

Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee (UDAC)

December 19, 2008

Ninth Meeting

Conference Call Meeting Minutes

Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee

I hereby certify that this transcript constitutes an accurate record of the Ninth Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee Conference Call held on December 19, 2008.



Kent Abadie, Chair

Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee



Date

Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee (Conference Call Meeting held December 19, 2008)

The conference call meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM EST. Elena Melchert, Committee Manager, called the roll of committee members and confirmed that a quorum was present. (see attached list). In addition to those 11 members and Ms. Melchert, Guido DeHoratiis, Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Roy Long, National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), were present. Mr. Karl Lang, TMS, was present as meeting recorder.

Kent Abadie, UDAC Chair, then asked the DFO for opening remarks. Mr. DeHoratiis thanked everyone for participating, and he confirmed that there were no members of the public present (the meeting was open to the public and had been publically announced). The Chair thanked the members for their participation as well.

The Chair then reviewed the objectives of the meeting. The first objective was to consider and vote on the formation of two standing subcommittees of the UDAC. One of these would focus on the process used to select and award research projects, and the second would focus on the overall R&D portfolio, in order to advise the Secretary of Energy whether or not the portfolio of projects is balanced in a way that achieves the overall program objectives.

The second objective was to nominate and vote on subcommittee chairs. The chairs of each subcommittee shall be members of the UDAC; however membership on the subcommittee does not require UDAC membership.

The final objective was to solicit comments on the charge and duties of the subcommittees (a draft charter for each sub-committee had been provided to each participant as background for discussion). The notion proposed by the Chair was that after the meeting, the subcommittee chairs would work to draft a charter.

There were no comments or questions on the objectives of the meeting as described by the Chair.

The Chair next provided some perspective on the need for the proposed subcommittees.

- UDAC actions to date have focused on providing Secretary of Energy with comments and recommendations related to the Draft Annual Plan.
- The Program has now entered into a stage where projects have been awarded and are being implemented.
- There is a need to provide the Secretary with advice on how well the process is being carried out and how effectively the chosen projects are achieving the overarching goals of the Program, and standing subcommittees could develop these assessments and provide input to the UDAC during the annual plan review, which could form the basis for advice to the Secretary of Energy.

The Chair opened the floor to questions regarding this perspective and the notion of a need for the subcommittees as defined in the two proposed charters (provided as background material for participants to react to in terms of identifying the need for standing sub-committees).

The first subcommittee discussed was that of a Process Subcommittee, a committee to examine and investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes utilized by the Program Consortium in the solicitation, evaluation, selection and award of ultra-deepwater development research projects. Essentially, the question to be answered was related to how are projects “filling the funnel,” how are projects progressing “through the funnel” and how efficiently are projects being funded.

It was suggested that this committee should develop some type of scorecard for presentation to the UDAC that would provide an assessment of the efficiency of the processes being utilized. Some type of benchmarking assessment might also be appropriate.

The chair asked for comments/questions.

In response to the question on how the subcommittee would accomplish the gathering of information to develop the scorecard, it was stated that requests for information should go through DOE in those cases where the subcommittee is gathering information. The Chair reinforced that all of the duties and activities of the subcommittee should be known to DOE.

In response to the question asking if subcommittee members wanted to visit RPSEA and see how they carried out their duties, it was responded that DOE would have to make the proper arrangements for the subcommittee, based on the subcommittee’s needs for information. The Committee members were reminded that they couldn’t just appear at RPSEA offices. For a number of reasons the process would need to be more formalized (to avoid conflict of interest, to respect the fiscal relationship between the DOE and RPSEA, and to respect the duties of the UDAC). The DFO reinforced that any request for information from Committee or subcommittee would be addressed expeditiously.

The Chair commented that the UDAC has recognized the need for more information from RPSEA regarding their process and that this information is needed.

With regard to the use of a “scorecard”, it was asked if the subcommittee would be looking for a process flow diagram that shows where individual projects are along the path to completion. The Chair suggested that it could be, but that it would be up to the subcommittee to determine how to assess the efficiency of the processes being utilized.

The Chair asked for a vote on the desire of the Committee to establish a Process Subcommittee. A role call vote was unanimous (11/11) in favor of establishing a Process Subcommittee that would focus on the topics discussed.

The Chair then moved on to the R&D Portfolio Subcommittee. The purpose of this standing subcommittee would be to assess the degree to which the research projects selected are balanced and collectively achieving the overall goals of the Program. The standing subcommittee would gather information related to this topic and provide inputs to the UDAC for consideration in preparing its advice to the Secretary.

In response to a comment related to the need for significant interaction between the two subcommittees, the Chair restated the focus of the Portfolio Subcommittee would be engaged in answering the question ... “Are we doing the right things from a portfolio standpoint ... so that collectively we are getting the breakthrough technologies we need to meet the objectives of the Program.”

When asked if the subcommittee would not be doing the same thing as the Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) that are advising RPSEA, the DFO commented that what the Portfolio Subcommittee would be doing was asking questions, following the decisions that have been made to fund specific projects; asking if the work that is being carried by these funded projects is accomplishing the objectives of the Program. If it is ultimately recommended to the Secretary of Energy by the UDAC that the portfolio is not meeting the goals of the program, then addressing that recommendation is something that the Secretary would take under advisement and discuss with NETL and RPSEA.

When it was suggested that the Subcommittee would need to interact with RPSEA to find out why research was not pursued in a given area, the Chair responded that in his opinion, if the subcommittee found that an important research focus was neglected, it should advise the UDAC to consider advising the Secretary to that effect, but that it would be up to the Secretary to decide how to solve the problem. The DFO agreed with this statement, adding that DOE is the proper entity to interact with RPSEA, its contractor. He also suggested that DOE may set up opportunities for additional interaction between RPSEA and UDAC Subcommittees. Ms. Melchert restated that the role of the committee as stated in Subtitle J of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 is to advise the Secretary of Energy on what is fundamentally his annual plan for the program.

Some discussion followed regarding a question as to whether or not the subcommittee is advising “after the fact” ... if advice will only be taken into consideration in the development of the next year’s plan. The DFO commented that changes can be made in the process as it proceeds. For example, if the subcommittee sees changes that need to be made related to solicitations for the 2009 plan, and the solicitations haven’t gone out yet, such changes could be made by the Secretary in response to the UDAC’s advice in real time. Comments from the UDAC can effect changes at any point in the process, not just in next year’s annual plan. If the Secretary accepted the UDAC recommendation, it would be incumbent on DOE to require RPSEA to make the changes.

When asked if they could give advice to the Secretary at points other than during the meeting where the annual plan is being reviewed, the Committee was told that the Chair was free to call a meeting at any time that he felt one was needed, and that the only

requirements related to meetings are that the UDAC meet a minimum of one time per year and that there is no limit to the number of meetings the Chair could call. Further, The UDAC must give advice on the annual plan, that is a requirement of the EPAct, but any time along the way the subcommittee could provide input to the UDAC and the UDAC could meet and the outcome from such a meeting could be additional recommendations. These recommendations would impact next year's annual plan, but UDAC doesn't have to wait to make recommendations, and they can impact previous annual plan implementation activities. The subcommittee can work at any time, the committee must officially meet to carry out its business, but recommendations can be made at any time.

The DFO also commented that all details about how the subcommittee works does not have to be spelled out specifically in the subcommittee charter and that the way this works can evolve over time.

The Chair then called for a vote on the formation of the R&D Portfolio. The motion to form the committee passed unanimously (11/11).

Following this the Chair asked for volunteers to serve on each standing subcommittee. Ms. Melchert noted that DOE stood ready to provide the subcommittee chairs with whatever administrative support they required.

The volunteers are given in the attached list. A discussion followed during which members of each subcommittee were asked to lead the subcommittee, and a chair was agreed upon for each (Process Committee Chair – Quenton Dokken, Portfolio Committee Chair – Mary Jane Wilson).

The Chair stated that the first order of business for each subcommittee would be to develop a charter and send it to DOE for publication.

The timing was determined to be: sub-committee comments on draft charters to sub-committee chairs by mid January 2009, final to DOE by end of January.

The Chair stated that he would confer with subcommittee chairs to develop a task plan for their respective subcommittee work going forward.

There was some discussion about the expected dates for the September/October 2009 advisory committee meetings. These have not been set yet but are expected to be the same weeks as in 2008.

A question was asked as to the status of the final UDAC report and cover letter in pdf format being provided to the committee members. Ms. Melchert stated that she would supply that document ASAP.

A question was asked as to the provision of minutes of the meeting and e-mail addresses/contact info of participants. Ms. said that she would supply those as well.

After a round of “thank you’s” by all to all, the meeting was adjourned at 11.21 AM EST.

Appendix 1 is the approved agenda, and Appendix 2 is the list of subcommittee members.

Appendix 1



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

9th Meeting
Ultra-Deepwater Advisory Committee
December 19, 2008
Conference Call

PUBLIC ACCESS: 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 1500
Washington, DC

AGENDA

9:30 a.m. EDT Registration; Begin Member call in

10:00 a.m. Roll Call;
Opening Remarks by the Committee Chair;
Remarks by Designated Federal Officer
Member discussion regarding organization and/or
establishment of standing subcommittees;
Committee vote;
Member discussion regarding next steps.

12:00 p.m. Adjourn

APPROVED: 
Guido DeHoratiis, Designated Federal Officer


Date

Conference Call Instructions:

- Toll free number: 1-866-705-4225 for U.S. callers
- 1-203-280-8163 for International Callers
- Pass Code: 1318649



Appendix 2

Subcommittee Member Listing

Portfolio Subcommittee Members:

Quenton Dokken
Ray Charles
Joe Fowler
Arnis Judzis
Steve Sears

Process Subcommittee Members:

Mary Jane Wilson
Kent Abadie
Ray Charles
Luk Ikelle
Paul Tranter
Morten Wienke