

Portland Transcripts (TPO)

Public Hearing May 13, 2003 – Portland, Oregon

DOE meetings/hearings to acquire comments on the Revised Draft Hanford Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Management Program Environmental Impact Statement were conducted in a combination of forums to allow full participation of the audience and commenters. The overall forum consisted of periods for introductions, presentations, informal question and answer sections, panel discussions, and formal comment periods. The identification of comments from the transcripts of these meetings required close reading and interpretation. The results are shown in the identification of formal comment speakers, numbering of comments related to the revised HSW EIS, and bar-coding of copies of the transcripts contained in Volume IV of the HSW EIS. Information in the transcripts related to those informal portions of the meetings are not numbered or bar-coded and do not constitute formal comments. Formal responses to this information were not prepared.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REVISED DRAFT HANFORD SITE SOLID
(RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS)
WASTE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(HSW EIS)

PUBLIC MEETING

MAY 13, 2003
7:00 P.M.
RADISSON HOTEL
1441 NE SECOND AVENUE
PORTLAND, OREGON

BRIDGES & ASSOCIATES
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Introductions; Presentations

1 (Ms. Paige Knight and Mr. Dee Willis
2 gave welcoming introductions,
3 followed by a presentation from
4 Michael Collins, Department of
5 Energy).

6 MR. NICK CETO: Well, I don't
7 know if I've spoke to you folks before. Since
8 my children insist that I don't speak very
9 loudly and trail off at the end of sentences,
10 I'll try to use this if I can.

11 As I said before, I'm Nick Ceto.
12 I'm the manager of the EPA office in Richland.
13 I don't think I've gotten a chance to meet most
14 of you. And I'll be around this evening later
15 for questions and to get to know you a little
16 bit.

17 I'm glad to be here. We're here,
18 like you are, to listen to DOE's presentation.
19 And I'm here to listen to the comments that you
20 guys have so we can take those into
21 consideration when we put together EPA
22 comments.

23 We've got a team of EPA staff
24 looking at the EIS. They include
25 hydrogeologists, folks that are basically EIS

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Presentations (contd)

1 specialists that we have.

2 We've got some geologists looking at
3 it, we've got some modelers. We have a pretty
4 good range of folks.

5 We, like you guys, have a lot to
6 look at. It's certainly a thick document.

7 I'm not used to traveling in Oregon
8 for gas. And when I was at the gas station, I
9 tried to pump it and, of course, someone jumped
10 in front of me to stop me from it, and they
11 asked me if I wanted to check the tires because
12 they looked low in the back. And I said, "No,
13 I've just got this EIS in the trunk."

14 So, I mean, it's a lot of material
15 to look at. We're very sympathetic to the fact
16 that you guys have a lot to digest. But it's a
17 much better job than before.

18 A lot of us were looking for more
19 detail. We got it. It helps us to do a better
20 job evaluating it, so I think DOE deserves some
21 credit for that.

22 We also looked at a better set of
23 alternatives. We had asked to have a wider
24 range considered, they did that when they did
25 this next round.

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Presentations (contd)

1 They also did a better job of
2 evaluating the Hanford waste versus the Hanford
3 plus offsite waste, so that's another good
4 thing. It gives us a better basis for
5 comparison.

6 And they've looked at the cumulative
7 impacts in a way that we think is a more
8 meaningful way to look at it.

9 So overall, and again this is
10 preliminary, because we really haven't had a
11 chance to go through it in tremendous detail.
12 But we do think it's a much better job.

13 It addresses a lot of the concerns
14 that you have. And there's a very thick
15 responsiveness summary that you can look at to
16 see how some of those were addressed.

17 And we think so far that it provides
18 a decent look at the alternatives so we can
19 compare among them. And that's really the
20 purpose of an EIS.

21 But it's not the entire purpose of
22 an EIS. And that's part of what we think it
23 lacks. And we're going to be providing
24 detailed comments on this.

25 There are a couple of things we

Presentations (contd)

1 think it lacks. First of all, there's a lot of
2 conservatism built into the model, and there's
3 a lot of uncertainty in any modeling that's
4 done.

5 And one of the things that we have
6 talked to DOE about is the need to look at a
7 wider range of assumptions when they develop
8 their model outputs.

9 If you're always using the most
10 conservative assumptions, it tends to lead you
11 one way; and if you look at a range of them, it
12 gives you a better idea of what the
13 alternatives may be, if you look at extremes at
14 both ends.

15 And we think that's worth doing.
16 And they've indicated some willingness to look
17 at a couple of those.

18 We also I think need to look at,
19 more rigorously at, some of the treatment and
20 sort of adaptive management and mitigation that
21 could be done.

22 This ties in to the next point I
23 want to make. The point of compliance for
24 these landfill units, for these waste disposal
25 units that was looked at in the EIS, was a

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Presentations (contd)

1 kilometer down gradient.

2 And it's our view that it has to be
3 looked at the facility boundary. And when that
4 facility boundary analysis is done, we think
5 that may change some of the, basically, outputs
6 of the model and lead us to a different kind of
7 a look or an understanding of the impacts of
8 these units.

9 And when that's done, that may then
10 force this issue of mitigation and adaptive
11 management to try to more aggressively go after
12 whatever exceedances of groundwater criteria
13 may result from some of these disposal
14 facilities. So we think that's important to
15 look at.

16 There's also the question of how
17 this EIS fits in with other EISs. There's a
18 tank waste EIS that's being done right now, as
19 you're probably aware.

20 And I think that, plus the
21 Programmatic EIS that talked about Hanford
22 receiving some wastes period, is an interesting
23 tie between some of those.

24 If you look at the Programmatic EIS,
25 it suggests that when some of this offsite

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Presentations (contd)

1 waste comes to Hanford, that any groundwater
2 problems or any other environmental impacts
3 would be mitigated. So then it doesn't really
4 say what that is. And it leads you to this
5 EIS.

6 And so this EIS, I think, has the
7 duty to look at what those mitigation measures
8 might be.

9 So the brief sort of message I'll
10 leave you with: much better job; we think it's
11 looking at the right things; we think it needs
12 to be a little bit more rigorous in some
13 respects; and there needs to be a clear
14 integration of some of these EIS documents. So
15 I'll leave it at that for now. Thanks.

16 (Member of the audience asked a follow-up
17 question without microphone. Inaudible).

18 MR. NICK CETO: Mitigation
19 would be, for example, if you looked at a waste
20 form that was being buried at the site and it
21 showed some potential for leaching into the
22 groundwater system, to mitigate that release;
23 in other words, to address that release,
24 somehow, you might treat it or containerize it
25 to limit the release that might occur.

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Presentations (contd)

1 And adaptive management is simply
2 kind of a feedback loop, where if you're
3 training a pet to sit when you tell it to, you
4 kind of work with the pet.

5 And if it's not sitting, you make
6 some adaptive change to yank it by the collar
7 tr talk to it in a loud voice to try to get it
8 to change its behavior.

9 And adaptive management is kind of
10 responding to what happens in the field to try
11 to basically head off problems before they
12 occur. So it might include a monitoring system
13 that would give you an early warning, for
14 example, a release so you can go in and do
15 something.

16 (Member of the audience asked a follow-up
17 question without microphone. Inaudible).

18 MR. NICK CETO: If you
19 envisioned a surface expression of some
20 facility, and it has a fence around the
21 boundary of it, if you were to drill a
22 groundwater well right at the edge of the
23 facility boundary and look at the groundwater
24 quality at that point, that's been our view,
25 the point of compliance that should be used to

Presentations (contd)

1 evaluate a landfill, not a mile or a kilometer
2 down gradient.

3 So it's important that there's not
4 an impairment to anything offsite from those
5 facilities.

6 Now, granted, Hanford is not a
7 pristine area where there's a new landfill
8 being sited, but it is a new landfill starting
9 from scratch.

10 So when this thing is designed, it
11 needs to be designed so that it won't create a
12 release which can contribute to environmental
13 degradation beyond water quality criteria.

14 MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks, Nick.

15 Paige Knight.

16 (Member of the audience asked a follow-up
17 question without microphone. Inaudible).

18 MS. NANCY METRICK: A quarter
19 of a million years to ten days for half life.

20 MR. DEE WILLIS: Thank you.

21 Okay, Paige.

22 MS. PAIGE KNIGHT: I would have
23 preferred the ten days myself.

24 Okay. Yes, I'm Paige Knight as I
25 said earlier, from Hanford Watch. And I'm just

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Presentations (contd)

1 going to go over some of my thoughts, really,
2 which I hope feed you something for comments
3 that you might write or make tonight.

4 I have to say that I appreciate that
5 the Department of Energy heeded our cry and
6 redid this EIS.

7 That being said, I'm in a place
8 right now with the kinds of things that are
9 happening at Hanford, work stoppage today, and
10 the lawsuits going back and forth that I've
11 lost hope for the moment. I will never lose
12 hope for the long run.

13 And I cannot support a lot of the
14 actions in this EIS. And I will go through
15 some of the reasoning there.

16 Many of the possible solutions for
17 treating and storing or burying solid wastes
18 from other weapon sites at the Hanford Nuclear
19 Reservation appear to embody some of the
20 publics' values that have been expressed over
21 the years and at last summers EIS meetings.

22 However, our buy-off in whatever
23 alternative the Department of Energy decides
24 upon, rests upon our ability to trust the
25 Department of Energy.

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Presentations (contd)

1 And when I'm talking about the
2 Department of Energy, I'm talking about
3 headquarters at this point.

4 Headquarters is driving this show,
5 and they're driving us to the ground. And I
6 will elucidate on that in a moment.

7 This is difficult at a time when DOE
8 stops cleanup work based on a directive, not a
9 law, from the Washington Department of Ecology
10 because Ecology says "You must comply."

11 So because that language was used in
12 a directive, the Department of Energy stopped
13 work and said "Oh, we can't do anything then."

14 And imagine the 177 tanks and their
15 failing infrastructure. Imagine a stopping in
16 the middle of the end run of cleaning up some
17 of the worst plutonium contamination in the
18 nation. Okay.

19 Yet over the years, and even in this
20 new document, the Department of Energy
21 capriciously picks and chooses which laws to
22 comply with and which to change without going
23 through the proper legal steps.

24 Now they're complying with the law.
25 They haven't been so willing to do this in the

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