



Paducah Citizens Advisory Board

"working for the future"

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Recommendation 12-01: Progress Report on Groundwater Contamination

Drafted December 12, 2011

Revised January 26, 2012

Background

Studies such as the "The Politics of Clean-up" have shown that DOE clean-up projects have much better public acceptance when there is public consensus on the clean-up goals and how the clean-up is to be done. In most cases, the public does not have the background or expertise to make an informed decision on these criteria, so it must depend on others to do it. Federal, State, and local regulators have final authority in making these decisions, but they must also include the public in the decision-making process through public meetings. In these types of cases, projects move most quickly when there is some consensus among public stakeholders, regulatory officials, and DOE.

In the current process, the PGDP Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) plays an important role in representing the leading edge of public stakeholders. The diversity of the CAB and their experience with the activities on the site put them in the best position to pass along information to build consensus in the community.

Groundwater contamination under the PGDP site has been determined to be the greatest threat to the area's environment and public health. It is also the environmental threat that has been addressed most aggressively by DOE over the past 20 years. Data over the years has shown that the groundwater contamination plumes have shrunk and in fact some of the groundwater capture wells have been relocated to better contain and reduce the contamination.

Recommendation

The CAB feels that this success story has not received the attention in the public that it deserves. In order to better recognize this success and also to build public confidence in other clean-up activities at the site, the CAB recommends that DOE develop a public presentation outlining this success story while introducing some of the upcoming challenges for the clean-up.

This presentation should be basic enough that members of the C-400 Subcommittee could present it to civic groups, church groups, school groups, etc. Each CAB member could also have a short synopsis of the slides with talking points so that they would be prepared to discuss with family members or anyone else that might approach them. This presentation should also be adaptive as time and remediation activities progress.

This presentation would be based on a brief history and timeline of when the groundwater contamination was discovered and where we stand today.

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The specific slides might include:

- Original headlines from the Paducah Sun, public comments, etc.
- Review of the Water Policy that was implemented and is still in place today
- Slides showing how the contamination plumes have shrunk since the wells installed
- Slides showing the temporary setbacks with ERH and what was learned
- Slide showing the redeployment of the wells and the increased capture zone
- Slide showing computer projections of how the plume is projected to shrink over the next 20 years
- Slide showing how we will use what was learned to remediate the other plumes

The second part of the presentation would focus on the future for groundwater clean-up showing what was in the plan for the NE Plume, SW Plume, and the Dissolved Phase plumes.

It is also important with this presentation for DOE to outline how the public can be involved in groundwater clean-up, including the different opportunities for public comment, with target dates for these opportunities. As the public gets a better understanding of the groundwater clean-up process and techniques proposed, hopefully, they will take a more active role in the stakeholder process.