

WM2013 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 1: WM Symposium Plenary Session

Co-Chairs: Fred Sheil, *Sheil Consulting, Ltd (United Kingdom)*
James Gallagher, *Gallagher Consulting*

Panel Reporter: Jim Fiore, *Fiore Consulting*

Panelists:

1. **William C. Ostendorff**, *Commissioner, US NRC*
2. **David McCauley**, *Director of Uranium and Radioactive Waste, Natural Resources Canada (Canada)*
3. **David Huizenga**, *Senior Advisor, US DOE – Office of Environmental Management*

An estimated 1200 people attended this opening panel session which featured government and industry world leaders speaking on the pressing issues facing radioactive waste management in 2013 and beyond from around the world.

Summary of Presentations

William C. Ostendorff opened Monday's plenary session by addressing the issue of commercial spent fuel in the United States. He explained that he and his team have travelled across the US to all of the nuclear power plants and the recurring theme of nuclear waste today is "tough choices." He assured the audience of his confidence that the US will do the "right thing and find an appropriate long-term repository." Today, three quarters of all spent fuel is stored in spent fuel pools where the waste was generated and there is the need to address issues such as the environmental impact if geological disposal capacity is not available when required and the forward looking analysis of spent fuel pool leaks and fires with their consequences. As a result of the decision not to go forward with Yucca Mountain, challenges to the Nuclear Waste Management Fee are in the courts. The key to regulatory success was continued safe operation, proactive risk communication and a stable and predictable regulatory process.

David McCauley the Director of Uranium and Radioactive Waste for the Canadian Natural Resources Division, discussed the great strides they've made in Radioactive Waste Management. Canada boasts a number of "largest" in the world, including:

- sixth largest oil producer,
- third largest Natural Gas producer,
- second largest uranium production, and
- fourth largest hydroelectric and nuclear power generation.

Nuclear energy plays an important role in Canada including four power plants, 19 reactors in operation, and six research reactors. Canada's Federal Government has policy and regulatory authority on radioactive waste management activities, while the individual waste owners manage, fund and develop long-term storage solutions. A deep geological repository site has been selected for Low and Intermediate Waste and a public hearing is scheduled for 2013. Nuclear power is a critical part of Canada's ever evolving clean energy landscape.

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David Huizenga, EM Senior Policy Advisor, shared that much progress has been made in the DOE complex, and an equal amount of challenges exist. Huizenga cited GAOs removal of EM from the High Risk Projects list as an example of progress by improved project management. However, four projects remain on the list, including: the Waste Treatment Plant and the River Corridor Projects at Hanford, the Salt Waste processing Facility at Savannah River and a project at Oak Ridge.

Accomplishments include:

- WIPP continues to succeed in safely transporting waste and sending it deep into the ground for storage.
- At Idaho, the project has shaved \$440 million off of the baseline for onsite reactor disposal by partnering with regulatory agencies with “out of the box” thinking.
- Progress has been made at the WTP on the lab and balance of plant and the LAW Melter. EM HQ has convened a team to solve the highly complex issues dealing with the HLW and Pre-Treatment Facilities and is expected to make recommendations soon.

Huizenga wants to expand Technology Development activities at EM, but doesn't want to reduce the already strained cleanup funds, and said that EM must find a way to “work smarter and not harder.”