



# FULL BOARD MEETING T-214

Tuesday, December 2, 2003

## DRAFT MINUTES

The Fernald Citizens Advisory Board met from 7:15 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 2, 2003, in T-214 at the Fernald Closure Project site. This FCAB meeting immediately followed a Progress Briefing that focused on the Silos Project.

Members Present:

Kathryn Brown  
Sandy Butterfield  
Lisa Crawford  
Lou Doll  
Pam Dunn  
Bill Taylor  
Gene Jablonowski  
Robert Tabor  
Steve DePoe  
Graham Mitchell

Members Absent:

French Bell  
Jim Bierer  
Lisa Blair  
Marvin Clawson  
Jane Harper  
Gene Willeke

Designated Federal Official:

Gary Stegner

The Perspectives Group Staff:

Douglas Sarno  
David Bidwell

Fluor Fernald Staff:

Sue Walpole

Approximately ten spectators also attended the meeting, including members of the public and representatives from the Department of Energy and Fluor Fernald.

**General Announcements and Ex-Officio Comments**

Lisa Crawford called meeting to order. The Board approved the minutes from its October 21st meeting.

Doug Sarno explained that he and David Bidwell participated in a SSAB Chairs conference call on November 25th, because Jim Bierer and Lisa Crawford could not be on the call. Doug explained that the Chairs reviewed a draft joint letter from the Chairs to DOE. Several FCAB members contributed to drafting this letter, which stresses the importance of coordinating the transition of sites from Environmental Management to other DOE offices and funding public participation adequately during the transition. Doug reported that the SSAB Chairs were very supportive of the letter. The FCAB reviewed a draft of that letter and approved it for signature by Jim Bierer. Board members suggested that the FCAB forward the final version of the letter to Ohio's Congressional representatives.

Doug reviewed other issues that were discussed on the SSAB Chairs call. During the call, Sandra Waisley read an email she received from Dave Geiser that said that the new DOE Office of Legacy Management would provide opportunities for public involvement, but would not support the existing SSABs. The Chairs also discussed the new Headquarters policy on long-term support for the SSABs. The Boards must have one of two support structures in place by October, 2004: 1.) Full support from DOE or 2.) Incorporation as a nonprofit organization. Doug reported that the SSAB Chairs reported significant problems in meeting this policy. During the call, Sandra explained that Jessie Roberson has received negative feedback from the Boards, but is committed to this change in policy. Doug stated that the Chairs from several Boards also expressed concern about the DOE Risk-Based End States policy and reported a lack of adequate public participation in the implementation of this policy at their sites. Doug also noted that plans to hold the April 2004 Chairs meeting in Washington, DC are moving forward.

Bill Taylor, the new DOE site manager for the Fernald Closure Project, reported that good progress is being made at the site. He expressed confidence that current problems would be resolved, as other problems have been resolved in the past.

Graham Mitchell reported that there has been no progress in settlement of the Natural Resources Damage (NRD) lawsuit, although he expected a conference call would be held in the next two weeks. He stated that there would be a public process when the parties have an idea of what a settlement would look like. Pam Dunn expressed concern that if the Risk-Based End States policy results in more waste being left in place at the site, it could impact the settlement of the NRD claim.

Gary Stegner announced that the Energy and Water Appropriations bill had been approved and signed. This bill designates materials from the silos as 11e.(2) waste. Because Envirocare has decided not to pursue NRC approval to accept this waste, however, the silos material will be sent to the Nevada Test Site for disposal.

Lisa asked about the status of ATSDR, and whether it had been subsumed by the Centers for Disease Control. Doug promised to contact French Bell for clarification and to discuss the future of his role with the FCAB.

Lisa asked if the support contract for the FCAB has been finalized. Gary stated that the Ohio Field Office has not completed the contract. Lisa stated that she was unhappy that it was taking so long to get a support contract in place and asked Bill to work with the

field office to ensure that the contract is finalized quickly. Bill and Gary promised to look into the issue.

Lisa noted that the Board members received a copy of a letter sent to the Ohio Congressional delegation by Bob Warther, in response to their October 9th letter on groundwater issues. Lisa stated that she should have received a copy of this response in a timelier manner. Gary apologized and stated that he believed a copy of the letter had been faxed to her.

#### **Follow-Up to Risk Based End States Meeting**

Doug distributed copies of letters sent to DOE by U.S. EPA and Ohio EPA regarding implementation of the risk-based end states (RBES) policy at Fernald. He also presented a draft FCAB letter on the issue which outlines the FCAB concerns identified at the November public meeting, and asks DOE to excuse the Fernald site from any further obligations under this policy. The FCAB members confirmed that the draft letter nicely summarized the concerns that were raised during the November 18th public meeting on RBES. Lisa asked that the letter be copied to Bob Warther and include signatures from both the FCAB Chair and Vice-Chair. The Board suggested some editorial changes to the letter and approved it as revised.

In response to questions, Gary reminded the group that individuals could comment on the Fernald RBES document up to January 15th. Pam Dunn stated a response to questions she raised at the November 18th meeting would be required for her to formulate her personal comments.

#### **Background on the Fernald Groundwater Strategy**

Doug stated that it is important for the public participation process to get back on track regarding groundwater issues at Fernald. He stated that the group would not discuss specifics in the draft groundwater strategy report, but rather it would discuss background information on groundwater issues at Fernald and why groundwater treatment strategies are being revisited. Doug stated that this discussion would signal an important return to the way past decisions have been made at Fernald, with the FCAB receiving the information it needs to provide informed input to DOE.

Johnny Reising stated that the primary goal of DOE is to meet the agreed upon cleanup levels for the Great Miami Aquifer. The agency realizes that any changes to existing agreements would require approval of the U.S. EPA and Ohio EPA. He added that DOE wants to explore ways to complete decontamination and demolition (D&D) of the Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWWT) facility prior to site closure. This would facilitate disposal of the AWWT in the on-site disposal facility (OSDF) before its final cap is in place, rather than having to transport the materials off site by truck.

Marc Jewett provided the group with an overview of the history of the Aquifer Restoration project at Fernald and why the groundwater treatment strategy is being revisited at this time. Key points from Marc's presentation are summarized below:

- Groundwater is covered by the OU5 ROD, which was signed in January 1996. DOE agreed to restore groundwater to federal drinking water standards for uranium. At that time, the proposed drinking water standard for uranium was 20 parts per billion (ppb). Final groundwater levels were set by USEPA at 30 ppb in 2001. The site used an Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) to change its cleanup target in order to conform to the 30 ppb drinking water standard.
- The AWWT became operational in 1995 and was designed to treat contaminated groundwater, wastewater from other projects on site (e.g., waste pits), and storm

water. Early performance of the facility demonstrated that it could consistently achieve outflow levels of 20 ppb of uranium. Although there was no health-based or regulatory requirement for the effluent to meet drinking water standards, 20 ppb was selected as the performance standard for average monthly discharge from the facility.

- When drinking water standards were set at 30 ppb in 2001, the site changed the AWWT performance standard to 30 ppb. The annual discharge limit of 600 pounds of uranium remained unchanged.
- Due to accelerated cleanup, most sources of contaminated water will be eliminated by 2006, so the only flow into the AWWT will be groundwater. Completion of the Aquifer Restoration project has never been considered part of site closure.
- Currently, water containing the highest concentrations of uranium are given the top priority for treatment at AWWT. The most contaminated flows come from the remediation projects (e.g., waste pits), not the Aquifer Project. Some groundwater is clean enough to bypass treatment entirely, and is mixed with treated water to meet final discharge limits. The Aquifer Project currently pumps approximately 6300 gallons of groundwater per minute but only treats 2300 gallons per minute on average.
- When Fluor Fernald's closure contract was renegotiated last winter, the contractor was asked to identify the most cost-effective groundwater infrastructure that could be left behind after closure. Fluor has been investigating several alternatives that would affect the lifecycle cost and time required to complete the Aquifer Restoration project. The site has not considered changing agreed upon cleanup levels for the aquifer.
- Based on current infrastructure, models predict that groundwater cleanup would be completed around 2021. Although uranium levels in the aquifer have been lowered dramatically in the past few years, as the concentration of the contaminant decrease, it becomes more difficult to pull the uranium from the aquifer.
- If the current AWWT remains in operation past final closure of the OSDF, materials from its future D&D will have to be shipped off site by truck. Current estimates are that it would require 5700 trucks to remove the AWWT debris from the site. As such, Fluor has been exploring options that would allow the AWWT to be dismantled and placed in the OSDF.
- One option is to place an interim cap on OSDF Cell 8, so that the AWWT could be placed in the OSDF at an unspecified future date. However, no one knows precisely how long the interim cap would be needed, because the Aquifer Restoration completion date is uncertain.
- Another option is to D&D the AWWT prior to site closure and to construct a smaller water treatment facility on a clean footprint at the site. It is not clear that this would be more cost-effective.
- Yet another option for groundwater treatment is to rely on smaller water treatment facilities (SPIT and IAWWT) that are currently in place at the site. A reliance on these facilities would likely extend the total time required to complete the aquifer restoration project.
- At this time, the site has developed seven alternatives for managing groundwater. However, there may be other possible alternatives or combinations of alternatives.

The FCAB members briefly discussed some of their major concerns. Some members stated that uncertainty has a cost, but the site knows that the current treatment system is working. Board members expressed skepticism that total project cost could be reduced

if the time required to complete the groundwater cleanup is extended. Members also expressed concerns that extending the time needed to complete the remediation would increase the total cost of stewardship for the site. Members stated that the magnitude of cost savings would be important, especially in relation to the likelihood that those savings would actually be realized; in other words, a savings of one million dollars would not be as attractive as a saving of 120 million dollars. Lisa Crawford stated that the community would strongly oppose any proposal to increase the total amount of uranium being discharged into the river.

The FCAB requested that additional information about each alternative be presented in an easy-to-understand and easy-to-compare format. In particular, the FCAB would like to see projections of lifecycle costs. The Board also requested information on how the need for treatment capacity will change as closure approaches and certain remediation projects are completed. Finally, Board members asked who would take over the Aquifer Restoration Project after site closure, and how its management would be impacted if the total time required to complete the project is extended. Marc stated that he would work with the FCAB technical staff to provide the requested information.

**FCAB Meeting Schedule**

Doug reminded the group that the next FCAB meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, 2004 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. There will be no progress briefing preceding the January meeting. A Stewardship Committee meeting will be held the preceding evening, January 12, 2004.

The Board discussed and agreed to a tentative meeting schedule for the remainder of the year:

**Stewardship Committee Meetings**

Tuesday, February 17  
Monday, April 5  
Monday, May 10  
Monday, June 28  
Monday, August 2  
Thursday, September 16

**Full Board Meetings**

Wednesday, February 18  
Tuesday, April 6  
Tuesday, May 11 (Silos Project Tour)  
Tuesday, June 29  
Tuesday, August 3  
Saturday, September 18 (Retreat)

**Public Comment**

The meeting was opened to public comment. Two comments were provided:

- Edwa Yocum announced that F-CHEC is still conducting its health impact survey on people using cisterns near the site. Anyone who needs more information or is interested in filling out a survey should contact Edwa.
- Steve DePoe announced that the next Fernald Living History, Inc. meeting would be held on January 5, 2004.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

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Lisa Crawford  
Fernald Citizens Advisory Board Vice Chairman

Date

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Gary Stegner  
Deputy Designated Federal Official

Date