



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

September 15, 2011

John Eschenberg
Assistant Manager for Environmental Management
DOE-Oak Ridge Office
P.O. Box 2001, EM-90
Oak Ridge, TN 37831

Dear Mr. Eschenberg:

Recommendation 203: Recommendation on the Uranium-233 Project Re-Examination

At our September 14, 2011, meeting the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board approved the enclosed recommendation regarding the Uranium-233 Project Re-Examination.

The Board recommends that the Department of Energy take the following actions regarding the Uranium-233 Project at Oak Ridge National Laboratory:

- The Alternatives Analysis for the project should be implemented
- Dissolving of uranium-233 should be done in a safe manner to prevent inadvertent criticality
- Supplemental funding for the project in addition to the normal Oak Ridge Environmental Management Budget should be provided by DOE
- DOE should hold a summit meeting regarding the removal of uranium-233 from Oak Ridge National Laboratory involving people who can make decisions regarding future uses of uranium-233, downblending, safety, and security.

Please see the enclosed recommendation for complete details.

We look forward to receiving your response to this recommendation by December 14, 2011.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Murphree".

Ron Murphree, Chair, PE, CPE

rm/rsg

Enclosure

Recommendation: Recommendation on the Uranium-233 Project Re-Examination

cc/enc:

Dave Adler, DOE-ORO

Cate Alexander, DOE-HQ

Fred Butterfield, DOE-HQ

Pat Halsey, DOE-ORO

Connie Jones, EPA Region 4

John Krueger, DOE-ORO

Local Oversight Committee

Myron Iwanski, Anderson County Mayor

Melissa Nielson, DOE-HQ

John Owsley, TDEC

Mark Watson, Oak Ridge City Manager

Ron Woody, Roane County Executive

File 140.1



Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board Recommendation 203: Recommendation on the U-233 Project Re-Examination

Background

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) was briefed on the Uranium-233 Disposition Project Update by Mr. John Krueger on March 9, 2011. The Alternatives Analysis has dramatically reduced the scope of the project, especially the need for dissolution of U-233 at Building 3019 at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). The reduction in scope has greatly reduced the projected cost and reduced the risk of disruption of ongoing mission activities ORNL through accidents.

The Board believes that the Alternatives Analysis represents innovative and creative problem solving that is most welcome.

Discussion

The Alternatives Analysis has greatly reduced, but not removed, the need for dissolution of some of the U-233 material in Building 3019. The handling, and in particular, the dissolution, of this material within ORNL presents a risk of severely disrupting activities at ORNL. While the Alternatives Analysis shows that this risk can be reduced, it apparently did not identify alternatives that could eliminate the risk.

The ORSSAB is, and has long been, concerned over the funding of this project. While the Alternatives Analysis has reduced the estimated cost, it is still comparable to the Oak Ridge Environmental Management annual budget.

The ORSSAB has repeatedly recommended that additional funding be provided to support this task [ORSSAB Recommendation 156 (13 April 2007), ORSSAB recommendation 178 (9 April 2009), and in our annual review of the FY 2010, 2011, and 2012 budgets].

The Board appreciates the Department of Energy (DOE) Deputy Secretary and the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management's (EM-1) recognition of the importance of the Uranium-233 Disposition Project and their support of completion of the project. Current efforts to redefine the technical project approach and reestablish both the technical and fiscal baseline are applauded. Concurrently, EM-1 has launched an aggressive effort at footprint reduction for the DOE Complex. The addition of long overdue funding for the Uranium-233 Disposition Project as incremental funding above baseline to the Oak Ridge Office-EM base budget will demonstrate the Deputy Secretary and EM-1's commitment to completion of the project and the footprint reduction goals of the Department.

The Board also recognizes that completion of this project is necessary before other remediation can take place to finish the cleanup of the ORNL central campus, and thus should be an appropriately high priority.

Prioritization of this project should include the high cost of maintaining the U-233 in a safe and secure condition.

Recommendation

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board recommends that DOE take the following actions regarding the removal of U-233 from Building 3019:

- The Board believes that the Alternatives Analysis represents innovative and creative problem solving that is most welcome and recommends that the approach outlined be implemented, to mitigate the continuing high cost of maintenance and to allow completion of the cleanup of the ORNL central campus.
- In order to assure that the work is performed safely, assure that any dissolving of U-233 in Building 3019 be done safely to prevent inadvertent criticality.
- The Board recommends that supplemental funding for this project in addition to the normal Oak Ridge Environmental Management budget be provided by DOE to assure that environmental cleanup activities will not be disrupted.

The Board recommends that DOE hold a summit meeting on the removal of U-233 from ORNL. Attendees should include the people who can make decisions regarding future uses of U-233, downblending, safety, and physical security. Others involved could include stakeholders such as DOE Congressional liaisons, local county and city officials, regulators, members of the Tennessee congressional delegation and/or staff, DOE budget administrators, and any other parties that can contribute to the speedy, safe and cost effective removal of the U-233 from ORNL.