

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SITE-SPECIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

April 29-30, 2026

In Person Meeting

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI – Artificial Intelligence
CAB – Citizens Advisory Board
CEQ – Council on Environmental Quality
CFO – Carlsbad Field Office
CRO – Community Reuse Organization
D&D – Decontamination and Decommissioning
DDFO – Deputy Designated Federal Officer
DNFSB – Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
DOE – U.S. Department of Energy
EA – Environmental Assessment
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
EM – (DOE) Office of Environmental Management
EM SSAB – Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board
FACA – Federal Advisory Committee Act
FY – Fiscal Year
GSA – General Services Administration
HAB – Hanford Advisory Board
HAMMER – Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Federal Training Center
HFO – Hanford Field Office
HQ – Headquarters
ICP CAB – Idaho Cleanup Project Citizens Advisory Board
NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
NNSA – National Nuclear Security Administration
NNMCAB – Northern New Mexico Citizens’ Advisory Board
NSSAB – Nevada Site-Specific Advisory Board
ORSSAB – Oak Ridge Site-Specific Advisory Board
PAD CAB – Paducah Citizens Advisory Board
PORTS SSAB – Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board
RRCOP – Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice
SRS – Savannah River Site
SRS CAB – Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
SSAB – Site-Specific Advisory Board
TRU – Transuranic Waste
WIPP – Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

ATTENDEES

Hanford Advisory Board: **Susan Coleman**, Chair; **Miya Burke**, Vice-Chair; **Meegan Tripp**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Dana Cowley**, Meeting Facilitator, **Laura Caulfield**, Staff; **MaryAnne Wuennecke**, Staff; **Ben Prueitt**, Washington State Department of Ecology liaison; **Matt Hendrickson**, member/Oregon Department of Energy (virtual)

Idaho Cleanup Project Citizens Advisory Board: **Robert Skinner**, Chair; **Debi Farber**, Vice-Chair; **Nicholas Balsmeier**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Jonathan Zobell**, alternate DDFO; **Jessica Vassuer**, Staff

Nevada Site-Specific Advisory Board: **Mark Hilton**, Chair; **Eddie Williams**, Vice-Chair; **Tiffany Gamero**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Barbara Ulmer**, Staff

Oak Ridge Site-Specific Advisory Board: **Kris Bartholomew**, Chair; **Melyssa Noe**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer (virtual); **Abby Hill**, Alternate Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Shelley Kimel**, Staff (virtual); **Sara McManamy-Johnson**, Staff (virtual); **Leah Alexander**, Staff (virtual)

Paducah Citizens Advisory Board: **Ben Stinnett**, Chair; **Myron Wessel**, Vice-Chair;

Portsmouth Site-Specific Advisory Board: **Donna Carson**, Chair; **Herman Potter**, Vice-Chair; **Julie Galloway**, Staff

Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board: **Deborah Creech**, Chair; **James Tanner**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Juanita Campbell**, Staff

Members of the Public: Ty Beaver, media/Tri-Cities Journal of Business; Kelsey Shank, media/The Edge Wins (virtual); Carrie Meyer, Hanford Mission Integration Solutions; Dan Solitz

U.S. Department of Energy: **Mark Bollinger**, Manager, Carlsbad Field Office; **Joel Bradburne**, EM Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary; **David Brunnert**, EM Chief Operating Officer; **Shannon Chester**, Office of Infrastructure and D&D; **Jill Conrad**, EM Intergovernmental and Tribal Programs; **Marianna Du Bosq**, Director, EM Budget and Planning; **Ray Geimer**, Manager, Hanford Field Office; **Michelle Hudson**, EM SSAB Staff (virtual); **Joceline Nahigian**, EM Director for Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Programs; **Kelly Snyder**, EM SSAB Designated Federal Officer; **Greg Sosson**, EM Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Field Operations; **Tom Teynor**, Deputy Site Manager, Hanford Field Office; **Steve Trischman**, EM Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resource Management; **Jack Zimmerman**, EM Acting Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regulatory and Policy Affairs

MEETING MINUTES

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE or Department) Environmental Management (EM) Site-Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) Chairs meeting was held in person, with a virtual component for observation and public comment only. The meeting was open to the public and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

DAY 1: APRIL 29, 2026

Opening Remarks and Introductions

The EM SSAB Chairs Meeting convened on April 29, 2026, with Kelly Snyder, the Designated Federal Officer, officially opening the meeting. She noted the meeting was being recorded for minute-taking purposes and informed the group of the absence of Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board members from Los Alamos due to membership appointment delays. Meegan Tripp, Hanford Deputy Designated Federal Officer, provided an overview of the binders issued to attendees. Dana Cowley was introduced as the meeting facilitator, and set the meeting's organizational expectations, including emergency procedures, electronics etiquette, and the goal of respectful and constructive discussion.

A round of detailed self-introductions followed from all attending participants—board members, DOE staff, site representatives, media, and support personnel—both at the main table and at support stations.

Ray Geimer, Hanford Field Office Manager, welcomed attendees and encouraged reflections from the prior day's site tour. Participants commented on the site's sheer size and the energy among Hanford's workforce, prompting Geimer to discuss recent major achievements, including advances in the vitrification project and the cesium capsule relocation. He noted a workforce transition with a significant influx of younger employees and shared that comprehensive training programs, including hiring retired experts and use of resources like HAMMER, are critical due to many new hires not arriving with Hanford-specific expertise. He stressed that advisory board members are crucial liaisons between DOE projects and their communities, ensuring critical two-way communication.

During discussion, board members commended Hanford's workforce enthusiasm. In response to training inquiries, Geimer recounted that most hires required extensive hands-on training, led by experienced former personnel and tailored site-specific instruction. The importance of leveraging diverse backgrounds for both operational and scientific roles was noted.

EM Update

Joel Bradburne, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for EM, provided a broad update highlighting the unique “renaissance” in nuclear energy and related industries. He detailed how the growing demands of AI technology, national power requirements, and a shift toward privatization are driving new investments and infrastructure challenges across the DOE complex. Specific examples were provided from sites such as Hanford (tank waste vitrification), Idaho (nuclear capability), Oak Ridge (isotope separation for cancer treatments), Portsmouth (data centers and power generation initiatives), Paducah (uranium enrichment), Nevada (mission nearing completion), and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (waste disposal). He acknowledged the valuable perspectives board members bring from their respective communities and noted that his

own experience as a former site manager now strengthens his efforts at headquarters to support and enable site missions.

In response to a question about his transition from fieldwork to headquarters, Mr. Bradburne shared that drawing on both his technical and leadership experience, he is responsible for driving effectiveness of field operations and strengthening coordination and collaboration across the EM complex. He feels that it will take time to achieve the level of collaboration that he is looking for EM to achieve.

Round Robin

The meeting then moved into a “Round Robin” site board update session. The Hanford board chair reported concerns about the impacts of the government shutdown, which disrupted in-person connections, and highlighted critical delays in board membership packet approvals, potentially threatening the board’s operation if not resolved by October. Despite these challenges, the board produced six pieces of advice in the last year, participated in site tours, and observed emergency response drills. In discussion, DOE headquarters staff reaffirmed prioritization of membership packet approvals and encouraged continued public engagement, underscoring the value of contributions from former board members who now participate as members of the public.

The Paducah board remarked on the site’s role as a regional economic driver and stressed the importance of safety and community-wide collaboration, reflecting optimism about future project opportunities and ongoing economic development.

Oak Ridge highlighted the recent approval of four new board members, ongoing recommendations related to waste disposal, site modernization, and the increasing role of property transfers in site transformation.

The Idaho board reported three new member appointments and described continued engagement and technology advances, including new glass waste forms, construction of new disposal capacity, and effective partnerships with the tribal community, exemplified by collaborative cultural and historical work. They stressed the importance of public outreach and dispelling misconceptions through greater transparency.

Nevada representatives noted their unique situation as their site approaches mission completion within the next decade. Key accomplishments included board contributions to major environmental reports and an ongoing dialogue about the legacy management phase to follow closure. Board liaisons play an important role in ensuring a broad range of perspectives are included, including those from regulatory and intergovernmental voices.

Savannah River’s chair shared news about the restart of the H Canyon and HP Line, which will support uranium recovery, production of mixed oxide fuel for advanced reactors, and the potential acceleration of plutonium disposition. The board’s recommendations addressed concerns about the impacts on the environment, future site use, artificial intelligence integration,

groundwater protection, and site decommissioning. DOE staff explained continued work on recommendations related to safe material handling and future site plans.

Portsmouth board members expressed appreciation for DOE's engagement, describing it as an active partner in community and workforce development. They noted a surge in large-scale projects such as data centers and power plants, with reindustrialization expected to add tens of thousands of jobs. This influx presents infrastructure and workforce challenges. The board requested continued DOE participation in local planning to address these needs. Discussion highlighted the need to upskill the local workforce and provide new technical opportunities, including craft and skilled trades education.

A recurring theme emerged on the critical shortage of skilled tradespeople across multiple sites, with boards discussing collaborations with unions, government grants, and local college partnerships to expand technical training and credentialing. DOE and boards recognized the need to foster educational programs that align with future workforce needs, emphasizing the value of craft careers and technical upskilling.

The meeting closed for a mid-morning break with notice that public comment would follow the budget presentation later in the session. Action items identified include the prioritization of membership packet processing by DOE, continued board attention to workforce development needs, and ongoing engagement between DOE, labor, education, and communities to ensure all sites have the workforce and infrastructure needed for both current and future mission objectives. The next EM SSAB Chairs meeting will potentially be held virtually in October¹.

Budget Update

Following the break, Marianna Du Bosq, Director of Budget and Planning, provided a detailed overview of the FY 2027 budget request and emphasized the substantial planning that is required behind the scenes prior to the budget's release. Her objective was to help the group understand the federal budgeting process and the implications for the sites managed by the agency.

Ms. Du Bosq explained that the FY 2027 President's budget request for DOE's Office of EM stands at \$8.2 billion, which is roughly five percent lower than the FY 2026 enacted level of \$8.6 billion. She highlighted that the agency remains committed to meeting legal requirements and maximizing continuity of operations, particularly through strategic use of "no-year" appropriations that facilitate ongoing progress even during budget shortfalls. She noted that the agency has had to make hard decisions this year, focusing on legal compliance and prioritizing work to ensure maximum continuity given the decreased funding.

Ms. Du Bosq proceeded to outline major activities slated for each site under the agency's jurisdiction. At Hanford, efforts will focus on advancing tank waste pretreatment and retrieval operations, evaporator campaigns, expanded treatment capability in the West Area, ongoing groundwater remediation, operation of the Integrated Disposal Facility, and capsule transfer. Savannah River will support the restart of uranium recovery, operation of salt processing,

¹ The next EM SSAB Chairs meeting is scheduled to be held virtually on November 10, 2026.

construction of disposal units, and key decommissioning efforts. The WIPP site in New Mexico will see investment in hoisting capability projects, ongoing mining, and waste transport operations. Los Alamos will direct increased resources to monitoring and containment, compliance with regulatory orders, and TRU waste retrieval. Idaho will continue legacy cleanup and support for the nuclear renaissance, handle TRU waste transfers, and treat sodium bearing waste. Sites including Oak Ridge, Portsmouth, Paducah, West Valley, Moab, and Nevada will continue making progress on such things as decontamination and decommissioning, disposal facility construction, property transfers, groundwater monitoring, and closure activities.

Miya Burke, from the Hanford Advisory Board, inquired about the impact of the notable decrease in funding for Hanford. Ms. Burke's concerns centered on the fact that the requested budget falls short of the "compliant" budget required to fulfill legal milestones, which stands at \$6.76 billion according to regulators. Ms. Du Bosq responded by acknowledging that some projects at Hanford would be deferred or paused as a result. She referenced the TRU waste project, which benefited from additional funding in FY 2026 but would not be sustained in FY 2027 unless appropriations increased. Work at the 324 building and K reactor would be affected by the reduction, while high-level waste activities and other core operations would continue via carryover funds. Ms. Du Bosq assured the board that her team is closely monitoring legal requirements and adjusting priorities as necessary to remain compliant.

Another question was posed by Herman Potter with the Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board. He asked whether the budget request had factored in costs related to recent executive orders or regulatory changes. Ms. Du Bosq answered that while the FY 2027 budget reflects the current regulatory environment, no specific costs associated with such changes have been incorporated yet.

The agency will continuously monitor and adapt to regulatory changes and executive orders as required. Legal compliance at sites remains a central task; project prioritization may be revisited if there are changes to appropriation levels. Leveraging carryover funds for core projects, particularly high-level waste work, will continue to be a strategic priority.

DOE Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice Overview

Shannon Chester from DOE's Office of Infrastructure and D&D provided an overview of the DOE Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice, describing it as an informally chartered, initiative composed of subject matter experts from across the DOE complex. The community's primary objectives are maximizing the internal reuse of excess materials and equipment, reducing life cycle costs, improving supply chain resilience, and sharing expertise and project lessons learned.

Ms. Chester explained the historical context for reuse and recycling activities, notably referencing the moratorium and suspension policies from 2001, which restricted the reuse and recycling of contaminated materials due to public safety concerns. These restrictions have since been rescinded, allowing for more flexibility in internal reuse, provided that material meets extensive safety and release criteria. Ms. Chester emphasized recent collaborative efforts, such

as Idaho Cleanup Project's acquisition of lead blankets from the Navy at the cost of shipping, which helped reduce worker radiation exposure and saved on costs versus procuring new materials. She also mentioned ongoing needs for shield blocks, the potential reuse of contaminated transfer tasks, and anticipated cost savings from these types of exchanges. Additionally, the Community of Practice is working on a lead pilot project, attempting to repurpose a significant inventory of clean, releasable lead for shielding containers destined for disposal, marking a notable shift from the disposal of uncontaminated, valuable material.

Regarding regulatory requirements, Ms. Chester highlighted recent legislation and existing mandates that require federal agencies to reuse government-owned property wherever feasible. Challenges persist due to disconnected site databases and insufficient communication between sites, which often impede efficient exchanges of materials and equipment. Currently, there is no integrated DOE-wide database accessible to all for tracking available materials; each site maintains its own inventory, and contributions to government-wide systems are limited. However, the Office of Asset Management is establishing a DOE-wide property database, expected to streamline multi-site collaborations in the future. The Community of Practice also utilizes monthly meetings, SharePoint resources, and a dedicated mailbox to facilitate information sharing and match needs to resources.

A question and answer portion followed the presentation, beginning with concerns raised by Miya Burke and Susan Coleman regarding Hanford's inclusion in the member group listings and the existence of centralized inventory databases. Ms. Chester clarified that Hanford is included, and while local inventories exist, there are significant limitations to their interoperability. She explained the transition underway towards an agency-wide database intended to solve these issues. Kris Bartholomew of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board expressed surprise at the lack of pre-existing collaborative platforms and questioned the management of site inventories. Ms. Chester explained the role of personal property managers, site size, and contractor timelines as contributing factors to missed opportunities and resource gaps.

Eddie Williams of the Nevada Site-Specific Advisory Board inquired about the percentage of sites utilizing the program since its charter in 2023 and the timeline for public comment and execution of site-to-site exchanges. Ms. Chester responded that only a few sites have completed exchanges through the Community of Practice but expects participation to grow with increased outreach and awareness. She clarified that timelines are largely dependent on how quickly involved parties coordinate and complete procedural requirements for site-to-site equipment transfer. Deborah Creech (Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board) and Bob Skinner (Idaho Cleanup Project Citizens Advisory Board) requested details on process flow for completed projects, which Ms. Chester described as beginning with nominations of available excess equipment and subsequent coordination between interested parties, culminating in necessary paperwork and transfer.

Mr. Skinner raised the topic of repurposing slightly contaminated metals for waste drums and the potential for redistributing cesium 137 sources. Ms. Chester explained that statutory release criteria prevent any material deemed contaminated from leaving DOE oversight unless it meets

rigorous standards, though internal reuse is encouraged where permissible. Mr. Potter questioned the voluntary participation by sites in the Community of Practice and possible conflicts with Community Reuse Organizations (CROs), to which Ms. Chester clarified that while participation in the practice is voluntary, federal mandates already require reuse of excess property. She has not encountered conflicts with CROs, particularly since the equipment moved internally is specialized and not suitable for community resale.

Further discussion explored examples of pre-charter collaborations—including West Valley’s acquisition of equipment from Hanford—and inquiry into future public accessibility of surplus items, particularly lead blankets. Ms. Chester explained the process, indicating public access is possible after a process of internal and interagency offers.

Future actions include continued development and rollout of a DOE-wide personal property database by the Office of Asset Management; increased outreach through digital flyers and monthly meetings to expand site’s participation in the Community of Practice; further exploration of potential reuse projects—including the lead pilot project—and investigation into the concerns about conflict with CROs and statutory requirements for certain materials. Stakeholders were encouraged to direct questions and ideas to the dedicated Community of Practice mailbox and to consider formulating recommendations based on topics discussed.

The session concluded with reminders from the facilitators about the importance and simplicity of recommendations emerging from board discussions and the meeting was adjourned for a break.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Update

Aaron White, Director of the Office of Regulatory Compliance for EM and acting NEPA Compliance Officer, was introduced. Expressing thanks for the opportunity to speak, he acknowledged Bill Ostrom, who had transitioned from the NEPA Compliance Officer to lead the Office of Infrastructure and D&D. Mr. White presented recent significant changes to NEPA and how DOE EM was implementing procedures and compliance commitments. He noted that the past five years have seen more changes in the NEPA process than the previous fifty, emphasizing the impact of the Fiscal Responsibility Act passed in 2023, which resolved many NEPA procedural issues.

Mr. White discussed several key regulatory milestones, including Executive Orders in 2025 that directed agencies to revise NEPA regulations and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)’s rescission of its NEPA regulations. DOE was required to update its implementation of NEPA rules in response, with further direction from an Executive Order concerning nuclear reactor testing. He detailed the implications of these changes, referencing a May 2025 Supreme Court decision that clarified agency discretion in NEPA review and reinforced limits regarding the analysis of environmental effects from unrelated projects.

He provided details on DOE's revised NEPA implementing regulations, finalized in February 2026, which include updates to the process for administrative actions exempt from NEPA review, additions and clarifications of categorical exclusions, and maintenance of provisions for emergency actions. The new procedures were designed to streamline processes, reduce unnecessary delays, clarify roles and responsibilities, and introduce deadlines and page limits for environmental documents. Notably, the procedures removed requirements for mitigation action plans—though mitigation may still be required through permits and tracked accordingly—and clarified notification and comment requirements.

Mr. White outlined significant procedural changes. For Environmental Assessments (EAs), DOE is no longer required to notify the public or provide a review period for draft EAs, allowing final publication directly. For Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), public scoping periods are required but with greater flexibility, and publication requirements for notices and draft documents have been reduced. DOE will continue to publish all NEPA documents online, and the EPA will maintain Federal Register notices of availability for each EIS. Mr. White emphasized these changes will help DOE meet the two-year timeline for EIS completion.

He stated that implementation of these streamlined procedures will consider existing agreements with states and tribes that require notification or comment periods. DOE will continue public engagement through meetings, newsletters, and other interactions outside the formal NEPA process.

Following the presentation, Ms. Cowley thanked Mr. White and reiterated the availability of Hanford-related NEPA documents on the Hanford.gov website. She opened the floor to questions. Debi Farber (Idaho Cleanup Project Citizens Advisory Board) inquired whether the elimination of traditional notifications and comment periods meant the public would still have input through other avenues. Mr. White clarified that DOE remains committed to honoring previously established commitments with states, tribes, and stakeholders—for example, agreements at West Valley require notification and public comment, as do certain National Nuclear Security Administration projects, and Hanford activities under the Tri Party agreement.

Miya Burke (Hanford Advisory Board) asked when these changes went into effect and whether they were currently active. Mr. White confirmed they are, stating DOE's interim final rule was issued earlier in the year following CEQ's regulatory rescission. Ms. Burke then questioned if there had been a public comment period on these changes. Mr. White confirmed that a public comment period was provided as required for regulation changes, ending in August 2025.

EM's action items include the continued evaluation on how best to implement the new NEPA procedures in compliance with existing agreements, and DOE's ongoing commitment to engage stakeholders through established notification requirements and public interactions.

Board Business

Board business began with a focus on the potential for a complex-wide recommendation related to several topics discussed earlier, including budget considerations, advancements in the nuclear

sector, enthusiasm for recent progress at various sites, and particular interest in the reuse and recycling program. Updates were also shared regarding the simplification and advancement of NEPA regulations. Ms. Snyder clarified that while a recommendation is not mandatory at every meeting, it can be made if desired. Any crafted recommendation must be approved or rejected by each site board without modification.

The group discussed drafting a recommendation supporting all sites participating in the Community of Practice for reuse and recycling and associated initiatives. Previous recommendations on this topic have received universal support from the site boards. There was a request for feedback, and most participants showed support, but some called for clarification on the impact, especially concerning CROs and budgeting. A board member explained the role of CROs as entities that use funds from the sale of surplus materials for community initiatives such as training programs and resource centers. The group agreed there is a need for consistency and rigor in the program, as well as funding to ensure its effectiveness.

Further discussion addressed the potential cost savings for sites receiving excess equipment from other locations, noting that while there are expenses involved in transfer and possible modifications, these are generally outweighed by savings compared to purchasing new equipment. The importance of clear criteria and guidelines for the transfer and reuse process was emphasized to avoid inefficient practices and ensure transparency.

Ms. Chester reported that while sites are already required to look at their excess inventories, efforts are underway to facilitate cross-site sharing from headquarters. She noted that documentation, such as existing forms, could be expanded to streamline the process, and that communication is a major hurdle. Ms. Chester shared an example of significant cost savings achieved through the sharing of equipment and stressed the importance of formal recommendations to support such efforts.

A question arose regarding funding approaches—whether there should be a general fund for all sites or site-specific line items. Ms. Chester noted differences in budget practices between entities and stated that further analysis would be needed to determine the most efficient method. Additional comments raised the need for a program plan or business plan document to define program criteria, operations, and funding needs, moving beyond the current relationship-based, informal framework.

Ms. Chester acknowledged this and reported ongoing work towards building infrastructure and formalizing site representation. Participants agreed there is broad support for developing the program further, and a draft recommendation could encourage the development of business and project plans, helping headquarters advance the program. Volunteers were requested to draft this recommendation, with the intent to review it as a group the following day. Miya Burke from Hanford volunteered to develop a first draft.

In other board business, updates were provided regarding the board's charter, which was renewed for two years on March 31. Changes included shifting membership criteria from categories of interest (such as health or education) to geographic proximity to EM program activities, to

broaden representation. For subcommittees, the language was revised to allow public participation without membership or leadership roles.

Progress on membership packages was reported, with faster processing thanks to revised procedures. Recruitment now uses resumes or expressions of interest instead of a formal application, improving efficiency. Streamlining has also reduced the required language and detail in membership packages.

Ms. Snyder provided updates on the EM SSAB desk reference guide, which is being revised to remove redundant content and improve usability. She intends to include citations for clarity and reference. Sites confirmed they can choose recruitment methods, including advertising in newspapers for rural areas. The group was informed that the Environmental Management Advisory Board charter was not renewed but all past recommendations remain available upon request.

The meeting concluded with participants expressing appreciation for the collaborative work. The meeting was adjourned, with thanks given for everyone's hard work and participation.

DAY 2: APRIL 30, 2026

The Spring 2026 EM SSAB Chairs meeting reconvened on April 30, 2026, and commenced with a welcome address, logistical instructions for both in-person and virtual attendees.

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Overview

Mark Bollinger, Manager of the Carlsbad Field Office, provided a comprehensive update on WIPP, emphasizing its role as a national asset for defense-related transuranic waste disposal. He underscored the importance of collaborative ownership among all stakeholder sites, noting that WIPP operates under congressional parameters and can only accept defense-related transuranic waste. Mr. Bollinger highlighted significant milestones achieved by contractor Salado Isolation Mining Contractors (SIMCO), including the completion of major infrastructure upgrades such as the Underground Ventilation System and utility shaft, both delivered ahead of schedule and under budget. Community engagement and STEM initiatives were also featured as part of SIMCO's broader impact.

Mr. Bollinger detailed the aging operational infrastructure at WIPP and how EM is planning to address those challenges while keeping safety as the top priority. This includes plans for installation of new hoists, major maintenance to waste handling shafts, and continuous investments in worker safety. He noted there is a planned six-month outage in 2027 to facilitate these upgrades. He also confirmed that WIPP maintains sufficient capacity for waste shipments, dependent upon generator sites' readiness and available budgets.

Mr. Bollinger then responded to a series of questions from board members. He clarified the process for determining how much space should be mined for waste emplacement, referencing the annual TRU Waste Inventory report and coordination with generator sites. He described the natural behavior of salt mines and their ability to encapsulate waste. When asked about staff utilization during maintenance shutdowns, Mr. Bollinger explained that drivers and transportation personnel would be reassigned to community outreach, training, vehicle maintenance, and possibly inter-site waste movements. Questions about panel infill processes and safety questions related to seismic activity and fracking were addressed, with Mr. Bollinger stating that engineered salt infill secures panels and that the salt formation at WIPP is highly effective at mitigating impact from seismic events.

Participants discussed the value of site visits to WIPP, the potential support of recommendations for permitting processes, and the appropriate channels for communicating recommendations to DOE. Mr. Bollinger encouraged stakeholders nationwide to participate actively in the New Mexico permit public comment process, as the outcome affects legacy cleanups at multiple sites.

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) Overview

Greg Sosson, Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Field Operations for EM, provided an overview of the DNFSB. He explained DNFSB's congressional mandate, composition, operational scope, and advisory role, emphasizing that it makes recommendations to the Secretary of Energy but does not regulate or enforce. The DNFSB's tools—recommendations, reporting requirements, advice letters, and routine staff communications—were clarified. Mr. Sosson described current open recommendations, ongoing safety topics, and recent closures, including improvements in safety culture prompted by DNFSB involvement. Questions from participants addressed DNFSB's public hearings, outreach efforts, reporting requirements, and the safety concerns program for employees and the public.

Small, Non-SSAB Sites 101

Jack Zimmerman, Acting Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regulatory and Policy Affairs for EM, presented a review of small non-SSAB sites, focusing on their clean-up missions, operational histories, and unique challenges. Sites discussed included Moab (Uranium mill tailings), Santa Susana Field Laboratory, Sandia National Laboratory, Lawrence Berkeley and Livermore National Laboratories, and several naval reactor facilities managed by the EM Consolidated Business Center in New York and Pennsylvania. Mr. Zimmerman explained project timelines, regulatory oversight, community engagement mechanisms, and the transfer of long-term stewardship to DOE's Office of Legacy Management. Questions centered around depth and extent of remediation at Moab, water contamination risks, and the eventual disposition of vitrified high-level waste from West Valley.

Board Business

The board members reviewed the draft Chairs' recommendation concerning the Reuse and Recycle Community of Practice (RRCOP) program developed by Miya Burke, Hanford vice-chair. Discussion included edits to improve wording, address collaboration among sites, and clarify the recommendation's intended goal. Board members supported the initiative and recommended increasing awareness and participation among all DOE sites to improve communication and maximize reuse and recycling opportunities. The draft will now be taken to each site board's next meeting for concurrence on signing, with the understanding that no changes may be made – each site-specific group must either approve as is or decline to support the recommendation.

The meeting concluded with instructions for submitting public comments, and planning for upcoming meetings. Participants offered feedback and reflections on the value of in-person meetings, thanked the hosts and presenters, and acknowledged outgoing board members for their service. Final procedural notes included instructions for future recommendation handling and survey participation prior to adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned shortly before 12:00 p.m.