



MEETING MINUTES

Environmental Management Public Information Review Effort (EMPIRE) Committee

February 6, 2008 – SNJV Conference Room

Members Present: Walter Wegst, Chair; Bob Gatliff,
Stacy Standley

Members not Present: Paul Adras, Vernell McNeal

Department of Energy: Kelly Snyder, DDFO

CAB Facilitator: Rosemary Rehfeldt, Navarro Research
and Engineering, Inc.

After review of the meeting agenda, the committee voted to approve the CAB recommendation letter to DOE regarding revisions to the “Soils Project” fact sheet. The committee unanimously approved the letter. Additionally, because most of the EMPIRE Committee members also serve on the Membership Committee, they took a vote to approve the recommendation letter to DOE regarding the proposal for new member recruits. Jack Ramsey, Chair of the Membership Committee, had approved via e-mail prior to this meeting because he was unable to attend. Therefore, acting as the Membership Committee, the members unanimously approved the membership recommendation letter as well.

The Committee proceeded to continue its review, which began at the last meeting, of the “Groundwater” fact sheet. The following recommendations for revisions were made:

- ◆ The committee agreed to create a “definition box” to define terms used throughout the fact sheet
- ◆ On page 1, in the “Background” section, the second sentence should be changed, to read: *“About one-third of these tests occurred near, below, or in the water table, which resulted in some radioactive contamination of the area’s groundwater.”* The words “water table” within this sentence, should be placed in the definition box.
- ◆ In the third sentence of the first paragraph, the word “with” should be replaced with “by.” The sentence will then read: *“The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) began preliminary hydrologic research in the 1970s; but a more intensive groundwater studies program was launched in 1989 by the formation of the Underground Test Area Project (UGTA) at the DOE Nevada Site Office (NSO).”*
- ◆ The first sentence of the second paragraph within the “Background” section should be changed to read: *“Faced with the reality that no proven, cost-effective method existed then, or now, for remediating deep, extensive groundwater contamination, the UGTA project team set out to develop an effective, long-term monitoring system.”* The third sentence in this paragraph should be changed, to read: *“Scientists are developing and refining computer models to effectively position future monitoring wells within the monitoring network.”*

- ◆ The next section in the fact sheet is entitled “The UGTA Strategy.” An addition should be placed within the first sentence of the first paragraph in this section. The sentence will then read: *“The complex geology and hydrology of the Nevada Test Site presents unusual challenges in understanding speed, volume and direction of groundwater flow and the movement of contaminants.”* The second sentence in this paragraph should also be changed, to read: *“To meet these challenges, the UGTA project team embarked on an investigative process that incorporates various research components including drilling and sampling of wells, contaminant characterization, and computer model development.”*
- ◆ It is suggested that the next paragraph be completely omitted and replaced with the following verbiage: *“With these components in mind, the team designed a phased approach – the objective of which is to establish a comprehensive monitoring network using both new and existing wells. The first phase of the strategy (already complete) consisted of a regional evaluation, which explored the groundwater pathways over the entire NTS. The second phase (currently in progress) will help scientists determine contaminant movement and the boundaries that are unique to each of the underground test areas. Both of these phases incorporate various components, such as sampling, contaminant characterization, computer modeling, and process validation.”*
- ◆ In the first sentence of the third paragraph within “The UGTA Strategy” section, the year should be changed from 2022 to 2027. In the next sentence, the term “proof of concept” should be placed in the definition box. There is also a blue box that defines “contaminant boundary.” This definition should be placed with the other terms in the definition box.
- ◆ On page 2, in the picture box entitled “What is a Computer Model?,” the first sentence should be changed, to read: *“Over the past 15 years, scientists have used modeling technology to explain how groundwater systems behave.”*
- ◆ Continuing on page 2, within the fact sheet verbiage, there is a term in the first sentence of paragraph 1 that should be defined. That term is “close these areas.” There are several additional changes to this sentence, therefore, when changed it will read: *“If the results are acceptable to both NSO and the State of Nevada, NSO will officially close these areas and establish a long-term monitoring program using existing wells and, if necessary, drilling new wells.”*
- ◆ Place the term “modeling” in the definition box.
- ◆ The very last sentence underneath the “Public Involvement” section that begins with: “For more information...,” should be removed.

The committee agreed to create a recommendation letter to DOE requesting these changes be made to the “Groundwater” fact sheet.

The committee then began its review of the Underground Test Area Project’s Questions and Answers brochure. Ms. Snyder informed the committee that the cover was going to be updated and redesigned. The committee likes the layout on the inside pages and would like to see it remain as is, including the boldface type for the questions. Additionally, all photos should have captions and some of the photos should be updated.

- ◆ On page 1, in the second sentence of paragraph one, the word “tools” should be changed to “alternatives.” In the first sentence of paragraph two, the word “historic” should be removed. In the next sentence, remove the word “Project” and replace it with: “Technical Working Group (TWG).” The last sentence on this page should be changed, to read: *“This brochure offers answers to these frequently asked questions:”* Also on page 1, within the map,

Pahrump and Oasis Valley should be added, and since Pahute Mesa is mentioned within the brochure, it should be shown on the map as well.

- ◆ On page 2, under the question “Is there an immediate risk to the public?” the first two sentences should be changed, to read: *“Based on currently available scientific information, there is no immediate risk to the public. The contamination associated with NNSA/NSO activities is thought to be confined to areas on the NTS where nuclear tests were conducted.”* After the last sentence in this paragraph, the following sentence should be inserted in parentheses before the period, *“(See DOE/NSO Groundwater fact sheet.)”* Also, the text box, with the sentence that begins, *“It is important to note that...”*, should be kept on this page.
- ◆ The only change to page 3 is under the question, “Should contamination migrate off the NTS, where would it go?” In the first sentence, replace the words, *“The NNSA/NSO believes that”* with *“Modeling indicates that...”*
- ◆ On page 4, under the question, “What background tritium levels have been found?” in the last sentence, remove the words *“As a means of comparison.”* Then place the sentence after the first sentence in this paragraph. Also on this page, removed the photo with the red cooler.
- ◆ The second question on page 5 should be changed, to read, *“If contamination is found in the groundwater, what do the NNSA/NSO and the State of Nevada plan to do about it?”* Then in the last sentence of the answer to this question, the committee suggests removing the words, *“an investigation would begin into an alternative water supply”* and replace them with, *“and alternative water supplies would be provided.”* Also on this page, in the text box, remove the word *“radioactivity”* and replace it with *“contaminants.”*
- ◆ On page 6, under the question, “What will be the total cost of the UGTA project?” - due to budget baseline changes since the last publication of this brochure, the dollar amounts will need to be updated. There are a number of changes in the first to fourth sentences of this section as well. All sentences should read as follows:
 - *“The total cost of this 138-year effort is projected at (\$ Updated), which includes 100 years of monitoring. During its first 18 years (1989-2007), the UGTA Project has spent approximately (\$ Updated). For the period between 2007 and 2027, when characterization activities will be completed, the NNSA/NSO estimates the cost at (\$ Updated). Between 2027 and 2127, NNSA/NSO calculates that the total cost will be (\$ Updated) to construct the 56 wells that are needed and conduct long-term monitoring.”*
- ◆ Under the next question on page 6, “When will the UGTA Project be completed?” – change all the first year, stated at “2130,” to 2027. Change the other two years that are stated as “2030,” to 2027.

The committee agreed to create a recommendation letter to DOE requesting these changes be made to the “Underground Test Area Project Questions and Answers” brochure.

The National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA) Nevada Test Site fact sheet was distributed to the committee for their information. The committee then reviewed and revised the membership recruitment questionnaire, and the changes will be submitted to the Membership Committee.

The committee asked Ms. Snyder if they were to receive response letters from DOE. Ms. Snyder stated that a response letter was written only if a recommendation was turned down, and, in that case, an explanation would be given. She agreed to check on previous items with CAB recommendations that were not included in final fact sheets and will inform the committee of those items in a letter to the CAB.

The next fact sheets to review will be: #933-Industrial Sites, #1056-Tonopah Test Range, and #936-Industrial Sites Success Story. The meeting was set for April 16, 2008, at 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., location to be announced.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.