WM2008 Conference Panel Reports

Session 07A
Panel: US DOE Idaho National Laboratory (INL) - Site Cleanup Accomplishments and Challenges

Panel Reporter: Kelly Rhodes, CH2M-WG Idaho

Representatives from the Idaho Cleanup Project (ICP) discussed accomplishments and challenges regarding the safe, environmental cleanup of the Idaho National Laboratory site, contaminated with legacy wastes generated from conventional weapons testing, government-owned research and defense reactors, laboratory research, and defense missions at other DOE sites.

The following individuals participated in the panel:

Elizabeth Sellers, Manager, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Idaho Operations Office

Jeff Bradford, Vice President, Waste Management Services, CH2M-WG Idaho (CWI)

Allen Schubert, Vice President, Strategic Planning, CH2M-WG Idaho

Keith Quigley, Project Manager, Tank Farm Closure, CH2M-WG Idaho

Brandt Meagher, Project Manager, CERCLA Remediation, CH2M-WG Idaho

Scott Anderson, Director of Transuranic Waste Projects, CH2M-WG Idaho

Jim Floerke, Director, D&D Program and Integration, CH2M-WG Idaho

Opening Remarks - Beth Sellers, Manager DOE-Idaho, opened the session, reporting accomplishments in cleanup milestones as well as the importance of continued cleanup success for the INL.

Project Overview – Allen Schubert provided an overview of the 890-square-mile site, established in 1949 as a national reactor testing station. He presented the project's award winning safety video, CWI-Light Zone, as well as 2007 safety performance. Mr. Schubert provided a detailed look at scope by major project area.

Tank Farm Closure – Keith Quigley discussed the ICP's tank farm closure project. Located at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC), the tank farm includes 15 tanks – eleven 300,000 gallon and four 30,000 gallon - used to store radioactive liquid waste generated during the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and plant decommissioning work. He discussed the sequence and approach for tank closure. Through December 2007, 11 of 15 tanks have been grouted. Significant progress has been made in the construction of the facility (Integrated Waste Treatment Unit) to treat the sodium-bearing waste in remaining tanks.

Buried Waste at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex (RWMC) – Brandt Meagher discussed the status of the buried waste project. The waste is located at a disposal site established in 1952; the site occupies 97 acres within the fence boundary with waste occupying ~35 acres. The disposal site contains waste from Rocky Flats, INL operations, and other generators. Records regarding the buried waste have proved excellent and have aided in the retrieval process. Through December 2007, the project team has exhumed more than 10,000 cubic yards of targeted buried waste. In late 2008, agencies will sign a record of decision addressing final remedy for the cleanup.

Remote-handled (RH) Transuranic (TRU) Waste – Scott Anderson reported on the progress of RH TRU shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). CWI's approach included use of integrated project team; use of the certification authority of the Central Characterization Project (CCP); performing drum venting operations using a vendor developed system; completing retrieval and transfer of stored RH TRU waste from vaults at the RWMC to storage areas at INTEC using shielded overpacks specifically fabricated for ICP use; modifying an existing shielded facility to accommodate a real-time radiography system and dose-to-curie measurement equipment; modifying an existing shielded facility to provide RH 72B cask loading capability including canister loading and lag storage rack; cask loading platform; and cask/trailer loading capability. On January 18, 2007, CWI completed the first RH-TRU shipment to WIPP; on January 3, 2008, CWI completed the 100th RH-TRU shipment to WIPP.

Facility Demolition/Disposition – Jim Floerke discussed the project's D&D scope and progress. Over the course of seven years, CWI will demolish/disposition 235 facilities/structures, totaling 1,827,581 square feet. The D&D team has addressed historically significant properties, determined end states for high risk facilities, sequenced D&D around operating facilities, and negotiated decommissioning end states that balance environmental protection with worker safety. Through 2007, the CWI had demolished 78 facilities/structures including removal and disposal of the Engineering Test Reactor vessel as well as demolition of the Test Area North Hot Shop.

Look Ahead – Jeff Bradford closed the formal session with a summary of what's ahead for the project in 2008.

More than 50 people attended Panel 07A. Questions included *how did you capture the hearts/minds of the workforce; what was the confidence level of the RH TRU characterization records; what kind of challenges have you had (with the split of the contracts [cleanup and laboratory]) and how have you worked through those.*