Portland Transcripts (TPO)

Public Hearing May 13, 2003 – Portland, Oregon

DOE meetings/hearings to acquire comments on the Revised Draft Hanford Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Management Program Environmental Impact Statement were conducted in a combination of forums to allow full participation of the audience and commenters. The overall forum consisted of periods for introductions, presentations, informal question and answer sections, panel discussions, and formal comment periods. The identification of comments from the transcripts of these meetings required close reading and interpretation. The results are shown in the identification of formal comment speakers, numbering of comments related to the revised HSW EIS, and bar-coding of copies of the transcripts contained in Volume IV of the HSW EIS. Information in the transcripts related to those informal portions of the meetings are not numbered or bar-coded and do not constitute formal comments. Formal responses to this information were not prepared.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REVISED DRAFT HANFORD SITE SOLID
(RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS)
WASTE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(HSW EIS)

PUBLIC MEETING

MAY 13, 2003
7:00 P.M.
RADISSON HOTEL
1441 NE SECOND AVENUE
PORTLAND, OREGON

BRIDGES & ASSOCIATES
Certified Shorthand Reporters
P.O. Box 223
Pendleton, Oregon 97801
(541) 276-9491 - (800) 358-2345

Introductions; Presentations

(Ms. Paige Knight and Mr. Dee Willis gave welcoming introductions, followed by a presentation from Michael Collins, Department of Energy).

MR. NICK CETO: Well, I don't know if I've spoke to you folks before. Since my children insist that I don't speak very loudly and trail off at the end of sentences, I'll try to use this if I can.

As I said before, I'm Nick Ceto. I'm the manager of the EPA office in Richland. I don't think I've gotten a chance to meet most of you. And I'll be around this evening later for questions and to get to know you a little bit.

I'm glad to be here. We're here, like you are, to listen to DOE's presentation. And I'm here to listen to the comments that you guys have so we can take those into consideration when we put together EPA comments.

We've got a team of EPA staff looking at the EIS. They include hydrogeologists, folks that are basically EIS

Presentations (contd)

specialists that we have.

We've got some geologists looking at it, we've got some modelers. We have a pretty good range of folks.

We, like you guys, have a lot to look at. It's certainly a thick document.

I'm not used to traveling in Oregon for gas. And when I was at the gas station, I tried to pump it and, of course, someone jumped in front of me to stop me from it, and they asked me if I wanted to check the tires because they looked low in the back. And I said, "No, I've just got this EIS in the trunk."

So, I mean, it's a lot of material to look at. We're very sympathetic to the fact that you guys have a lot to digest. But it's a much better job than before.

A lot of us were looking for more detail. We got it. It helps us to do a better job evaluating it, so I think DOE deserves some credit for that.

We also looked at a better set of alternatives. We had asked to have a wider range considered, they did that when they did this next round.

Presentations (contd)

They also did a better job of evaluating the Hanford waste versus the Hanford plus offsite waste, so that's another good thing. It gives us a better basis for comparison.

And they've looked at the cumulative impacts in a way that we think is a more meaningful way to look at it.

So overall, and again this is preliminary, because we really haven't had a chance to go through it in tremendous detail. But we do think it's a much better job.

It addresses a lot of the concerns that you have. And there's a very thick responsiveness summary that you can look at to see how some of those were addressed.

And we think so far that it provides a decent look at the alternatives so we can compare among them. And that's really the purpose of an EIS.

But it's not the entire purpose of an EIS. And that's part of what we think it lacks. And we're going to be providing detailed comments on this.

There are a couple of things we

Presentations (contd)

think it lacks. First of all, there's a lot of conservatism built into the model, and there's a lot of uncertainty in any modeling that's done.

And one of the things that we have talked to DOE about is the need to look at a wider range of assumptions when they develop their model outputs.

If you're always using the most conservative assumptions, it tends to lead you one way; and if you look at a range of them, it gives you a better idea of what the alternatives may be, if you look at extremes at both ends.

And we think that's worth doing. And they've indicated some willingness to look at a couple of those.

We also I think need to look at, more rigorously at, some of the treatment and sort of adaptive management and mitigation that could be done.

This ties in to the next point I want to make. The point of compliance for these landfill units, for these waste disposal units that was looked at in the EIS, was a

Presentations (contd)

kilometer down gradient.

And it's our view that it has to be looked at the facility boundary. And when that facility boundary analysis is done, we think that may change some of the, basically, outputs of the model and lead us to a different kind of a look or an understanding of the impacts of these units.

And when that's done, that may then force this issue of mitigation and adaptive management to try to more aggressively go after whatever exceedances of groundwater criteria may result from some of these disposal facilities. So we think that's important to look at.

There's also the question of how this EIS fits in with other EISs. There's a tank waste EIS that's being done right now, as you're probably aware.

And I think that, plus the Programmatic EIS that talked about Hanford receiving some wastes period, is an interesting tie between some of those.

If you look at the Programmatic EIS, it suggests that when some of this offsite

waste comes to Hanford, that any groundwater problems or any other environmental impacts would be mitigated. So then it doesn't really say what that is. And it leads you to this EIS.

And so this EIS, I think, has the duty to look at what those mitigation measures might be.

So the brief sort of message I'll leave you with: much better job; we think it's looking at the right things; we think it needs to be a little bit more rigorous in some respects; and there needs to be a clear integration of some of these EIS documents. So I'll leave it at that for now. Thanks.

(Member of the audience asked a follow-up question without microphone. Inaudible).

MR. NICK CETO: Mitigation would be, for example, if you looked at a waste form that was being buried at the site and it showed some potential for leaching into the groundwater system, to mitigate that release; in other words, to address that release, somehow, you might treat it or containerize it to limit the release that might occur.

Presentations (contd)

And adaptive management is simply kind of a feedback loop, where if you're training a pet to sit when you tell it to, you kind of work with the pet.

And if it's not sitting, you make some adaptive change to yank it by the collar tr talk to it in a loud voice to try to get it to change its behavior.

And adaptive management is kind of responding to what happens in the field to try to basically head off problems before they occur. So it might include a monitoring system that would give you an early warning, for example, a release so you can go in and do something.

(Member of the audience asked a follow-up question without microphone. Inaudible).

MR. NICK CETO: If you envisioned a surface expression of some facility, and it has a fence around the boundary of it, if you were to drill a groundwater well right at the edge of the facility boundary and look at the groundwater quality at that point, that's been our view, the point of compliance that should be used to

8

(541) 276-9491 BRIDGES & ASSOCIATES (800) 358-2345

evaluate a landfill, not a mile or a kilometer down gradient.

So it's important that there's not an impairment to anything offsite from those facilities.

Now, granted, Hanford is not a pristine area where there's a new landfill being sited, but it is a new landfill starting from scratch.

So when this thing is designed, it needs to be designed so that it won't create a release which can contribute to environmental degradation beyond water quality criteria.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks, Nick.

Paige Knight.

(Member of the audience asked a follow-up question without microphone. Inaudible).

MS. NANCY METRICK: A quarter of a million years to ten days for half life.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Thank you. Okay, Paige.

MS. PAIGE KNIGHT: I would have preferred the ten days myself.

Okay. Yes, I'm Paige Knight as I said earlier, from Hanford Watch. And I'm just

Presentations (contd)

going to go over some of my thoughts, really, which I hope feed you something for comments that you might write or make tonight.

I have to say that I appreciate that the Department of Energy heeded our cry and redid this EIS.

That being said, I'm in a place right now with the kinds of things that are happening at Hanford, work stoppage today, and the lawsuits going back and forth that I've lost hope for the moment. I will never lose hope for the long run.

And I cannot support a lot of the actions in this EIS. And I will go through some of the reasoning there.

Many of the possible solutions for treating and storing or burying solid wastes from other weapon sites at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation appear to embody some of the publics' values that have been expressed over the years and at last summers EIS meetings.

However, our buy-off in whatever alternative the Department of Energy decides upon, rests upon our ability to trust the Department of Energy.

Presentations (contd)

And when I'm talking about the Department of Energy, I'm talking about headquarters at this point.

Headquarters is driving this show, and they're driving us to the ground. And I will elucidate on that in a moment.

This is difficult at a time when DOE stops cleanup work based on a directive, not a law, from the Washington Department of Ecology because Ecology says "You must comply."

So because that language was used in a directive, the Department of Energy stopped work and said "Oh, we can't do anything then."

And imagine the 177 tanks and their failing infrastructure. Imagine a stopping in the middle of the end run of cleaning up some of the worst plutonium contamination in the nation. Okay.

Yet over the years, and even in this new document, the Department of Energy capriciously picks and chooses which laws to comply with and which to change without going through the proper legal steps.

Now they're complying with the law. They haven't been so willing to do this in the