

WM2013 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 2: Hot Topics in US DOE Environmental Management

Co-Chairs: James Gallagher, *Gallagher Consulting*
Martin Schneider, *Exchange Monitor Publications*

Panel Reporter: Linda Lehman, *Consultant*

Panelists:

1. **Mark Gilbertson on behalf of Alice Williams**, *Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS)*
2. **Mark Gilbertson**, *DAS for Site Restoration*
3. **Kenneth Picha**, *DAS for Tank Waste and Nuclear Material*
4. **Frank Marcinowski**, *DAS for Waste Management*
5. **Matthew Moury**, *DAS for Safety, Security and Quality Programs*
6. **Jack Surash**, *DAS for Acquisition and Project Management*
7. **Melody Bell**, *Assistant DAS for Human Capital and Corporate Services*

Approximately 100 people attended the session on Hot Topics within the US DOE Environmental Management Office. Jim Gallagher opened the session and introduced Martin Schneider, who has replaced Ed Helminski as CEO of the Exchange Monitor Publications. Martin noted that with the flat budget projections for EM for the foreseeable future, there may not be sufficient dollars available to accomplish the EM work that has been scheduled during this period. The panelists reviewed goals and successes within their respective organizations.

Summary of Presentations

Mark Gilbertson, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Site Restoration described today's Panel session as the hottest Hot Topics Panel ever. Gilbertson stepping in for Alice Williams, Associate Principal DAS indicated that Safety is EM's most important driver. This theme along with risk reduction and protecting workers was continued throughout all the presentations by the other Deputy Assistant Secretaries.

EM has set a priority on reducing life-cycle costs and increasing cleanup efforts by improving project planning and management and by utilizing new and innovative technologies. Another focus is to improve communications with stakeholders, regulators and the national laboratories to find efficiencies and leverage resources to maximize value to tax payers.

The EM 2013 budget request of \$5.65 Billion will be down from last year's \$6.13 Billion dollar figure. About a third of the budget goes to tank waste activities. The reduced budget will impact tank retrievals and delay work at Hanford. Gilbertson also concluded that slow and steady may actually work better for communities, sustain the work force and lessen the economic impacts in surrounding areas.

Gilbertson stressed that EM must be systematic, strategic and methodical in their work so that stakeholder's can better understand the EM mission. He also noted that they will be

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strengthening the Communities of Practice for remedy reviews, compliance and Risk/Performance assessments.

Ken Picha, DAS for Tank Waste and Nuclear Material, noted that there are 138,000 cubic meters of liquid waste that need processing and disposal. They eliminated 35,280 cubic meters in 2012 and 13,450 cubic meters of HLW were vitrified at SRS and an additional 11,237 cubic meters of salt waste was processed at SRS.

Picha cited successes to include: cleaning of 6 tanks with 16 tanks at Hanford in various stages of retrieval; 404,000 curies of decontaminated salt waste was disposed in salt stone; two West Valley WIRs were completed for the vitrification melter and for two vessels, a feed makeup tank and a feed holding tank. West Valley as also has installed an innovative tank drying system due to some of their 5 tanks accumulating infiltrating water. (That technology is an example of some that could be utilized at other sites.). The continuation of the Tank Waste Corporate Board which sets high-level policy and strategies to address tank issues was also considered a success.

Frank Marcinowski noted that progress had been made on DOE Order 435.1A and the changes in priorities at Los Alamos on near surface TRU disposal, but much work remains. His goals for the future include:

- Disposition Nickel – Paducah and Oak Ridge have 15,000 tons of nickel so they will be developing a strategy to handle that
- ROD for the GTCC EIS and a location
- Develop and implement a strategy for disposal of defense HLW
- Implement the BRC recommendations

Mathew Moury gave a safety reminder to the audience that follows the ISMS system of planning. He asked how many had someone watch them while climbing ladders and encouraged all audience attendees that principles of ISMS should be applied at home as well as on the job site.

Safety is the first priority and that is a DOE core value. DOE's integrated safety management approach has been utilized for 15 years and improvements are based on data. His office is responsible for interactions with the DNFSB.

His goals are to streamline security and to keep an eye on low probability high consequence events. He also wants contractors to employ self-assessment programs to identify hazards and utilize lessons learned from past experiences.

Jack Surash, good project management plays a key role in reducing costs and no item is too small to consider. Even small changes like the type of ink utilized in printers can save the complex thousands of dollars. Management has been looking at ways to reduce efforts and changes that can be made and has had remarkable success in reducing costs. . His goals are to:

- Improve project, budget and contract management and
- Deliver results on time and within cost

Some of his strategies include:

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- Use internal QA process
- Monitor contract and staffing needs
- Improve and expand independent contract and project reviews
- Optimize the use of Small Businesses and minority owned businesses
- Encourage stronger ownership by holding contractors accountable
- Mutually agree to identify issues early
- Solve problems at the lowest level possible

Melody Bell discussed ways to optimize the existing work force. An aging workforce continues to be a problem and ways to interest young engineers and scientists are in the works. Cooperation is continuing with various universities. Her strategy is to use feedback results from Employee Viewpoint Surveys and follow up on targeted surveys. They are looking at other organizations such as NASA and NRC who have earned awards for their treatment of employees and they have performed benchmarking and developed a gap analysis. They have developed an EM Capital Management Plan.