WM Symposia WM2010 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 25 - Emerging Issues with US DOE Prime Contractors

Co-Chairs: Judith Connell, *Fluor Government Group (USA)*
Pete Knollmeyer, *Fluor Government Group (USA)*
Reporter: Judy Connell, *Fluor Government Group*

General Introduction
The session featured eight panelists from both large and small DOE sites. Each speaker gave a brief overview of the respective site, its mission, and their organization's specific work scope and progress, before going on to discuss existing and emerging challenges. An aging workforce, predictable funding, and ARRA funding and challenges were issues common to all the presentations.

Panelists in the order of their presentations are given below.

1. Bill Franz, *Project Manager, LATA/Parallax Portsmouth;*
2. John Lehew, *President, CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company, Hanford;*
3. Garry Flowers, *President & CEO, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions;*
4. Scott Sax, *COO, Washington River Protection Solutions, Hanford;*
5. Jeff Mousseau, *President & GM, Bechtel BWXT Idaho;*
6. Ryan Dodd, *Deputy Project Manager, Washington Closure Hanford;*
7. Greg Meyer, *VP, Environmental & Nuclear , Fluor Government Group (formerly Pres. & GM of B&W PANTEX);*
8. Dennis Ferrigno, *Site Manager, Paducah Remediation Services.*

Bill Franz spoke about the environmental restoration at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in southern Ohio – a 3,777-acre Site that employees about 2,300 workers. LATA/Parallax has 450 workers at Portsmouth including subcontractors. From 2006-2009, LATA/Parallax has torn down 17 inactive, surplus facilities, and is currently involved in such activities as demolishing a cooling tower complex and remediating groundwater contaminated with trichloroethylene, both of which are American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA)projects. The overarching issue at Portsmouth is the upcoming transition to the D&D of the Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

John Lehew focused his comments on the work the CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company (PRC) is doing at Hanford in decommissioning and remediating the Site's Central Plateau and 100-K Area to support DOE's 2015 vision. The PRC has a $4.5 B, 10-year cost-plus-award-fee contract with DOE and has integrated $1.3 B of ARRA activities into its work scope. Through ARRA funding, the PRC has directly hired or retained more than 1,200 jobs, and placed over $276M in contracts. Lehew cited three emerging issues: funding past 2011 (need for "stable" level of funding), workforce transformation (potential loss of newly trained D&D craft after 2011), and regulatory alignment (strategy for Hanford's Central Plateau).

Garry Flowers gave some statistics about the Savannah River Site: 310 square miles, a workforce of about 11,000 (SRNS employs about 55% of those workers) and four primary customers (DOE-EM, NNSA, and South Carolina and Georgia). From Flowers' perspective, SRNS is facing five issues: reducing the Site's footprint (reduce the footprint by 67% by 2011), addressing the realities of an aging workforce with many employees eligible for retirement

(preserve knowledge and experience), making strategic investments (reduce lifecycle costs, improve infrastructure, support Savannah River National Laboratory initiatives for growth), improving safety performance, and managing and sustaining growth (maintain performance and efficiency and establish enduring relationships). Like several contractors at Hanford, SRNS also received ARRA funding ─ $1.4B that is credited with creating or saving 3,114 jobs.

Scott Sax described Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) mission at Hanford: reduce the risk of 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemical waste stored in 177 underground tanks. He shared that WRPS was dealing with some of the same issues previously mentioned by his colleagues: an aging workforce, the need for predictable funding, and the ARRA "cliff" in 2012. However, he also noted that WRPS has a unique issue ─ staffing up to support commissioning and operating Hanford's Waste Treatment Plant that is slated to operate until 2052. Sax spoke about building the workforce of the future, likening them to "conservation activists." He also pointed out that to address a shortage of engineers and technicians, WRPS was partnered with Columbia Basin Community College and Washington State University – Tri-Cities to help fund scholarships and attract young students into science-based disciplines.

Jeff Mousseau explained Bechtel BWXT's mission at the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Plant in Idaho: retrieve, characterize, process, package and ship 65,000cubic meters of transuranic (TRU) waste to out-of-state permanent disposal sites and support the receipt and treatment of TRU waste from other DOE sites for shipment to WIPP. Mousseau cited four issues for discussion: people, technology, safety, and small business. He went to further expand each of these topics. For example, he pointed out that in a closure contract, as work progress, people perceive they are working themselves out of a job and it is difficult to retain and motivate workers. Further, the goals for subcontracting with small business are becoming more and more aggressive and mentor-protégé relationships are extremely important. In closing, Mousseau reminded the audience that issues are opportunities.

Ryan Dodd pointed out Washington Closure Hanford's (WCH) achievements and challenges. WCH's work scope involves about 210 miles of the 585-square miles Hanford site. WCH has also received ARRA funding and has used those funds in expanding the on-site LLW disposal facility (ERDF – Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility) by 50% and doubling the daily disposal rate (12,000/day). He cited the following challenges: the closeout plan and attendant regulatory requirements and retaining the work force.

Greg Meyer did not deliver a PowerPoint presentation for this panel. Rather, he shared some statistics about PANTEX: PANTEX is a High-Reliability Work Organization with 3,200 employees; the Site achieved VPP STAR status in February 2010; and the current contract expires in September 2010, but a 6-9 month extension is likely. Meyer shared that PANTEX is teamed with Texas Tech on a $28M wind-power project at PANTEX to deliver 14 megawatts of electricity to the Site.

Dennis Ferrigno pointed out that the 3,425-acre Paducah site in rural western Kentucky is a site with "shared" missions: environmental cleanup, waste management, depleted uranium conversion, deactivation and decommissioning, re-industrialization, and long-term stewardship. Paducah is also home to the USEC-run Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) used to enrich uranium.

Paducah Remediation Services' contract calls for remediating and dispositioning specific areas of the Site (land and groundwater) by removing legacy waste, performing facility D&D, and operating the Site's waste-storage facilities. PRS received $78.8M in ARRA funding that is being used to complete the demolition of two large chemical-processing facilities and one contaminated metals smelting facility, including the disposition of waste and debris. The smelter is a potential beryllium facility, and therefore requires a full beryllium program to protect on-site workers and the public from exposure to this hazardous material.