



INL Site Environmental Management

C I T I Z E N S A D V I S O R Y B O A R D

From the Board Chair

Herb Bohrer, CAB Chair



It is time again for another edition of the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site Environmental Management (EM) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Newsletter. Our February meeting was a success and we are now in the process of planning our April meeting. As always, you are invited, and can find meeting details above.

Among the many topics covered in February was the budget for INL cleanup activities. The budgeting process is a very important element of achieving DOE's cleanup mission. The 2015-16 budget year will end in June. The Department is collaborating with Congress and the Administration to finalize the budget for the 2016-17 while also establishing the planning budget for the 2018 fiscal year.

Monica Regalbuto, the Department of Energy's Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, has specifically requested that all citizens advisory boards review budget requests and funding priorities identified by the sites and provide input to DOE management. Last year, the INL CAB reviewed the priorities identified by DOE for the 2017 budget and was in agreement with them. We provided our [recommendation in a letter to DOE](#) to that effect. This year, after being [briefed on the 2018 budget](#), we submitted a similar [recommendation](#).



Please note that the CAB and DOE agree that the overarching goal of cleanup work in Idaho is to protect the Snake Plain Aquifer, and that we concur with the DOE work priorities to

accomplish that goal. Implementation of these priorities will continue to focus efforts on the removal and control of sources of potential contamination threats to the aquifer. The CAB will continue to monitor not only the work activities at INL, but also the budgeting and planning processes of DOE to reassure ourselves that the work is being responsibly done.

We hope to see you in Twin Falls where we'll hear presentations on groundwater, environmental permitting and other relevant topics!

Herb

Timeline on WIPP Restart

Betsy McBride, CAB Member



During its February 17, 2016 meeting, the INL Site EM Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) received an [update on the revised schedule for the re-opening of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant \(WIPP\)](#) to again accept, for final storage, the transuranic (TRU) waste from Idaho and other U.S. Department of Energy sites.

The timeline now describes steps toward a re-opening at the end of 2016.

Investigators looking at the fire and partial release of radioactive materials in February 2014 generated a listing of 75 “corrective actions” needed to re-open the facility. The corrective actions range from enhanced training of workers to the overhaul of the underground ventilation system. Following the completion of the corrective actions, operations can be authorized to restart *only after* a consensus is reached between the operating contractor, DOE and all relevant regulators, on the readiness for safe operations.

The DOE website to follow WIPP progress reports is at: <http://energy.gov/em/waste-isolation-pilot-plant-wipp-recovery>

Meanwhile, representatives from citizen advisory committees at the various DOE sites collaborated on [a joint letter](#), dated December 3, 2015, to DOE’s Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management expressing concerns related to the current closure of WIPP. The letter recommends that DOE concurrently move to identify and evaluate an alternative central location or locations for above-ground interim storage of the treated and packaged TRU waste. This would provide for the resumption of the transport of TRU waste away from the generating sites, some of which are now out of compliance on removal dates connected to existing regulatory requirements and state consent orders. A temporary back-up location would also be valuable in case of future operational issues at WIPP or further delays in the re-opening.

In a [written response](#) dated December 23, 2015, the Assistant Secretary noted that “we have adequate safe interim storage at affected sites until we can resume normal waste shipments, and legacy waste processing and packaging activities are continuing.” However, the letter also said that the Carlsbad Field Office, where WIPP is located, “has initiated conceptual planning, preliminary requirements development, and trade-off analyses for additional above-ground storage capability at WIPP.”



For now, retrieval, treatment and packaging of TRU waste continues at INL. Packages are being stored on cement pads inside existing covered buildings available for this temporary use. The CAB continues to ask if, and has been told that, storage space for the treated and packaged waste is currently adequate. However, because of the WIPP closure, Idaho Settlement Agreement dates for transportation of TRU waste out of Idaho are not being met.

When the CAB members asked if the rules for packaging (in WIPP jargon – “acceptance criteria”) might change because of the incidents at WIPP, DOE managers at INL said that they are watching closely for any changes and because of the detailed records being kept on INL package contents, any adjustment to the waste acceptance criteria is expected to be manageable.

Student perspective: Nyles Johnson describes February CAB meeting

Nyles Johnson, Senior, Hillcrest High School

I attended the February 17th meeting of the INL Site EM Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) in Idaho Falls. It didn't take me long to notice that I was the only teenager in the room, maybe even the only person under 35, but that didn't stop me from taking an interest in the subject matter.

I've grown up in Idaho Falls and have always heard people talk about “the Site,” and “INL,” and I guess I kind of knew about the nuclear waste cleanup efforts that were taking place. During a meeting break, Brad Christensen, a member of the board, showed me a poster map of all the locations and my eyes really got opened.

I was looking at pictures of radioactive waste being dug up from the ground, and dozens of barrels stacked and labeled with the radioactive signal I recognize from playing video games set in places like these, and here they are just a few miles from my home. It's a little shocking when you think about it, so I was pleased to see that the board was critically appraising the efforts and asking thoughtful questions about the process.

The last presentation was a [5-year review of activities](#), and it's clear that DOE is making progress. As someone who intends to live here and be a part of this community, I'm just really glad that there appears to be a solid partnership between the Department of Energy, the contractors, and the citizen board. While this analogy possibly over-simplifies the many differences between the RCRA and CERCLA, it's a start at understanding why these different regulative entities exist.

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