

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SITE-SPECIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

Hanford Idaho Nevada Northern New Mexico
Oak Ridge Paducah Portsmouth Savannah River

June 30, 2022

Mr. William “Ike” White
Senior Advisor for the Office of Environmental Management (EM)
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. White:

On October 7, 2021, the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the EM Site-Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) passed the following recommendation concerning best practices for stakeholder and community interaction at EM sites. This recommendation was subsequently approved by all eight local boards of the EM SSAB.

The EM SSAB was tasked with identifying EM SSAB expectations and guiding principles to be used as a complex-wide framework for DOE EM’s interactions with stakeholders and communities. The process included each board documenting their expectations and suggestions for how DOE EM should interact with local stakeholders and communities to reach EM’s 10-year strategic vision. These results from the individual boards were presented at the EM SSAB Chairs Meeting in April 2021.

The EM SSAB then formed a subcommittee to develop a compilation of guiding principles (attached). The EM SSAB recommends that DOE EM consider these important principles when communicating with the public.

- Attachment #1, *EM SSAB Expectations and Guiding Principles for Stakeholder Communication*, principles developed and recommended by the EM SSAB.
- Attachment #2, *Charge Responses Compiled*, contains the PowerPoint slides provided by each SSAB Chair at the Spring 2021 Virtual Chairs Meeting. The slides provide a detailed listing of the improvement opportunities offered by each of the SSAB chairs.

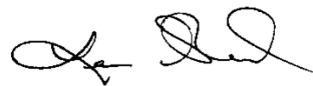
These recommendations are respectfully submitted by the below signed chairs of the respective SSABs.



Steve Wiegman, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board



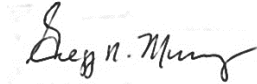
Frank Bonesteel, Chair
Nevada SSAB



Leon Shields, Chair
Oak Ridge SSAB



Don Barger, Chair
Paducah CAB



Gregg Murray, Chair
Savannah River Site CAB



Cherylin Atcitty, Chair
Northern New Mexico CAB



Jody Crabtree, Chair
Portsmouth SSAB



Teri Ehresman, Chair
Idaho Cleanup Project CAB

cc: Kelly Snyder, EM-4.32

Attachments

1. Attachment #1, *EM SSAB Guiding Principles for Stakeholder Communication*
2. Attachment #2, *Charge Responses Compiled*

EM SSAB Expectations and Guiding Principles for Stakeholder Communication

10 Year Strategic Plan Development:

- 1) DOE should hold 10 year Strategic Vision public meetings every year, at each site, in order to share the next iteration of programmatic goals, including discussions of successes, roadblocks, course changes, new scopes of cleanup and recognition of potential uncertainties. Public tutorial meetings should be held two weeks in advance of the beginning of any formal Public Comment period in order to build a common knowledge base.
- 2) EM Sites have the commonality of specific, near-term, three to five year, plans. These specific site plans should all trigger public involvement campaigns, outlining yearly updates on their next respective, goals. Site near-term plans should be aligned with 10 year Strategic Plan goals such that near-term plans can be used iteratively to benchmark programmatic progress.
- 3) Regarding the Strategic Vision, in addition to reducing jargon and allowing for a quicker means of identifying or getting to information pertinent to a specific site, the document needs a better explanation of how the priorities are established. What criteria are used with regard to public health, environmental risks, local economies, cost to complete, land transfers, etc.? Not details for each site, but an overall explanation of the process. This might help people understand why some sites have larger budgets or seem to be more active. Local SSABs are probably knowledgeable about planning for their sites, but each board should have some education on national priorities.

Communication:

- 1) DOE should put forth a concerted effort to define terminology so that FACA Boards and the public understand what is being considered and asked for, from them, within the decision matrix to be discussed. DOE needs to clearly communicate the boundaries of what is being considered. Additionally, DOE should articulate, in what manner, public policy advice can be successfully received by DOE-EM in order to see it incorporated into DOE's pending decisions. Lastly, DOE must convey how they will respond to public comments.
- 2) Utilize the strength of the SSAB Board's experiences and longevity by having them help to facilitate public meeting design, timing and locations. DOE-EM SSABs are now long-standing. They are formed from broad representation of the communities they represent and as such have the ability to help DOE regionalize presentations.
- 3) Evaluation of SSAB effectiveness should be based on several factors. This should include development of, but not limited to, guidance on when and what types of recommendations are needed. Although less objective, evaluative assessments from community stakeholders, DOE, DOE contractors, regulatory personnel and the SSAB's themselves should be incorporated.
- 4) Activities at some sites are long term and have reached the stage where little change is seen during the tenure of a typical SSAB member. Hence, the need for major decisions and recommendations is less or non-existent. Maintaining SSAB member interest is difficult. In this situation, DOE should consider ways to involve the SSABs in less consequential decisions and public outreach. DOE should

also consider what types of education might provide a better background for recommendations, decisions, community outreach that will occur in the future.

5) Written communication produced by DOE and the SSABs that is intended for the general public should be reviewed by site Public Affairs to verify that the use of jargon or uncommon terminology is understandable to a non-technical audience.

Public Involvement:

1) DOE should embrace the tenet that institutional knowledge and transparency in all aspects of the cleanup program is an essential component of building informed, useful and supportive public policy advice from the SSAB Boards, Tribes and the public. By engaging the public early and often, DOE can utilize the SSAB Boards and their operating structures such that they help prepare future generations of Board members and the public for informed engagement.

2) DOE should support STEM program development for local schools and colleges with curriculum development. Efforts should include supporting development of trained people for trade-focused careers.

3) DOE should actively provide opportunities for informational engagement and coordinate with the EM SSAB meeting schedule to the extent possible.

4) DOE should hold public tutorial meetings in order to share DOE interactions with regulatory bodies and formally convened scientific panels. Building a collective, scientific basis for remediation pathway development that incorporates informed public policy recommendations should be the goal.

5) SSAB membership should be consistent in reflecting community educational levels, proximity, racial and cultural diversity, and income levels. An exact mirror of the community is not necessarily beneficial. Interest and commitment are most important. Including actual stakeholders affected by public health or environmental risks or community economic and political factors is more important than simply looking at the community demographics. Also, having people that can contribute to SSAB decisions because of experience, education, and connections in the community is important. One criterion that should be emphasized is a member's willingness and ability to communicate with the general public.

6) Introductory training for new board members appears to be inconsistent. Site tours and in-person instruction should be required. These should be supplemented by online or other virtual resources. In addition to DOE and/or contractor personnel, current SSAB members should be involved in the tours and training. Introductory training can be spread out over time, but should be separate from SSAB meetings. A more formal schedule of when new SSAB members are added should be established to allow for a better introductory training schedule and to reduce the need for continual repetition of information that has already been addressed by longer term SSAB members.

7) Because of COVID, virtual meetings have become routine. Although these meetings allow for participation of people geographically distant or with health issues, they are not as effective regarding communication within and between SSAB, DOE, regulatory personnel, DOE contractors, and the general public. Virtual meetings allow for a lessened commitment among participants. SSAB in-person meetings should be prioritized, with hybrid meetings as needed.

Risk Communication:

- 1) DOE should address the Boards and the public on how risk assessments affect prioritization and decision making.
- 2) Training should be provided to Board members on communications surrounding high-profile or sensitive issues.

Charge #2 – SSAB Expectations/ Guiding Principles

- Identify SSAB 10-year expectations and guiding principles that could be used as a complex-wide framework for DOE EM's interaction with stakeholders/communities
 - Utilizing the current EM 10-year Vision*, each Board will document their expectations for how DOE EM will interact with local stakeholders/communities to reach that 10-year vision (a template will be provided to each board)
 - Each Board will present their results during the Spring 2021 Chairs meeting
 - The Chairs will collaboratively discuss the individual Board results, identify commonalties and develop a complex-wide SSAB expectations and guiding principles framework (Spring 2021 – Fall 2021)
- * 10-Year Vision can be found at [DOE-Strategic-Vision-LR.pdf \(energy.gov\)](#)

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

- Would the improvement in remediation techniques warrant a review of the earlier sites remediated to ensure that they are remediated to the highest potential?
- Develop a Site EM Nevada Program History and Lessons Learned Compilation that accounts for developments throughout the Program's mission life-cycle, including initial mission statement.
- Coordinate with the State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (State Regulator) and the EM Nevada Program and seek mutual corporate knowledge to develop a historical summary, fact sheet, and lessons learned compilation that could be a reference input to an EM Nevada Program public affairs milestone plan for the 2020s.

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years

- 1. Commit to openness and transparency**
- 2. Engage early before policy level decisions to get stakeholder buy in on cleanup**
- 3. Get back in the Trust Zone – good collaborative process is a scaffold upon which trust is built**

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

- 1. Have relevant-topic poster session forums as add-on to regular NNM CAB meetings.**
- 2. Hold EM life-cycle cleanup vision public forums and invite public comment.**
- 3. Through NNM CAB newsletters inform the public on a more regular basis about environmental cleanup and legacy waste issues.**

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

- **Increase public input/educational meetings on projects where feasible**
- **Expand workforce development, whether through contractors or DOE-direct activities.**
- **When remediating land, return it to a state available for some beneficial use whenever possible (recreational, business, conservation)**

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

- The excavation of groundwater plumes and unlined landfills will not only provide fill material for the OSWDF, but also leave a healthier environment and cleaner footprint for future land transfer.
- While the successful coordination and completion of simultaneous waste cell construction, building D&D and landfill excavation are important, local stakeholders should hear more about monitoring efforts, the WAO and regulatory oversight benchmarks.
- The DOE and contractor workforce is a major source of pride for southern Ohio. Continued workforce training that produces safe, timely and quality work should be promoted to local communities for the benefits that it provides.

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

- Continue to develop and promote The Groundwater Success Story and comparable video series.
- Develop and share key metrics to help identify success and progress of the safe removal of contaminants as process buildings are prepared for demolition.
- Stand by Paducah's hallmark of focusing on financial/ safety/ environmental successes by continuing to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars by downsizing infrastructure through utilities optimization

Description of site activity that needs to be completed	What does completion of this activity mean to the SSAB?	How would the SSAB like to see DOE EM interact with local stakeholders/communities to reach the completion vision?
<p>The endstate of the Savannah River Site will be the elimination or minimization of nuclear materials, spent nuclear fuel, plutonium, and waste through safe stabilization, treatment, and/or disposition. All EM-owned facilities will be decommissioned once work scope is complete. Waste units will be remediated. Contaminated groundwater will either be remediated or undergoing remediation. Units where residual materials are left in place will be under institutional controls comprised of access restrictions and land use controls, inspections, maintenance, monitoring, and remedial measures/corrective action(s), as appropriate. Land that can be safely returned to the public will be.</p>	<p>With the removal and offsite disposition of EM nuclear material and waste hazards, the remaining hazards at SRS will be orders of magnitude less in quantity and risk than the current hazards. Any residual hazards to onsite and offsite receptors will be significantly reduced to an acceptable risk level that is protective of onsite and offsite potential receptors and consistent with environmental laws and regulations.</p>	<p>DOE should continue to communicate program information to the stakeholder communities through a variety of methods and multi-media tools, in a collaborative and meaningful way to help surrounding communities take action to protect their health and safety. This includes continuing public outreach efforts by SRS.</p>

**The table shown is the result of our efforts on the original Charge 2. Our board has not met since the charge was changed.

Top three suggestions for improving stakeholder interactions during the next 10 years:

1. Better cross-complex communication - particularly when events at another location (i.e. WIPP) have meaningful impact on our cleanup progress.
2. In-person participation by EM administration for substantial events and milestones.
3. Proactive involvement about using ICP resources well before their existing mission is completed - thereby allowing for more efficient use of resources and employee skill-sets.