

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 071: **US DOE Featured Site: Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) – US DOE and NNSA Working Together in a Multi-Mission Environment**

Session Co-Chairs: **Teri Browdy**, *National Security Technologies, LLC (NSTec)*
Scott Wade, *US DOE, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Field Office*

Panel Reporter: **Dona Merritt**, *Navarro*

Panelists:

- **Patrick Morris**, *Director, Operations and Infrastructure, NSTec*
- **Leo Drozdoff**, *Director, Nevada Department of Conservation & Natural Resources*
- **Richard Arnold**, *Spokesperson, Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organizations*

A panel was convened at the 2015 Waste Management Symposium which brought together leaders that discussed the overall approach to successfully conducting diverse missions at the NNSS while working with other agencies and organizations to expand and preserve use of existing, extensive, and unique NNSS resources. Panelists represented unique perspectives and differing missions/goals that converge for mutual success. During the session, panelists discussed best practices; cross-cutting activities; tribal collaborations; and the evolution of the NNSS from its proud past to its exciting future. A summary of the panel discussion and audience questions are presented below.

Summary of Presentations:

The session was introduced by Co-chairs Teri Browdy and Scott Wade who provided a quick overview on the background of the NNSS to include location, current missions, historical significance, and organizations that participate in its missions.

Following the overview, **Patrick Morris**, NSTec Director of Operations and Infrastructure presented a programmatic overview of the NNSS (including NSTec's management and operating responsibilities) that covered budget, missions and challenges.

Leo Drozdoff, Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, followed Mr. Morris and capitalized on his remarks by emphasizing that diversifying and bringing new missions to the NNSS is an objective for the governor of Nevada. Mr. Drozdoff highlighted that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) is one such example of mission development. He also noted that it is very advantageous to bring missions that exist at other facilities to the NNSS because of its vast size and isolation. Furthermore, Mr. Drozdoff expressed that Nevada is a leader in renewable energy and is seeking new opportunities, particularly solar – which is a good use of the NNSS.

Referring back to Mr. Morris's presentation, Mr. Drozdoff discussed culture issues for those who want to do work at the NNSS may take some adjusting; stating that it's exciting to announce new work, but when getting down to business for implementation, there are challenges. Mr. Drozdoff closed on the importance of embracing new opportunities and being prepared for requirements and expectations; that the governor is fully committed to making sure expectations get managed so that new work can be accomplished at the NNSS; and that State of Nevada stands ready and appreciates the amount of thought put in ahead for risk and challenges – challenges understood so opportunities can be realized.

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Richard Arnold, spokesperson for the Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organizations, wrapped up the session by presenting an overview on tribal involvement, including cultural beliefs and ties to the NNSS and the importance/value of tribal engagement. During his presentation, Richard stated that tribal involvement provides an opportunity to integrate traditional practices with federal agencies and showcases how tribes (within and between) come together in order to effectively collaborate with federal agencies. He noted that it is very important for the tribes to have a united front and to do so they deliberate extensively to reach consensus for presenting “one voice.”

Mr. Arnold shared the need for tribes to be involved because of cultural ties to the land so that they can “address” unnatural, land disturbing activities. He further explained this by describing “angry rock” (a tribal way of understanding/relating radiation) and “dead air” (used to describe “anomalies”) which are good examples of the unique perspective that helps others understand tribal ties to the land.

Mr. Arnold also discussed how tribes go to the NNSS to survey and monitor cultural resources left in place which is important, not only for preservation, but also for reconnecting with the land. To illustrate, Mr. Arnold spoke of when the tribal representatives camped out over several nights to evaluate and conduct ceremonies that had not been conducted in a long time which is just another way to “sustain cultural and ecological balance of the area.” In closing, Mr. Arnold reiterated the shared value of tribal engagement with an anecdote on the identification of 364 plants by Indian name, scientific name, and botanical name.

Synopsis of Audience Questions/Responses

- *Tribal interactions/perspective of renewables, particularly solar* – Mr. Arnold responded that there are mixed reactions since many tribal people feel that capturing and harnessing the power of the sun can cause harm; tribes need to unite on the message that “green still has an impact to the land – there is still a cultural component.”
- *UAV project* – Mr. Morris responded that they are waiting for the Federal Aviation Administration to flush out the concept and how the six sites will work space. At the NNSS, the unmanned aircraft system mission is focused on Department of Defense and intelligence support. Mr. Drozdoff responded that the process is uncertain; getting the award as one of the six sites was significant but now the work begins to figure out and get the process started.
- *Significant legacy that the weapons testing program left on the NNSS* – Mr. Morris noted that the NNSS is no different than any other Department of Energy site for addressing the legacy – the objective is the same, but there are different closure options. The degree of isolation and long-term use of the NNSS provides for flexibility in closure options. Mr. Drozdoff responded that the NNSS is not a monolithic site and that Christine Andres (Federal Facilities Bureau Chief for the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection) would discuss in a later session.
- *Developing techniques for ensuring non-proliferation activities* – Mr. Morris explained that the NNSS is working with the national laboratories and federal agencies to provide information and technologies for achieving that.
- *Where do you see the NNSS in 10 years* – Mr. Morris expressed that he sees a greater relationship with intelligence communities and providing more Department of Defense training and environments. He also sees greater engagement with the private sector and greater collaboration with national weapons laboratories for predicting the stability of the stockpile in a more frequent and reliable basis.