

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
to the
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

July 18, 2022

www.em.doe.gov/emab

PARTICIPANTS

Environmental Management Advisory Board (EMAB) Members:

David Abelson
 Jack Craig
 Amy Fitzgerald, EMAB Vice Chair
 Brent Gerry
 Celeste Greene
 Diahann Howard
 Kim Kearfott
 Elliott Laws
 Frazer Lockhart
 Nicole Martinez
 Tracye McDaniel
 Josiah Pinkham
 Jim Rispoli
 Michael Shapiro
 Jake Washington

U.S. Department of Energy Participants:

William “Ike” White, Senior Advisor for Environmental Management (EM)
 Candice Robertson, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, EM
 Cathy Tullis, Chief of Staff, EM
 John Howard, Acting Deputy Chief of Staff, EM
 Jay Mullis, Acting Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regulatory and Policy Affairs, EM
 Angela Watmore, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Project Management, EM
 Kristen Ellis, Acting Director of Regulatory, Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Engagement, EM
 Mary Kruger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resource Management
 Erik Olds, Director of Communications, EM
 Joceline Nahigian, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Programs, EM
 Kelly Snyder, EMAB Designated Federal Officer
 Alyssa Harris, EMAB Federal Coordinator
 Michelle Hudson, Office of Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Programs
 Melinda Comfort, Office of Assistant General Counsel
 Julie Dock, Office of Corporate Executive Management

Members of the Public:

Thomas Bond Calloway, University of South Carolina College of Engineering
 Aidan Platkin, K&L Gates LLP
 Kelsey Shank, theEDGE
 Tim Smith, Governmental Strategies Inc.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

D&D – Deactivation and Decommissioning
DOE – U.S. Department of Energy
EM – (DOE) Office of Environmental Management
EMAB – Environmental Management Advisory Board
FACA – Federal Advisory Committee Act
R&D – Research and Development

MEETING MINUTES

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Management Advisory Board (EMAB) met virtually on July 18, 2022. Participants included EMAB members, DOE staff, and members of the public. The meeting was open to the public and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

The meeting was live streamed on YouTube and the recording can be accessed at the following link: https://youtu.be/gNqHuJVZD_8

Opening Remarks

Ms. Joceline Nahigian, Director of the Environmental Management Office of Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Programs, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. ET. The attendees introduced themselves. Ms. Kelly Snyder, EMAB Designated Federal Officer welcomed the attendees.

Ms. Julie Dock, DOE Office of Corporate Executive Management, administered the oath of office to new EMAB special Government employee members, Celeste Greene, Michael Shapiro, and Jake Washington.

Ms. Snyder introduced Senior Advisor for EM William "Ike" White. Mr. White noted that the oath of office is a great reminder of the Department's mission. He thanked the members for being part of a diverse advisory board and for their commitment to public service. He recognized Shelly Wilson and Amy Fitzgerald for being willing to serve as the new EMAB Chair and Vice Chair respectively. He thanked Jack Craig for his past service as Vice Chair and thanked Elliott Laws for his service to the Board as his term ends.

Mr. White discussed the progress on EM's key priorities for the year, including demolition of Portsmouth's Building 326, treating record amounts of tank waste at Savannah River Site, getting the Tank Side Cesium Removal system up and running at Hanford, and completion of the transuranic waste retrieval effort at Idaho.

Mr. White acknowledged the importance of tackling EM's challenges, strengthening relationships with stakeholders and regulators, and enhancing research and development (R&D) efforts to enhance cleanup activities. He noted that none of this would be possible without the proper workforce to make it happen. He added that EM has approximately 1200 federal employees. One third of this workforce is eligible to retire within three years, and half of the workforce is eligible to retire within five years. Approximately 15 EM federal employees are under the age of 30. Mr. White said that getting the right workforce on board is the single most important component of ensuring a successful cleanup program in the years to come.

Mr. White said that EM was granted \$56 million dollars to support EM's Minority Serving Institutions Partnership Program, which will enhance EM's workforce pipeline. He said that the Energy Communities Alliance and the Energy Facility Contractors Group are meeting in conjunction with the National Cleanup Workshop to discuss EM workforce challenges.

Mr. White acknowledged that EM has lessons to learn about recruiting and retaining the best workforce and setting up the workplace of the future. He discussed two new charges:

The future of work will continue to be full of opportunities and challenges. Based on the diverse and extensive backgrounds of the EMAB members, EM is requesting actionable recommendations on how the program can demonstrate modern human capital practices that make EM an employer of choice.

1. Recruitment and Retention

- a. How can EM increase its participation in STEM partnerships that prepare students for a career in EM?*
- b. What innovative recruitment practices could be adopted for the federal workforce and contractor partners that align with DOE's Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goals?*
- c. How should EM recruit top non-STEM (i.e. HR, Budget, Project Management) professionals and students?*
- d. What retention practices make the largest impact for EM federal employees and contractors?*

2. Hybrid Work Environment

- a. How can EM leverage hybrid and virtual flexibilities to enhance agility and efficiency?*
- b. How can EM empower federal and contractor employees with efficient workspaces and technology that minimize hybrid workplace challenges?*
- c. What are best practices to balance mission needs with a flexible hybrid workplace culture?*
- d. How can EM foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive hybrid environment?*
- e. What are best practices for office hoteling?*

Mr. White noted that the charges are broad, and he appreciates the various perspectives on EMAB. He noted that there are many benefits to in-person work, however there is an opportunity for many folks to increase both productivity and job satisfaction in a hybrid environment.

Mr. White mentioned that EMAB worked on a charge related to EM's R&D program in 2014 and suggested that he may ask EMAB to revisit this topic.

Mr. Jim Rispoli said that during his time in EM, a career development program was created that recruited and retained many employees, including those from minority-serving institutions, with automatic career advancement that was attractive to recent graduates. He asked why programs like this seem to be created, discarded and resurrected at DOE. Mr. White responded that he suspects it's a combination of priorities and budget, but they are currently in the process of restarting programs like this. He said that it seems irresponsible not to have an entry-level pipeline for a program that will be in existence for several decades.

Ms. Candice Robertson said that there was a government-wide revamping of recent graduate programs to correct an issue with veterans preference not being properly considered which led to the dismantling of existing programs.

Ms. Snyder said that she was recruited to EM through a college graduate program in the early 2000's and that she appreciated the program. Mr. White said his career also started through a similar program as a federal intern.

Mr. Jake Washington asked Mr. White if the open positions in EM are inherently federal. He noted that the private and public sectors often compete for the same talent, and it may lessen the burden of federal hiring to source employees as contractors. Mr. White said that some are and some are not inherently federal. He said that some positions could be filled through support service contracts. He said that the attrition rate of EM is not concerning.

Ms. Mary Kruger said that about 10% of the workforce is federal and 90% are contractors. She noted that it is a challenge to balance how many positions being filled should be high-level subject matter experts and how many should be entry-level employees that will fill a need in the future.

Mr. David Abelson said that another challenge is competing with the National Nuclear Security Administration's positions in similar fields. Mr. White said that in some EM locations this overlap exists, and at some sites they can leverage resources and efforts to benefit both programs.

Ms. Amy Fitzgerald said that knowledge transfer is always a challenge and retaining people, even if it is part-time or on a contract, is helpful to train new employees. Mr. White said that it is important to have mentorship and training to have new employees connect with the organization and want to stay. He said that remote work can make this even more challenging. He added that they leveraged the remote environment to expand mentoring opportunities to connect more mentors to mentees across the complex.

Ethics Briefing

Ms. Melinda Comfort provided the required annual ethics training to EMAB members that are special Government employees. She reviewed the federal ethics rules and principles that apply to these members. She encouraged any members with specific questions to reach out to her any time.

Board Business

Ms. Fitzgerald said that Ms. Shelly Wilson, EMAB Chair, could not be at the meeting today, so she will lead the discussion. She suggested that the EMAB members review past recommendations by the group to inform them on how the EMAB has conducted their work.

Ms. Fitzgerald noted that the expertise of EMAB is a great mix to tackle the charges. She asked the members to read the charges and respond to EMAB staff to sign up for a subcommittee. She asked how the members would like to split up the charge and they decided to set up one subcommittee for each charge.

Ms. Fitzgerald said that it would be helpful for the members to know what the current telework policies are. Ms. Kruger said that the policies have been changing over the past two years. She said the authority to enforce these policies is at the Department level, and at DOE the Secretary of Energy has delegated authority down to the program office heads, such as Mr. Ike White.

Ms. Kruger said often EM will recruit excellent interns but will be unable to retain them for a variety of reasons. She noted that understanding the perspective of the younger workforce is important to be competitive. She also noted that it can be tough to convince managers that junior employees are worth the extra training effort when they already have so much on their plate.

Ms. Diahann Howard mentioned that supporting the retention of existing employees will stabilize the recruitment pipeline. She said that investing in the pipeline starts at the middle school level. She also suggested blending diversity, equity, and inclusion into their response to the charge. She emphasized that the next generation of the workforce values flexibility.

Mr. Michael Shapiro asked if there are unions that affect remote policies. Ms. Kruger responded yes, and that they have a great working relationship.

Ms. Angela Watmore commented that she would like to see the group avoid being limited by the current hybrid framework. She noted that EM is seeing differences in drivers of successful recruitment and retention across their local communities.

Ms. Nicole Martinez noted that diversity, equity and inclusion is mentioned in both charges and suggested that a couple of members focus on that topic between both groups.

Ms. Fitzgerald suggested that the group should provide responses to the charges by the end of the calendar year. Ms. Snyder agreed. Ms. Kruger noted that the remote work extension for EM federal employees was extended to the end of the calendar year, so getting recommendations before then could make an impact on decision-making.

Ms. Kim Kearfott commented that while this topic has been discussed many times before, the pandemic may have created an opportunity to make significant, lasting changes.

Ms. Snyder asked the group to let her know their thoughts on scheduling a meeting before the end of the calendar year.

Mr. Rispoli said that DOE is a member of the Federal Facilities Council at the National Academies, which has a standing committee on human resources. He said that DOE is not alone in addressing these challenges, and there are 15 agencies on the standing committee that could dialogue with the DOE Human Resources team. He offered to connect Ms. Kruger to the National Academies' staff person. Ms. Howard suggested that it may be helpful for the EMAB to have a meeting with the staff person.

Ms. Fitzgerald thanked Elliott Laws for his service to the EMAB and wished him well in future endeavors.

Public Comment Period

Ms. Snyder stated that members of the public were given the opportunity to submit written comments to be read into the record during the public comments section of the meeting. DOE staff did not receive any comments.

Ms. Snyder and Ms. Fitzgerald thanked the attendees and adjourned the meeting.