murray Regan, Bridget Wilson, and Bill King. Not attending were: Rich Tobe, Lana Redeye, Barbara Mazurowski, Warren Schmidt, John Pfeffer, and Pete Cooney.

*Regulatory Agency Attendees*

Jack Krajewski, Tim Rice, and Rudyard Edick - New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

*Attendees via Video Conference*

Jack Parrott, Tim Johnson, and Kristina Banovac; Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)  
Pat Mackin and David Ferrell; Center for Nuclear Regulatory Analysis

**October 19 Meeting Summary:**

Tom Attridge opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. by reviewing administrative issues and the agenda. The following items were noted:

- ▶ Bill King invited everyone at the meeting to a Town Meeting at the Community Center on Saturday morning, October 23, 1999 with State Assemblyman Dan Burling and State Assemblywoman Pat Magee. The two would be on hand to answer questions from the public.

- ▶ Gayla Gray distributed a Stewardship report recently issued by the Committee of State and Tribal Governments to CTF members. Gayla also indicated that the report is also available on the Committee's website.
- ▶ Ray Vaughan suggested that Russel Edge's comments on the September 21, 1999 CTF meeting minutes be put in a memo for distribution rather than using them to revise the existing minutes. The CTF members in attendance agreed.

### **Susan Brechbill Visit**

Elizabeth Lowes (DOE) introduced Susan Brechbill, Manager of DOE's Ohio Field Office, who was present at the meeting. Ms. Brechbill indicated that she was at the site for the Ohio Field Office Summit Meeting and was glad to be able to come to a CTF meeting. Ms. Brechbill addressed the CTF on a number of items. She stated that, within the Ohio Field Office sites, DOE is focused on accelerating site clean up, wherever possible, such as getting the long-lived radionuclides out of the high-level waste tanks at West Valley. Also, Ms. Brechbill stated that DOE was committed to completing the negotiations between New York State and DOE by May of 2000, adding that the negotiations would include sorting out responsibilities now and for the future. Ms. Brechbill said the Ohio Field Office is also embarking on an office-wide policy on stewardship, with emphasis on identifying new technologies for monitoring wastes that remain in place to make sure they are safely contained. She added that DOE recognizes it has stewardship responsibilities, and that they will be fulfilled between New York State and DOE. DOE also believes stakeholder input is important to stewardship decisions. Ms. Brechbill thanked the CTF for its hard work and helping DOE understand community expectations.

### **Review of High-Level Waste Tank Closure Conference**

CTF members Joe Patti and Nevella McNeil reported back to the CTF on information they gained from attending DOE's High-Level Waste Tank Closure Workshop held on October 12-14, 1999 in Las Vegas. Nevella McNeil thanked the agencies for sponsoring their trip. She said the meeting brought together a dynamic blend of participants for two long, hard days of highly technical and intricate regulatory discussions. Ms. McNeil said she had the handouts from the workshop and would make them available to any CTF member. She said that she hoped DOE continues to have these type of meetings as she thought they were worthwhile. Ms. McNeil responded to a question from a CTF member about tank removal, indicating that no information on tank removal was presented or discussed at the meeting. She stated that one of the major discussion points at the meeting focused on the question "What is closure?" One workshop attendee, Suzanne Dahl, suggested that closure should be considered a "journey," not just "completion," and that negotiation is an important part of the journey. Ms. McNeil reminded the CTF, NYSERDA, and DOE that the West Valley site is unique, not a true DOE facility, as it resides on State land. She added that she believes the CTF should have more discussions on DOE Order 435.1, that deals with incidental waste. Ms. McNeil concluded by asking the New York State and DOE negotiators to make the right "technical" decisions for the site.

Joe Patti reiterated Nevella McNeil's remarks regarding the value of the workshop, the "closure" question, and the incidental waste issue. Mr. Patti stated that the Savannah River Site (SRS) is currently conducting an "operational" closure of high-level waste tanks, without having

completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). He added that the SRS Community Advisory Board did not feel that an EIS was important, suggesting that it might delay the process. Mr. Patti came up with the idea that the different sites should use EIRs, or Environmental Impact Reviews, an alternative to an EIS that could be conducted by a forum of regulators. Mr. Patti also reported on some of the new technologies being employed to clean-up the waste tanks, like a \$100,000 riser installed in an SRS tank that was sized specifically to get the right equipment into the tanks for better cleaning. He also talked about the Idaho National Environmental Engineering Laboratory (INEEL) demonstration which used grout to move waste to pump areas for a more complete clean-up. He showed a video of the INEEL demonstration to the CTF. Mr. Patti suggested that the Hanford Site was in disarray and far behind the other DOE sites in its clean up. Mr. Patti said that the Yucca Mountain site tour gave him a better understanding of the site's desolation, adding that the less than 6 inches of rainfall per year make it a good place for putting waste. Several CTF members asked clarifying questions about the INEEL grout demonstration including the use of aggregate without Portland cement and how the cooling pipes in the tank were arranged.

A brief discussion ensued about the issue of removing high level waste tanks versus leaving them in place. A CTF member indicated that by looking at only in-place stabilization, the process could be seen as biased in that direction. A DOE official responded that they must balance the health and safety of workers and the public with the cost of the alternative. The CTF member suggested that if the site was willing to spend the money, health and safety issues could be avoided, adding that it would be useful to start looking at ways to take the tanks apart.

### **Reengineering of In-Place Stabilization Alternatives for North Plateau Facilities**

Dan Westcott (WVNS) gave a presentation on the strategy, performance, and considerations of closing the high-level waste tanks, vitrification facility, and main process building in place. During the presentation, numerous questions and comments arose, which are described below.

A CTF member requested that Mr. Westcott discuss how the in-place closure strategy would comply with regulations. Mr. Westcott responded that under this alternative, DOE proposes to meet NRC's decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) criteria of 25 mRem/year for off-site individual and 500 mRem/year for the intruder, adding that ALARA (As Low As Reasonably Achievable) principles would apply as well. Discussion continued regarding paragraph 2 of the WVDP Act and the interpretation of DOE's responsibilities under the Act. Mr. Westcott described the three responsibilities as (1) Vitrify the high-level waste in the tanks and ship the waste to a federal repository, (2) dispose of LLRW and TRU waste consistent with applicable law, and (3) D&D facilities in accordance with NRC D&D criteria. The CTF member stated that he felt Mr. Westcott was misquoting the Act and suggested that they needed to talk more about this at a later time. Regarding the issue of Class A, B, and C wastes, the CTF member stated that the West Valley wastes did not fall into the envelope of NRC's Part 61 regulations. Dan Westcott agreed that West Valley wastes were not looked at in the Part 61 EIS, but NRC has told the site to go ahead and do a performance assessment, adding that the site needs to go through a formal process of NRC review.

A short video was shown about the grout test event held at the Ashford Concrete facility earlier in the day. The video showed grout (that had been cured for 28 days) being dug up by CTF

members with shovels and also a backhoe. A CTF member expressed some concern over the lower strength grout that is proposed to be used at the site. Mr. Westcott responded that they were trying to engineer a grout that acts like the clay around it. However, he also said that by adding more cement to the mixture, you can also increase the strength of the grout. A question followed about testing the grout by exposing it to water. Mr. Westcott stated that they tested the grout for flowability, compressive strength, and hydraulic conductivity. Another CTF member asked what the purpose of the grout test was. Dan responded that it was to demonstrate that the grout could be pumped into a tank, fill void spaces in the tank, and be retrieved in the future. The CTF member followed up by asking if one of the test conclusions (that the grout filled all the void spaces in the vault) was based on cross-sectional analysis. To which Mr. Westcott responded by saying the proof is in the material that was dug up, adding that anybody interested could come to the Ashford Concrete plant to see the grout first hand. The CTF member suggested that the test was more anecdotal, than scientific, and further wondered if the site was planning to do a leach test on the grout. Mr. Westcott responded that they were planning to do a leach test. Another CTF member was concerned about the curing process of the grout if it was poured into a closed container. Dan replied that the grout curing is a chemical process, adding that more testing would be done if the alternative is actually selected. Another CTF member stated that the CTF wanted to know what the grout was going to be like to get a comfort level with it, commending the site for being responsive. A DOE representative then added that the purpose of the test was to show that the grout could be retrievable. A brief discussion followed on the possibility of installing electric wires into the grout to assist in environmental monitoring in the future. Mr. Westcott replied that it was an emerging field and that DOE plans to be doing research on the best ways to conduct environmental monitoring, as Ms. Brechbill pointed out earlier. Another CTF member inquired about the performance of the grout under various seismic events. A DOE representative responded by saying that they are close to placing a contract to do additional site-specific analyses on the seismic issue and that they would be getting back to CTF member Ray Vaughan soon to discuss the work and his recent letters on the issue.

### **Erosion Modeling Update**

Joe Price (SAIC) gave a presentation on the history, status, and issues of the erosion modeling work currently being done. During the presentation, numerous questions and comments arose, which are described below.

A CTF member questioned whether the HEC-6 erosion model used a survey profile of Frank's Creek, conducted between 1980 and 1990, to estimate the site's downcutting rates. Another CTF member suggested that stream downcutting rates were used to calibrate the HEC-6 model. Mr. Price responded saying he was reasonably sure that the Frank's Creek longitudinal survey was not used to calibrate the HEC-6 modeling, but that he would get back to the CTF on it.

Discussion followed on the applicability of the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) that is commonly used in erosion modeling. Joe stated that the USLE is an old empirical model and that there are some drawbacks in using it such as limiting the grade of slopes you can input (up to 8%). Another CTF member then stated that he had two concerns with the site using the SIBERIA model. First, he believes the model is not accurately calibrated and is off by a factor of six based upon the 1980 versus 1990 stream survey. Second, he believes that various soil erodibility scenarios (e.g. loose sands, tight clays) should be built into the model for analysis.

Mr. Price responded saying he believes SAIC did look at the 10-year stream survey in regard to the calibration issue, but had questions in regard to its value. For example, were the surveys done in the same place. Mr. Price recalled that there were several issues regarding the use of the survey for calibration of the model. Regarding the erodibility factors, Joe said that the version of SIBERIA used did not have the ability to incorporate spatially variable erodibilities and that they are looking at whether new versions of the code have that capability. The CTF member then asked how the erosion analysis will be completed for the EIS. Joe responded by saying that, at this point, work is being done to respond to the NRC's comments.

A CTF member asked if the site has seen any significant erosion since the June 1998 rainfall event. Another CTF member commented that he accompanied a NYSERDA representative out on the site about a month after the event and saw significant signs of cobble scouring in some of the creek beds. Mr. Price added that about two percent of the rainfall that occurs removes about 30 percent of soil through erosion. Another CTF member offered the site access to historical records on precipitation and "washouts" since the late 1800's. Mr. Price said he would be interested in seeing this information, but added that it would not give him the quantitative information he needed for erosion modeling.

Another CTF member asked Mr. Price to explain what he meant when he said "he had a weak database to work with." Joe responded by saying that the kind of information that is normally needed to calibrate a landscape evolution model is not normally available because it does not exist. He added that it is not just the West Valley site that has a weak database, but everyone doing this type of work has a weak database to work with.

## **Next Steps**

Jack Parrott, from NRC, updated the CTF on the status of the NRC's Policy Statement on the D&D criteria for West Valley. Jack said that all of the Commissioners have voted on the policy statement, offering editorial changes, and that it should be issued by the end of October. He added that they will be putting this in the Federal Register, and on the Government Printing Office website as well. Mr. Parrott also said that they will be holding a public meeting in the West Valley area on the policy statement. Discussion ensued about a possible date for the public meeting, but no dates were actually decided upon.

Site representatives indicated that they would send out the NRC policy statement to the CTF members as soon as it became available. NRC representatives indicated that they believed the policy statement would be available before the next scheduled CTF meeting. The CTF then decided to go ahead with its scheduled meeting on November 9, 1999 to discuss the NRC's policy statement and plan for the upcoming NRC public meeting.

[As of October 29, 1999, NRC indicated that the Policy Statement would not be available before November 9, 1999. As such, Melinda Holland and Tom Attridge will be contacting all CTF members to postpone this meeting until the next scheduled meeting on November 30, 1999. A notice will be sent to all CTF members and all individuals on the CTF mailing list to confirm the next meeting date.]

## **Observer Comments**

There were no observer comments.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.