RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group
October 11, 2000
Meeting Minutes

Introduction and Administrative

Reed Hodgin began the meeting explaining that the meeting room would again be arranged as an open square table to foster better communication among the participants. Those who wished to join the conversation were asked to sit around the table; those who attended the meeting to answer technical questions or to observe were seated behind and around the square.

A participants list for the October 11, 2000 RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group meeting is included in this report as Appendix A.

Reed reviewed the Focus Group purpose.

Reed reviewed the agenda for this meeting.

The September 27, 2000 RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group meeting minutes were reviewed and approved with the following modification: Dave Abelson of RFCLOG and Rich Horstmann of CDPHE stated they had not been included in the September 27 participant's list, although they had attended that meeting.

Wildfire Impacts on Vegetation at the Hanford Site and INEEL

Mary Harlow, City of Westminster, presented a briefing to the group on vegetation impacts from Summer 2000 wildfires at the Hanford Site and Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL). Her summary, titled "Report on Re-vegetation at Hanford and Idaho National Laboratories as a result of recent fires," is attached as Appendix B.

Mary indicated that 900 acres of undisturbed land at the Hanford Site were burned during Summer 2000 as the result of a wildfire. The fire produced 80-foot high flames from six foot tall vegetation. The flames were fanned by 35 mile-per-hour winds. The wildfire created its own weather.

Vegetation affected by the fire included rabbit bush, sagebrush, sage, and Russian thistle. Agreements with the Shoshone-Bannock Indian tribe will require revegetation with seeds grown locally on the site. Sagebrush is being used in the revegetation effort.

A problem has been noted in the post-fire environment at Hanford. Burned areas were sufficiently denuded by the hot fire that significant sand and dust resuspension are occurring. Sand is infiltrating into buildings, causing problems with filtration systems and machinery. Hanford is using a soil surfactant to bind the loose sand and soil, reducing the amount of wind erosion until revegetation can progress.

Mary also briefed the group on vegetation impacts following a wildfire at INEEL during Summer 2000. The INEEL experience was influenced by the type of ecosystem at the site – high desert grassland. Historical experience with fires at INEEL has shown that the grassland will recover from a fire best if left alone – deliberate reseeding is not as effective as natural revegetation.

INEEL has also experienced problems with wind erosion of loose soil following the wildfire. The site is using water spray to mitigate resuspension. The water and airborne dust are sometimes combining to produce windborne mud.

INEEL does not conduct prescribed burns because the community is already sensitive about smoke nuisance from controlled agricultural burns.

A group discussion followed Mary's presentation.

David Abelson (RFCLOG) mentioned he had seen a newspaper article regarding dust problems after the fire at INEEL. He will provide a copy of the article for the next meeting packet.

A member of the Focus Group asked if there had been any studies on air resuspension after the fires at Hanford and INEEL. Mary answered that she was not aware of any.

A member of the Focus Group asked if RFETS had conducted any recent vegetation studies at the site, including vegetation uptake of radionuclides. Joe Legare of DOE agreed to research the last vegetation study completed for the site. He also stated that the Rocky Flats Wind Tunnel Tests report will be issued in November 2000. It was also noted by a member of the Focus Group that information on Los Alamos National Laboratory's resuspension work will also be available in November 2000.

Path Forward for the RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group

Joe Legare gave a presentation on the path forward for the Focus Group. The path forward as recommended by DOE was based on key upcoming regulatory and decision documents that will define the cleanup process at RFETS. John Corsi of RFETS compiled and summarized the information in an Environmental Decision Matrix timeline and discussion document (Appendix D). Joe emphasized that the path forward is preliminary and that input from the Focus Group is strongly requested. Representatives from both CDPHE and EPA indicated that the proposed path forward is sufficiently draft that they had not yet reviewed DOE's ideas and would be examining the proposal in parallel with the Focus Group.

The path forward focused on twelve environmental restoration decision processes for which RFETS would like input from the Focus Group:

- RSALs
- 903 Pad
- ER RSOP
- Soil Management RSOP
- Industrial Area SAP
- Buffer Zone SAP
- Present Landfill Remediation Project
- Original Landfill Remediation Project
- Solar Ponds Remediation Project
- RIDD
- Site Water Balance Study
- Land Configuration Study.

DOE presented the following information for each decision process:

- Summary
- Decision-making schedule
- Key policy questions to be resolved.

Joe requested that the Focus Group review the timeline and summary document and submit questions and suggestions to John Corsi.

A short discussion by the Focus Group followed the presentation. A member of the Focus Group suggested that the decision documents should be reviewed periodically for validity and lessons learned when the remediation program defined in the documents occurs over a long period of time. Another Focus Group member asked how the RSALs, 903 Pad, RFCA Integrated Decision Document (RIDD), and Water Balance document will interface with each other. Joe responded that the RSALs must be established prior to completion of the plan for 903 Pad remediation. In addition, the RIDD will incorporate the integrated water management strategy. Joe also stated that it is in the site's interest to complete the RIDD before 903 Pad decisions are made.

A member of the Focus Group suggested that the erosion and transport study should be included in the timeline and path forward. John Corsi agreed and committed to revise the decision matrix accordingly.

Report-Back from RFCA Agencies on Influence of Focus Group on Decision-Making

DOE, CDPHE, and EPA provided their first report-back to the Focus Group on the influence that the group is having on decision-making by the RFCA parties.

DOE

Jeremy Karpatkin of DOE made a presentation on the influence of the Focus Group on the DOE's decision-making (see Appendix E). He indicated that, although it was very early in the decision-making process, a number of key messages had already been received:

- resistance to changing surface water standard
- expectation that ecological impacts will be mitigated by agencies and not be a factor limiting cleanup
- need for extensive technical data as basis for discussions on potential trade-offs
- willingness to work with agencies in using CERCLA process and criteria

CDPHE

Steve Gunderson of CDPHE stated that he agreed with the influences described by DOE, and added the following from CDPHE's perspective:

- There is a strong preference for excavation of contamination
- The Site must demonstrate when excavation is not feasible
- Engineered barriers are on the table, but there are concerns
- Surface water must be protected
- Remedies must work for stewardship.

EPA

Karen Reed of EPA listed the following messages received by her agency:

- Ecological issues must be considered
- NRC regulations are a topic for discussion
- Water quality protection is critical
- Stewardship is important, and
- Schedule is important.

A short discussion followed the statements by the agencies. One Focus Group member asked for input from the agencies on what was needed from the Focus Group. The discussion brought out that the agencies would like the Focus Group to focus on key questions that would define the remediation decisions (including those presented in the Path Forward discussion and others that the Focus Group may decide upon), and a desire on everyone's part to move from general discussions to evaluation of hard information.

A concern was voiced among the Focus Group that a "one-size fits all" approach would not work at Rocky Flats – each source area must be addressed separately.

Focus Group Discussion of Evaluation Criteria from 903 Pad Alternatives Evaluation Matrix

The Focus Group discussed the evaluation criteria that had been included in the 903 Pad Alternatives Evaluation Matrix used in the group exercise on September 27, 2000. Key points made by members of the Focus Group during the discussion included:

Human Health Protection

- There are two threshold criteria on the list (objective criteria that must be met): risk to humans from radiation (10^{-4} to 10^{-6}) and the surface water standard (0.15 pCi / l). The other criteria listed under human health should be considered as modifying (balancing) criteria.

Stewardship:

- The need for institutional controls should be minimized
- The objective for the Stewardship Cost criterion should be to minimize the cost of Stewardship

Ecological Impacts

- Major damage to the ecosystem should be avoided
- However, if a choice must be made between protection of human health and protection of the ecosystem, human health protection must be considered the priority

Cost

- The site should manage costs so that moderate costs can be absorbed in the available budget

Human health is separated into 2 groups:

- Threshold - risk from contamination, and

- Modifying - other risks.

General

There is a minimum we must do – as reflected in the threshold criteria. What we do in cleanup beyond the minimum is discretionary. That is the area in which trade-offs can be discussed among balancing criteria.

Everyone should look at the CERCLA guidance on evaluation criteria, as it is much more specific than our discussions; i.e., long-term effectiveness equals stewardship.

Protection of groundwater should be considered as an evaluation criterion.

Air quality standards should be included as threshold criteria.

Discussion of Schedule and Path Forward

The group discussed and modified its schedule to accommodate the upcoming holiday season. The next meeting will be November 8, 2000.

The Focus Group will begin its discussion of RSALs at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group
October 11, 2000
Meeting Minutes

Appendix A
Participants List

RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group
October 11, 2000
Meeting Minutes

Appendix B
Mary Harlow: Report Of Re-Vegetation At Hanford And Idaho National Laboratories As A Result Of Recent Fires

RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group
October 11, 2000
Meeting Minutes

Appendix C
Joe Legare: Presentation Of The Path Forward For This Focus Group

RFCA Stakeholder Focus Group
October 11, 2000
Meeting Minutes

Appendix D
Jeremy Karpatkin: Presentation Of The Influence Of The Focus Group On The Agency's Decision-Making