

The Role of the Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, With Emphasis on the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board – 12482

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ABSTRACT

The Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) is comprised of eight Citizens' Advisory Boards, chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) by the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management for the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE). The purpose of the EM SSAB is to provide the DOE with recommendations regarding Environmental Management issues from legacy waste produced at major sites across the DOE Complex. The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB) is the site specific advisory board to the DOE on issues of environmental monitoring, remediation, waste management and long-term stewardship at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The other boards are located at: Hanford, Idaho, Nevada, Paducah, Portsmouth, Oak Ridge and Savannah River. Using broad citizen outreach and input, the SSAB provides an official mechanism for the citizenry at each of these sites to monitor current activities affecting the region and also to have input into the prioritization of future activities.

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, in response to the increasing need for public participation in DOE's decisions, the department participated in a national policy dialogue on federal facility environmental restoration decision-making and priority-setting issues. The Keystone Center, a non-profit environmental conflict management group, established a working dialogue among representatives of the federal government, Tribal governments, Native American organizations and local citizen groups. The goal was to develop consensus policy recommendations aimed at improving the process by which federal facility environmental cleanup decisions are made, such that these decisions reflect the priorities and concerns of all stakeholders. It was recommended that federal agencies establish advisory boards to provide independent policy and technical advice to both regulated and regulating agencies with respect to key cleanup decisions. In June 1994, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and General Services Administration (GSA) approved the Charter that established the EM SSAB under FACA. The Charter has been renewed every two years since then. ¹

In accordance with its charter, the EM SSAB may provide advice and recommendations to any DOE official the Assistant Secretary shall designation at various sites. Local EM SSAB Boards draw upon diverse community viewpoints to provide advice and

¹ EM SSAB Guidance

recommendations to DOE. The goal of the EM SSAB is to more directly involve stakeholders in EM planning and decision-making processes for the nuclear weapons complex cleanup. The goal of public participation programs organized by the NNM CAB is to build and sustain effective relationships between public stakeholders in northern New Mexico and the Los Alamos Site Office on topics and issues related to the cleanup program at LANL. In building and sustaining these relationships, the NNM CAB builds a bridge between stakeholders affected by operations at LANL and the DOE.

The formation of the SSAB is recognition that legacy waste from DOE operations may have impacted the environment detrimentally over the past 60 years. The EM SSAB provides an official mechanism for the citizenry at each of these sites to both monitor current activities affecting the region and also to have input into future activities. Not only does it have a formal role in advising the DOE about environmental matters, the EM SSAB also uses public outreach with local communities, including Native American Tribes. The mission of the Board includes increasing public involvement, education and awareness related to DOE activities and ensuring that stakeholders have a vehicle to voice concerns and ideas related to issues at LANL and other DOE sites.

The responsibilities of the EM SSAB include communicating, educating and engaging citizens living around major DOE facilities across the nation. Hundreds of volunteer citizens have served on the EM SSAB since it was chartered in 1994. Members have heard numerous presentations and have toured many DOE sites during this time. With this stakeholder involvement and education, DOE has had the benefit of *informed* citizen input in its decision making process.



Fig. 1. EM Site Specific Advisory Boards across the nation

METHOD

The membership of the NNM CAB comes from many counties and communities around northern New Mexico and represents a variety of backgrounds and interests. Thus, it acts as a liaison between stakeholders and DOE and provides a formal pathway for citizens to bring concerns to the Department. It is DOE policy that the EM SSAB membership provides for gender and ethnic diversity. Each board must establish a strong outreach program and recruit members from all segments of its community. To

the extent possible, membership should reflect diverse viewpoints in the affected community and region and should include primarily individuals or groups who are directly affected by DOE site cleanup activities. Careful attention is given to conflict of interest considerations.²

Board members are usually drawn from stakeholder groups and organizations including:

- Local governments
- Tribal governments
- Environmental organizations
- Labor organizations
- Universities and colleges
- Tribal, Hispanic and other minority organizations
- Women's groups, business groups, civic and religious groups

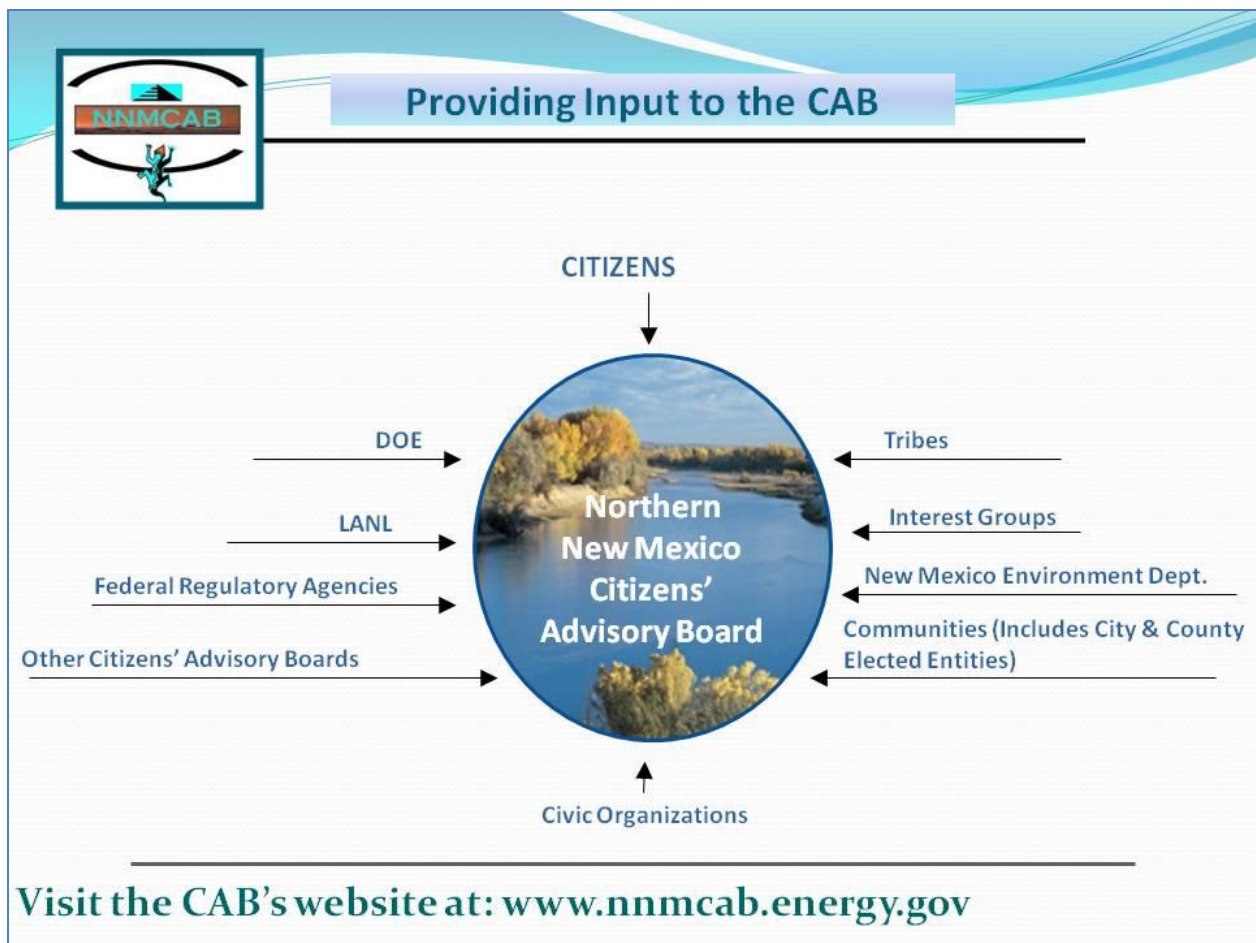


Fig. 2. Stakeholder Input on the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board

² EM SSAB Guidance

The NNM CAB and the Los Alamos Environmental Projects Office have a robust outreach program. Los Alamos National Laboratory is situated on the Pajarito Plateau and is surrounded by several communities upstream and downstream of its operation. LANL also shares a boundary with the Pueblo de San Ildefonso. The Pueblos of Santa Clara, Jemez and Cochiti are also in close proximity of LANL. It is critically important that the stakeholders of these and other communities have a voice in the decision making process for the cleanup of LANL. Consequently, the NNM CAB strives to keep the public informed and involved. The NNM CAB sends out a semi-annual newsletter detailing the work of the Board and the accomplishments or delays in the cleanup efforts. It also has a very informative website and has entered the social media age with a Face book page, in an effort to reach younger citizens in the area.

It is essential that the public is informed not only regarding the work of the EM SSAB but also that the public is kept informed regarding the details of the clean up issues at all sites across the DOE complex. The NNM CAB has hosted several public forums in an effort to bring the information to the public in one place and have a panel seated to answer questions from the public. These public forums are widely advertised in newspapers, radio, home mailings and on several websites. Posters are placed in area restaurants, grocery stores, coffee houses, libraries, doctor waiting rooms and other public gathering places.


The public forum is videotaped and is later broadcast on Public Access Channels in the area. Shorter versions are available on You Tube. The forum typically includes a poster session where the subject matter experts explain the issues and the remediation work in detail and have an opportunity to answer questions “one on one” with those in attendance. The poster session is followed by detailed presentations on the subject and then by a panel discussion with individuals representing regulatory agencies, counties, cities, tribal governments, LANL, DOE and others who are directly involved in the day- to-day work of the pertinent issue.

The public forums hosted by the NNM CAB have focused on surface and groundwater issues in the area, since water is such a precious commodity in New Mexico. The NNM CAB also hosted a public forum on “Material Disposal Area G Closure Alternatives.” These forums have been attended by 60 to 100 members of the public and have served as an excellent exchange between the agencies, NNM CAB members and the public. The NNM CAB considers all public comment when developing or deliberating on recommendations going to the Los Alamos Site Office.

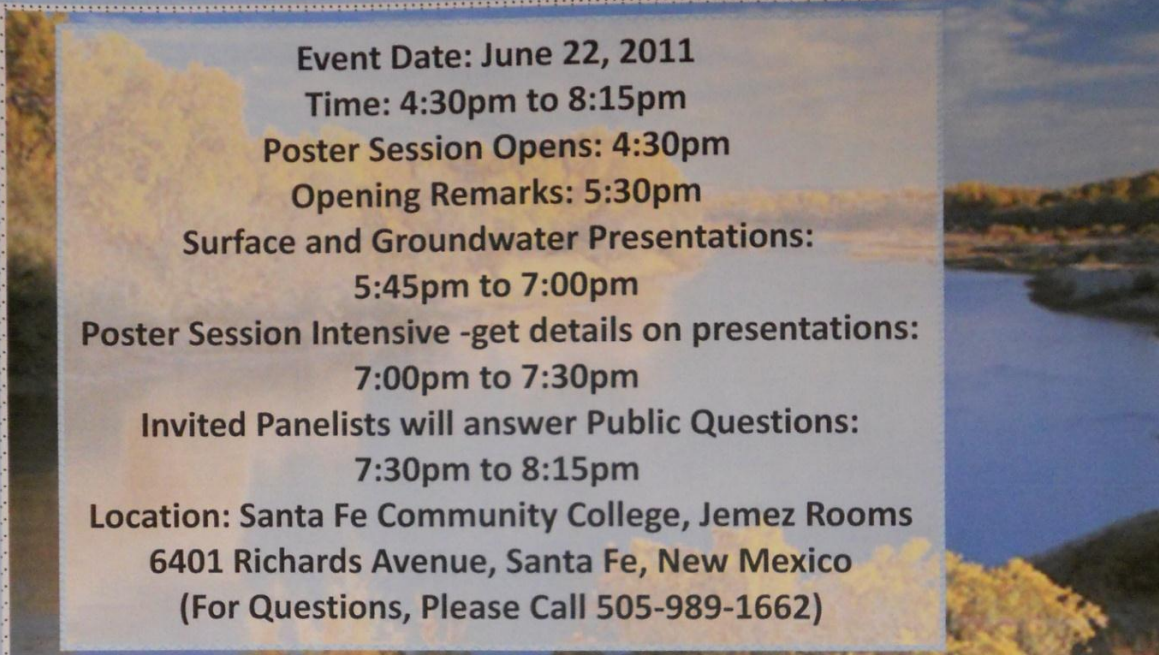
The NNM CAB also has a “Speaker’s Bureau” presentation used by members and staff at meetings of civic, environmental and governmental groups across northern New Mexico. This presentation is a synopsis of the organization, history, mission and work of the NNM CAB. It also serves as a recruitment tool for new members. NNM CAB staff sets up informational booths at Earth Day events, LANL Leader’s Breakfasts and any other events where the public may be in attendance and may take reading material with them.

You are Cordially Invited to Participate!

Surface and Groundwater Quality at LANL; an Update for our Community




Event Date: June 22, 2011
Time: 4:30pm to 8:15pm
Poster Session Opens: 4:30pm
Opening Remarks: 5:30pm
**Surface and Groundwater Presentations:
5:45pm to 7:00pm**
**Poster Session Intensive -get details on presentations:
7:00pm to 7:30pm**
**Invited Panelists will answer Public Questions:
7:30pm to 8:15pm**
**Location: Santa Fe Community College, Jemez Rooms
6401 Richards Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico
(For Questions, Please Call 505-989-1662)**



The public will have an opportunity to hear a current update from LANL, with input and participation from the Department of Energy and other invited groups, pueblos, local city, state and county representatives.

The presentations will be structured by canyon watershed to address:

- ♦ What contamination has been found at LANL
- ♦ How has the contamination been addressed, outfalls reduced, pathways stopped, etc.
- ♦ What is left to do, what are the areas of focus, what are the plans to complete the process
- ♦ What is the proposed path forward for the near term future



**FREE PUBLIC EVENT
HOSTED BY:**
**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO
CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD**
www.nnmcab.energy.gov
Email: lnovak@doeal.gov

Fig. 3. Announcement flyer for Surface and Ground Water Forum, June 22, 2011

RESULTS

“Since 1994, the local site Boards have met numerous times, providing DOE with hundreds of recommendations. Many of these recommendations have proven highly effective in redirecting EM efforts in ways that have saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

- At Hanford, the local site Board recommended that the DOE reduce indirect and overhead costs, saving more than \$200 million. Additionally, the Board recommended against DOE building six new double-shelled tanks. As a result, the Energy Department avoided approximately \$375 million in unnecessary costs.
- At Idaho National Laboratory, the Board recommended that DOE use the most efficient and cost-effective method available for remediating ground water contaminated with hazardous chemicals – resulting in a savings of more than \$6.5 million.
- At Savannah River, the local Board has assisted in accelerating the closure of the Old Radioactive Waste Burial Ground (ORWBG), the highest risk site in the Savannah River Sites’ Environmental Restoration Program. With their input and recommendations, SRS has proposed a final remedy for this waste unit that combines remedies from three nearby radioactive waste basins with the closure of the ORWBG.
- At Paducah, waste disposition has been one of the local Board’s primary focuses. They have performed in-depth studies on a potential on-site disposal facility, ultimately aiding in the selection of its future location. The board continues to stay abreast of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility study and currently is focused on the on-site sanitary landfill and a myriad of regulatory issues. It is also preparing comments on actions resulting from the Accelerated Cleanup Plan.
- At Oak Ridge, the Board submitted its Comprehensive Closure Proposal identifying two projects for accelerated closure. Its proposed disposition of low-level radioactive waste will produce an \$8 - \$9 million savings. In another project, two high school classes wrote summaries of the Oak Ridge Reservation Stakeholders Reports on Stewardship as a way to educate other students about stewardship.”³

³ DOE EM Website

Table I. NNM CAB Recommendations Submitted in 2011.

Recommendation Number	Topic
2011-01	FY 2012 Budget Request for LANL EM Work
2011-02	Accelerating TRU Waste Shipments from Area G to WIPP
2011-03	Using Rail Transport for Moving Waste
2011-04	Achieving 2005 Consent Order Milestones in the Next Four Years
2011-05	Recommendation that LANL Not Be Selected for GTCC Waste Disposal
2011-06	Utilization of LANL as a Screening Lab for Certain Greater Than Class C Low-Level Radioactive Wastes Considered for Disposal at the WIPP Repository
2011-07	Maximum Utilization of WIPP by Increasing MDA G TRU Shipments
2011-08	Restore User Confidence in the Risk Analysis, Communication, Evaluation, and Reduction (RACER) Database
2011-09	New Urgency for Increased TRU Shipments from MDA G

DISCUSSION

“The mission of the EM SSAB is to more directly involve stakeholders in EM Planning and decision-making processes for the nuclear weapons complex cleanup. DOE has various means of involving the public in its planning and decision-making processes; the EM SSAB is only one component of EM’s public participation program, and is not intended to be an exclusive means of public participation. It is the policy of DOE and EM to conduct its programs in an open and responsive manner, thereby encouraging and providing the opportunity for public participation in its planning and decision-making processes.”⁴

EM SSAB members are appointed to a two year term and may serve up to three terms. During this time, members are able to hear many presentations from subject matter experts, attend several site tours at their site and across the DOE complex and are able to express their concerns and give input to the prioritization of clean up at each site. It is an excellent education and it is hoped that these members will go out to their communities, friends and family and discuss these issues in an informed manner. Many times our citizens rely only on newspaper articles or the Internet, which are sometimes replete with fear and misinformation. The more stakeholders are able to be truly informed, the more accurate the discourse will be at each of the DOE sites.

⁴ EM SSAB Guidance

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LASO/EPO
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REFERENCES

1. DOE EM SSAB Guidance, 2011
2. DOE EM SSAB Guidance, 2011
3. DOE EM Website: <http://www.em.doe.gov>
4. DOE EM SSAB Guidance, 2011