

DOE and Public Involvement A Key to Successful Clean Up - 8135

Sondra Sarten
Member of the Oak Ridge Specific Site Advisory Board
Oak Ridge, Tennessee
Owner R S Construction and Fabrication
P. O. Box 1062, 201 East Broadway
Lenoir City, TN 37771

ABSTRACT

The combination of two vital elements in the Oak Ridge, TN area are the Department of Energy and the education of the public, at any age, of the necessary work that is and has been going on this region of the country since the setting aside of land during the World War II era. A wide variety of interested citizens from surrounding counties make up a group of individuals that bring different elements of education and involvement to form a committee of whose interest is the Department of Energy's handling of contaminated material. The effort of one of the committees on this board has given the public a resource of material to develop a better understanding of the history and stewardship efforts taking place at the Oak Ridge Reservation.

INTRODUCTION

When the general public has the opportunity to become involved in their community, whether it is a DOE remediation site or a little league ball park, you can rest assured that they will give time and an effort to see a job that is done right.

Over 40 years ago the United States Government embarked on a mission that would change history and bring an end to the Second World War. In 1943, site selections were made to build an atomic weapon. One of the primary areas selected was Oak Ridge, TN, where three major facilities would be constructed. One of these major sites was dedicated to the enrichment of uranium.

These facilities had a mission to build a bomb as soon as possible no matter what the cost and built to wartime codes. With early weapons development began the out put resulted in the production of radioactive components along with radioactive waste and radioactive waste by-products being generated as a result the disposal of such drums and material were buried in ditches or trenches exposing the containments to the ground water. Waste generation was of low importance to satisfy the current mission of weapons development. During this time security was of primary importance to the current mission. The city now

referred to as the Secret City was locked down with military guards posted not allowing anyone to enter or leave the city without specific permission. During the mid to late 1980's the United States and the DOE focus changed to waste reduction, due to amount of waste stock piled that was generated during the cold war era.

The 1990's brought on a new era as several site cleanups were underway with Oak Ridge being no exception. The closing of K-25 facility now known as East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) the DOE launched a Decontamination and Decommissioning (D&D) project awarded to BNFL to cleanup three buildings K-27, K-29 and K-33. This was a \$238 million dollar project that actually ended in nearly a \$500 million dollar effort. Currently efforts are underway by Bechtel Jacobs to remediate the remaining site with the D&D of the K-25 building known as the "U". With the demolition of the K-25 building the radioactive waste that met the acceptance criteria will be sent to the Environmental Management Waste Management Facilities that is located near the Y-12 facilities. The ETTP site has a lot of activity going on with plans being discussed for the north building becoming a museum of history about the part it played in the Manhattan Project and commemorating its place in the National Historic Preservation Society.

What the Future Holds

The future of public involvement with DOE projects is very important in addition to public involvement such as advisory boards, town meetings, citizens groups and local stake holders. The monthly distribution of the Public Involvement News, the FY 2005 version of the Cleanup Progress, and updates of project fact sheet that are made available at the DOE Information Center in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The involvement of our future is with student groups, libraries that can reach the public through history and civics agendas and educational promotions. Fortunately, the clean-up efforts in Oak Ridge, TN is just now getting underway and making efficient progress, along with the Oak Ridge Site Specific Board (ORSSAB) in making great strides in the education of the local community. With what was once the Secret City now open to the public with tours every year in accordance along with the Secret City Festival that is held in down town Oak Ridge. The education kits are also on display at the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, TN.

In 2001, ORSSAB established a Stewardship Committee which included a Stewardship Education Task Team to reach out to students and the community with long term stewardship education to help ensure that these issues are understood. In 2005, the ORSSAB celebrated its 10th year of success and in March the board launched its Stewardship Education Resource Kit. These kits took three years to develop and now contain lesson plans, videos and a fictional case study all based on actual clean up operation. This kit is to be used to educate the public and students of the reservation by various videos and maps with lesson plans for educational purposes. In February of 2006 the ORSSAB hosted a Teachers Workshop on the Stewardship Education Resource Kit to explain it sufficient as a teaching tool that can be used in the classroom to teach the students of the history of the area and what is being done with the clean-up efforts in this

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area. Participation included the DOE, State of Tennessee, Teachers, and Board Members thus proving that when the public gets involved things happen. Currently the ORSSAB Stewardship Committee has plans to introduce this educational tool into the State of Tennessee School System to educate teachers and students about Oak Ridge's history and clean up efforts that are underway with what areas need to be addressed before the potential threat to the public and the environment.

Record keeping is also a vital mission of the ORSSAB Stewardship Committee with the primary focus on areas of contamination levels. A characterization map has been developed that will be on display in the future at the DOE Information Center indicating the various levels of contamination and where and when these areas have been remediate. These records are important to maintain for future development as land is turned over for public use and are recorded at the County Property Accessories Office in Anderson and Roane counties.

As the mission at Oak Ridge moves forward efforts are all ready underway to dispose, reprocess and reuse nuclear material and waste products. Down blending, refueling and reconfigurations of nuclear material; and components are just a few of the many advanced technologies being conducted at the Oak Ridge reservation.

CONCLUSION

The current and past ORSSAB members, DOE participants and area leadership should be applauded for the efforts and success that have been accomplished, with much work still left to be done. The ORSSAB board members will retire and others will take their place bringing with them new ideas to accomplish different challenges brought before the board at every meeting. Public involvement is moving forward with assistance from past ORSSAB board members and also with new members coming on board, the focus will change.

From determining what areas need to be cleaned up and how it should be cleaned up. The Oak ridge sites are different from most sites clean-up projects with Y-12 becoming the nation's center for nuclear weapons the Y-12 National Security Complex is currently constructing a \$500 Billion dollar facility to store High Enriched Uranium (HEUMF) as well as a Uranium Processing Facility (UPF), ORNL is making remarkable advancements in computer technology, the recent completion of the Spallation Newtron Source (SNS) and researching of alternative energy resources it makes it hard to keep focused on legacy waste and clean up efforts.

The DOE regulators and stakeholders are staying focused with groups like the ORSSAB who are all volunteers that devote a considerable amount of their time, expertise and knowledge. The clean-up mission will continue although the future of waste management in Oak Ridge, TN is clear, the people want a clean future for their children and generations to come. Great accomplishments occur when regulators and the public work together. By education the public and listing to their ideals, we can accomplish

many things and pave the way to a successful remediation project at Oak Ridge, TN. Any nuclear process development must have waste plans as well as viable remediation of legacy waste as core considerations no matter where you are or what you do getting involved and staying involved is the key to successful for long term stewardship and perseverance will demand results.

REFERENCE

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
P. O. Box 2001, EM-91
Oak Ridge, TN
www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab