

SOUTH CAROLINA NUCLEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

March 4, 2004
Room 209 Gressette Building
Columbia, South Carolina

Members present: Chairman - Mr. Ben Rusche, The Honorable Robert S. Perry, Dr. Carolyn Hudson, Dr. Vince Van Brunt, Mr. Bill Mottel, Dr. David Peterson, Mr. Steve Byrne, and Ms. Kate Billing

Staff: Patricia Tangney and D'Juana Wilson

The Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council convened on Thursday, March 4, 2004, at 1:30 PM. Mr. Ben Rusche, Chairman of the Council, called the meeting to order at 1:40 PM and welcomed the speakers and guests. He then introduced Council members to the guests.

Dr. Van Brunt moved to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2003, meeting. Mr. Mottel seconded the motion, and the Council agreed.

Mr. Rusche then briefly discussed the meeting that was held in December 2003 at the Barnwell facility. He felt that the information presented to the Council at the meeting was very useful, and he thanked the Barnwell facility for hosting the meeting.

At that time, he moved on to discussing business items. He began by announcing that the Council will meet quarterly this fiscal year, on the first Thursday of each quarter. He reported that there are two standing committees, one assigned to Barnwell issues and the other to Savannah River Site issues. These committees will meet from time to time and will keep the full Council apprised of any findings. He also stated that if someone knows of an issue that

they feel the Council should address, they should forward that information to the Nuclear Advisory Council staff housed at the South Carolina Energy Office.

Mr. Rusche then introduced Mr. Charles A. Hansen, Assistant Manager for Waste Disposition, Savannah River Site, to the Council. Mr. Hansen presented the following information:

- Performance management plan overview;
- waste treatment activities;
- high-level waste tank space and inventories;
- waste vitrification;
- tank closure;
- salt waste processing facility;
- and TRU waste disposal.

** A copy of this presentation is attached.*

Mr. Hansen discussed in detail where the site is today, and plans for the site in the future. He then discussed the Performance Management Plan. In order to accelerate risk reduction at SRS, site officials plan to empty “higher risk” high-level waste tanks sooner than others, and treat and dispose of nuclear materials and radioactive wastes to eliminate risks while addressing the hazards of contaminated site and excess facilities. He said that these efforts will meet applicable environmental standards, policies, and regulations.

After discussing the Performance Management Plan (PMP), Mr. Hansen discussed the PMP’s impact on SRS activities. The SRS Accelerated Cleanup Plan includes high-level waste processing until 2020 that will produce 5,000 high-level waste canisters; there will be one canyon and one fuel storage basin; TRU waste shipments have been accelerated almost 20 years and the Plan has them off the site by 2013. Mr. Hansen reported that studies indicate that they can reduce costs by \$7 billion if they can complete the EM cleanup work by 2025.

Major performance metrics that will get them to the 2025 date include processing all of the high-level waste liquid storage tanks; closing all 51 tanks; preparing and shipping 5,000 canisters of vitrified waste to an appropriate repository; packaging all spent fuel for disposal to an appropriate repository; disposing of all legacy TRU waste; completing disposal of all of legacy low-level and low-level mixed waste material and; completing all other site remediation by 2025. Mr. Rusche asked about the degree to which state regulatory agencies are involved in this process, and in developing conclusions. Mr. Hansen answered that DOE headquarters is working actively with the state to try to bring this to resolution. He stated that DOE's major concern is getting everyone to agree that there is a need to clarify the law so there will not be questions about what is safe and unsafe. Although barriers have been thrown in the way, Mr. Hansen reported that they feel these goals will still be met.

Dr. Van Brunt asked if the tanks could be emptied without declaring them closed and Mr. Hansen replied that they could. Additional discussion took place as Mr. Hansen explained the waste treatment flow at SRS, and the distribution of radionuclides in SRS high-level waste. He then reported that by the end of the fiscal year, the high-level waste vitrification will be on track. He reviewed the high-level waste clean up timeline for actinide removal and stated that they are not planning to dispose of any salt waste for about a year and a half.

Mr. Hansen reported that the mission of the salt waste processing facility is to provide pre-treatment capability for salt waste, resulting in a Class A stream for disposal in the Saltstone Facility and a high-level waste stream containing

cesium and actinides for vitrification in DWPF and eventual disposal in Yucca Mountain. A single contractor has initiated preliminary design on a large scale low curie salt facility. He said that DOE has high confidence in both the technology and the contractor's ability to bring the salt waste processing facility on line as scheduled.

Mr. Rusche then asked for DOE's view with respect to SRS when it comes to legacy management or long-term care. Mr. Hansen replied that officials have discussed that SRS might remain a federal area in perpetuity. One reason for this is that it permits a more reasonable approach to clean-up. There was additional discussion about interest in long term care of the site. Mr. Mottel stated that we need to clearly focus on the present mission and issues at the site. We must not forget the site is a unique asset of our State, Country, and the World. Perpetuity decisions will come naturally with time.

Dr. Van Brunt asked if the 2005 federal budget will have any impact on the employees of the site, and Mr. Hansen reported that the budget is not expected to do so.

Mr. Byrne asked about what specific clarifications of the national Nuclear Waste Policy Act SRS is looking for, and Mr. Hansen said that he would defer that discussion for response from headquarters. They are working actively with the Congress to try to define the Nuclear Waste Policy Act language to permit them to proceed with the PMP. Mr. Byrne then asked what defined a closed tank. Mr. Hansen responded that a closed tank means that waste has been removed, although small residual amounts of radioactive material may remain as

well as other non-radioactive material substances. Material remaining is stabilized at the bottom of the tank with concrete grout, the remainder of the tank is filled with other material so that it will remain structurally sound. An analysis is then obtained to show that there is no long term danger to the environment. Mr. Byrne also wanted to know if an evaluation has been done on the accelerated clean up as opposed to the benefits of decaying, letting this go beyond 2025. Mr. Hansen replied that with regard to high-level waste in a carbon steel tank, there is general agreement that the potential for leakage into the environment far outweighs any concerns about getting it out quicker. He concluded that the decision now is to accelerate other than pay more maintenance costs.

In summary, Mr. Hansen stated that the acceleration of the cleanup at SRS is being achieved. Some adjustments to the cleanup plan are needed but 2025 completion remains achievable. The final tank closures await clarification of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982. He concluded by noting that the salt waste treatment plans can proceed when risks are resolve. Effective information sharing with the Nuclear Advisory Council and SC DHEC will continue in the future.

Mr. Ernie Chaput, representative from the Aiken County Economic Development Partnership, commented on the accelerated high-level liquid waste disposition and asked questions of DOE and DHEC relative to their interest. A copy of his specific questions and comments are on file with the SC Energy Office.

Mr. Rodney Lens, representative from Carolina Peace Resource Center, addressed the Council and wanted to know how an organization such as the Peace Resource Center can voice their concerns to the Council. Mr. Rusche asked him to check the link on the website for Barnwell disposal for information on how to contact the Council on issues, and further noted that Dr. Hudson and Ms. Billing were appointed to represent the interests of environmental groups.

Mr. David Wilson, SC DHEC, was then asked to speak to the Council and briefly commented on the status of the lawsuit.

Chairman Rusche thanked everyone for coming and declared the meeting adjourned at 3:35 PM.

*Attachment: Savannah River Site Waste Disposition Update for the Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council,
Charles A. Hansen