

Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Johnson Controls Building
Española, NM

Board Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2000

<p>Board Members Present: Menice S. Manzanares, Chair Fran Berting George Chandler Patrick Feehan Sara Galpin Agustin Garcia Dorothy Hoard Jim Johnston Angelina Valdez</p>	<p>Board Members Absent: James Alarid John Alejandro Jim Brannon Tim Gallegos Janet Gerwin Domingo Martinez Evelyn Maruska</p>
<p>Ex-Officio Members Present: Michael P. Baker, ER/LANL James Bearzi, NMED Joe Vozella, EM/DOE</p>	<p>Ex-Officio Members Absent: MJ Byrne, DDFO/DOE Rich Mayer, EPA</p>
<p>Staff: Ann DuBois, PWT</p>	<p>Guest: Carmen R. Rodriguez, ER/LANL Tom Starke, LANL/Stewardship</p>

I. OPENING

In the absence of the Deputy Designated Federal Official MJ Byrne, Joe Vozella, Assistant Area Manager of Environmental Management Programs DOE/LAAO, called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. He turned the meeting over to Menice S. Manzanares, Chair. Ms. Manzanares asked the Board members and members of the public to introduce themselves.

Fran Berting, seconded by Sara Galpin, moved to approve the meeting agenda as sent to the Board before the meeting. The agenda was approved by consensus.

Sara Galpin, seconded by George Chandler, moved to approve the August Board minutes, as amended.

George Chandler moved, seconded by Angelina Valdez, to approve the September Board minutes, as amended.

II. Public Comment

A. Tom Starke, Program Manager, LANL Environmental Stewardship Office, MS-J 591, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544 505-665-8118

Mr. Starke invited the Board and other Site Specific Advisory Boards (SSAB) to participate in the DOE Pollution Prevention Conference to be held in Albuquerque in June. The webpage announcing the conference will be available soon.

Mr. Starke said that MJ Byrne took the conference announcement to the SSAB Stewardship Conference that was held this week in Denver. She will ask the SSAB Chairs if they want to participate in this conference.

B. Carmen M. Rodriguez, LANL ER, MS M707, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544 505-665-5358

Ms. Rodriguez said that Ms. Elizabeth Withers, NEPA Document Officer, sent to the Board meeting a copy of the Special Edition of the SWEIS Yearbook Wildfire 2000. She distributed additional copies to Board members.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that Julie Canepa is sick and that is the reason that she did not attend the Board meeting.

C. James Bearzi, Chief, Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau, New Mexico Environment Department, 2044A Galisteo Street, Santa Fe, NM 87502 505-827-1557

Mr. Bearzi talked about the Santa Fe City Council Water Quality Task Force.

The City Council is now selecting the Task Force membership. On November 1, the Task Force will meet with Dr. Till. At the December meeting, the Task Force will hear about how Rocky Flats contaminated the Westminister water supply

D. Hank Daneman, P. O. Box 13260, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502 505-983-5261

Mr. Daneman is one of the founders of the Santa Fe City Council Water Quality

Task Force. He said that the Task Force is collecting materials on the hydrogeology of the area. The Task Force does not yet have an office. He asked if these materials could be stored at the Board office since the Task Force and the Board have common interests. Ms. Manzanares said that these materials could be stored at the Board's Santa Fe office.

III. REPORTS

A. Presentation on Tritium Found in a Los Alamos Drinking Water Well

Mat Johansen, DOE/LAAO said that the Department takes seriously the presence of tritium in a Los Alamos drinking water well. The current level of tritium is below the EPA drinking water standards. However, its presence is an indicator that there is movement between LANL waste and the aquifer. This movement is a key indicator of risk. Watchfulness is required so sampling will be increased to monitor what is happening with the well.

Dr. Berting asked Mr. Johansen to be more specific about the levels. Mr. Johansen responded that background levels are 1-3 picuries and the sample tested at 40 picuries per liter. Dr. Berting asked about the timeframe of this increase. Mr. Johansen replied that during 1997 this well was off line. The first sample was taken in June 1996 and tritium was seen then. Two samples have now been taken and the level has stayed the same. The nearby test well samples are consistent showing 36 picuries per liter. In 1993, the levels were the same.

Dr. Berting said that since this data is minimal, it is difficult to draw conclusions from it. Mr. Daneman expressed his concern that the strontium 90 levels are higher than the tritium. He thought that strontium 90 is a bigger risk to human health. Mr. Johansen replied that in January the data was 1.9 picuries per liter, which is closer to the drinking water standard. LANL used a new lab to establish greater precision on the sample results. Strontium 90 was not seen in the most recent sample. He said that in twelve drinking water wells, seven regional wells, and fourteen springs, there have been no valid samples showing strontium 90. Mr. Johansen added that strontium 90 was found in the shallow wells.

Mr. Johansen introduced Bob Beers with the LANL Environment, Safety and Health Division 18. Mr. Beers distributed a handout describing an overview of LANL's drinking water monitoring activities. Three of the four programs are conducted in cooperation with the New Mexico Environment Department, the Los Alamos County and LANL. One program is conducted solely by LANL.

LANL meets monthly with the Los Alamos County to discuss the results found in the previous month. The reports from these meetings are found in the annual Environmental Restoration Surveillance Report.

Mr. Beer described the strengths of the water system in Los Alamos. He said that the system's problems include perchlorates associated with the manufacture of rocket fuels, munitions, and jet propulsion. The original thought about the origin of perchlorates was the research on high explosives at TA-16 or TA-9. After investigation, the source is the Chemical labs where they are using perchlorates.

Mr. Daneman asked about the strontium 90 data that was collected in 1999. Ken Mullen explained that all the 1999 data on strontium 90 was canceled because it could not be validated. Mr. Vozella said that a more accurate answer was that LANL started using another laboratory that could reduce the uncertainty of the results. Mr. Mullen agreed with Mr. Daneman that the bigger concern is for strontium 90. The analytical data is hard to measure in the lower concentrations. Mr. Mullen said that LANL would continue to sample for strontium 90. He said that the 1999 Surveillance Report is nearly ready to be distributed. Mr. Johansen said that the values are a big concern because more of them are in the non-detect range. He added that the LANL's current sample testing program with better analysis shows the non-detects.

Peter Maimgren from the Rio Arriba Environmental Health Association in Española asked how does LANL determine if the water is safe and what will happen when there is a problem. James Bearzi, New Mexico Environment Department, explained that his Department will determine when LANL went past the legal limit and the law requires LANL or the Los Alamos County to treat the water, or not use the well.

A member of the public asked if the Potential Release Sites at LANL are the source of this contamination and who decides to shut down the well. Mr. Vozella explained that the Los Alamos County makes the decision to shut down a well. The DOE is taking the final steps to transfer the water system to the Los Alamos County. The County has leased the water system for some time. He said that the source terms have been defined and the Environmental Restoration program is responsible for the tritium in Pueblo Canyon. Each source term is being pursued by the New Mexico Environment Department and will be prioritized by risk including rapid movement.

Dorothy Hoard asked about the source of the strontium 90. Mr. Vozella said that LANL does not know the source at present. Mr. Chandler asked if it is possible for surface water to get into the drinking water well and contaminate it. Mr. Mullen said that the monitoring wells are showing approximately the same levels so it is not likely that the surface water was getting into the well. Mr. Mullen added that tritium is a concern because it shows that there is a pathway between legacy waste and the drinking water aquifer. He said that the source of the strontium 90 was the high atmospheric levels in the mid-1960s due to bomb testing.

Mr. Beer said that LANL is confident that perchlorates present in low levels in the Otowi 1 well are at or below 1 or 2-3.5 range. LANL communicated these results to the New Mexico Environment Department and the Los Alamos County. The EPA has not yet established the maximum limits for perchlorates before treatment. EPA is testing to find these limits.

Mr. Beer said that the tritium levels got LANL's attention. LANL increased the well monitoring samples and is working with the Los Alamos County and the New Mexico Environment Department to track and trend the results. Mr. Daneman asked why do the limits on the Chemicals of Concerns vary and if the effects on children and the elderly are concentrated in body in different ways. Mr. Beers responded that LANL must comply with the drinking water limits set by the New Mexico Environment Department. LANL has a toxicologist doing research on these levels. Dr. Feehan responded that at low levels, the limits are theoretical. For example, at low levels of strontium 90 at the 40 picuries level, the strontium 90 will not be taken up by the bone marrow. He said that radiation by itself is not the problem. The presence of tritium is an indicator of what else is going on in the pathways.

Mr. Daneman said that Al Shapola had graphs showing the effect of strontium 90 on the historical cancer incidence in Los Alamos. Dr. Feehan said that this issue is being researched. The data shows that thyroid cancer was a problem but not brain cancer. The brain cancer was found in people living in Los Alamos and working in Española so the cluster did not exist.

Mr. Maimgren from the Rio Arriba Environmental Health Association in Española said that he is doing an oral history project. He interviews people living in Los Alamos and Española. Mr. Maimgren found that 28 of 40 workers died of cancer. Dr. Feehan said that the types of cancers are usually prostate, breast or leukemia not lung. A thyroid cancer cluster did exist. The University of New Mexico did an epidemiological study. The low lung cancer rate seems to be the same as other parts of the country. Dr. Feehan added that people are living longer and more cancers are seen at 60 than at earlier ages.

Mr. Vozella described the upstream study to discover the source of the tritium. LANL will look at the first quarter results. When the source of the tritium is identified, then the original producer will move the source to the evaporators at TA-53. LANL expects in the next 1^{1/2} to 2 years to find and segregate the source. Then LANL will treat at the source or at the plant to quickly get the waste streams under control. Ms. Hoard asked if you could fingerprint tritium. Mr. Vozella said that tritium cannot be identified that way. Mr. Daneman said that because of the cost of tritium, it is effective to recover it. Mr. Steve Yanicak, New Mexico Environment Department, said that his Department is looking into methods to detect strontium 90 with all three of their labs.

B. Chair's Report

Ms. Manzanares said that the 8A contractor that will work with the Board is ATA Staffing Services, Inc. They hired Amanda Burton who is working temporarily until Terra Nash comes on November 20.

Ms. Manzanares appointed a Bylaws Committee to suggest changes in the current bylaws. The Committee members are Dr. Berting, Mr. Johnston and Ms. Manzanares. The Committee should finish this task by January 1, 2001. Ms. Galpin suggested that the March 24, 1999 version of the bylaws be redistributed to the Board members.

Ms. Manzanares asked the Board members to recommend other Board members so the Board can expand to the full complement of twenty-one members. She explained that Anthony Armijo requested a temporary leave of absence from Board activities to finish his degree. Ms. Byrne approved that temporary leave of absence. Ms. Manzanares said that Agustin Garcia would be the temporary Chair of the Monitoring and Surveillance Committee.

C. DOE Report

Mr. Vozella reported that Ms. Byrne is attending the SSAB Stewardship Conference. He had nothing further to report.

D. Waste Management Committee

The Waste Management Committee did not meet this month. Ms. Manzanares asked if a Board member were interested in serving as Chair of the Waste Management Committee. She indicated that she has emailed some Board members about the importance of serving on committees and attending Board meetings.

E. Monitoring and Surveillance Committee

Mr. Garcia reported that Mr. Armijo, Dr. Berting and he went on a flight over Los Alamos to see the Cerro Grande fire damage particularly in the canyons. This experience was very instructive to see the monitoring and surveillance issues resulting from the fire.

Ms. Manzanares asked Mr. Vozella for a report about the fire cleanup. Mr. Vozella said that all the physical construction is complete and they are cleaning up and seeding the construction sites. The next Environmental Restoration public meeting is on October 31. The topic will be to update the report on the cyanide found in the surface water. He said that the U.S. Forest Service is checking the vegetative growth. On the flat areas, vegetation

is growing well. The steep areas are more difficult to grow anything. The Forest Service may re-seed in the spring.

Mr. Vozella said that LANL experienced some recent storm events. Some erosion occurred away from any facilities or pueblo land. The erosion was in Guaje and Water canyons.

Mr. Vozella said that LANL is working on the Potential Release Sites that were damaged by the fire. Less than thirty sites are being remediated, particularly at TA-2, TA-41 and the canyon bottoms. The LANL ESH-16 website on the Cerro Grande fire has the most recent information. DOE gave NMED some funds to do a fire risk analysis and an independent dose assessment. The contractor will look at all the data and assess the risk to public. The contracting process has begun. He offered a further briefing if the Board requested it.

Mr. Garcia said that the Committee is concerned about what LANL can do to clean up the water after it is contaminated. He requested a follow-up presentation at the next Committee meeting.

F. Environmental Restoration Committee

Dr. Berting distributed a written report. She announced the Risk Assessment workshop sponsored by the Board to be held on December 2. The workshop's purpose is to learn how to assess risk to the public. The workshop participants will use Acid Canyon cleanup decisions to apply their learning. The next Committee meeting will be on October 30. Dr. Berting invited members of the public to join the Committee.

G. Community Outreach Committee

Mr. Johnston distributed a written report.

IV. Board Comments

Ms. Manzanares expressed her appreciation to Jim Brannon for his work on the LANL Stewardship paper to be presented to the Site Specific Advisory Board Long-Term Stewardship conference.

Ms. Rodriguez asked if the Board had considered the Santa Fe WIPP office space. Ms. Manzanares said that this space was considered but parking is a problem. She said there might appear to be a conflict of interest if the Board were housed in the WIPP office.

Ms. Manzanares asked about the FY2001 budget. Mr. Vozella said that DOE/LAO is working on how much carry over there will be and how much the LANL Environmental Restoration program will fund this year.

Mr. Chandler asked about the press coverage for this Board meeting. He suggested that the Board should invite the press for each meeting. A press release should go out from LANL before each meeting to announce the Board's agenda. Mr. Vozella said that this meeting had a timely issue. LANL came out with the data on tritium in timely manner. The Board provided a public forum to discuss the implications of this information.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

The minutes are an accurate and complete summary of the matters discussed and conclusions reached at the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board meeting held on October 25, 2000.

Certified by:


Menice Santistevan-Manzanares / Date

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