

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 111: US/Canada – Making the Bilateral Agreement Work

Session Co-Chairs: **Laurie Judd**, *NuVision Engineering Inc.*
Joan Miller, *Canadian Nuclear Laboratories*

Panel Reporter: **Christine Fahey**, *Canadian Nuclear Laboratories*

Panelists:

- **Rob Mason**, *Director, DWM Business Operations, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) (Canada)*
- **Mark Gilbertson**, *Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS), Site Restoration, US DOE EM*
- **Andy Szilagyi**, *Director for the Office of Deactivation and Decommissioning, US DOE EM*
- **Craig Michaluk**, *General Manager, Whiteshell Laboratories, CNL (Canada)*

This first-time panel provided an update on how a bilateral Statement of Intent signed in 2013 February is working for Canada, as represented by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and its newly established subsidiary, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL), and the United States (US), as represented by the Department of Energy (DOE).

The session co-chairs provided opening statements, setting the context for the cooperation agreement. **Joan Miller**, CNL Vice President Decommissioning and Waste Management (DMW), noted how important it is for countries to cooperate – just like nuclear power plant operators do through the World Association of Nuclear Operators – because of the opportunities such cooperation offers to share experiences and to build on each other’s successes at programmatic and technical levels. **Laurie Judd**, Vice-President of NuVision Engineering, noted that while the Canada-US agreement was still in its infancy, reasonable progress had been made to leverage its benefits to date. He further expressed optimism the agreement would yield both more and more significant outcomes for both parties as awareness of the agreement grows within the organizations and the points of contact are expanded, as has been the case with the seven-year old agreement between the DOE and the United Kingdom (UK) Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Mark Gilbertson, DOE Environmental Management (EM) Deputy Assistant Secretary for Site Restoration, positioned the highlights achieved to date as evidence of how the US and Canadian cleanup programs can leverage each other’s activities to ensure maximum return on investment for their respective taxpayers. He explained, the opportunities for cooperation were initially explored in a two-day videoconference in 2013. This dialogue was followed up by a range of activities, including participation in workshops and information exchanges to share experiences and documents, visits to national laboratory sites to observe “on the ground” implementation of proven methods and best practices, and, launch of technology demonstrations and trials.

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

One such technology now being tested at CNL's Chalk River site is the use of DOE's Advanced Simulation Capability for Environmental Management (ASCEM) to model groundwater flows. Following an online seminar, the tool was deployed and data are being fed back to the DOE to further enhance the tool's capabilities.

Rob Mason, Director of Business Operations for CNL DWM unit, spoke of the valuable exchanges between CNL representatives with lead responsibilities for preparing the organization to transition to a Government-owned, Contractor-operated (GoCo) business model and representatives at DOE Headquarters and Site Office staff at the Argonne National Laboratory and Idaho National Laboratory (INL). Their experiences on transitioning and administering GoCo contracts and implementing the lab directed R&D program were particularly helpful. Rob further discussed the fruits borne of a Work for Others agreement that focused on the refurbishment of hot cells at CNL, based on successful facility revitalization of shielded facilities at INL and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL). As a result of a week-long visit – one on each side of the border - involving project managers, facility engineers, and operators, CNL is now positioned to significantly progress its technical plan and business case for the recovery of its cells.

Andy Szilagyi, DOE EM Director for the Office of Deactivation and Decommissioning, described a characterization technology developed at Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) – Gray Qb – that is now undergoing a cold temperature test trial at CNL's Chalk River site. The proprietary technology generates gamma radiation contour maps, showing source locations and relative radiological contamination levels present. A prototype had been tested in SRNL's B235-F; with a strong DOE interest in ensuring the technology is robust for its northern cleanup sites, such as those at the INL, Chalk River cold temperature field tests were initiated under the DOE EM international program. Other topics being pursued between SRNL and CNL include the application of grout to tank closure and the in situ decommissioning (entombment) of research and prototype reactors and related infrastructure.

Craig Michaluk, CNL's General Manager (acting) of the Whiteshell Laboratories Decommissioning Project spoke of the value of a 2014 November visit to Hanford by the teams responsible for the decommissioning and dismantlement (D&D) of CNL's site infrastructure. As part of the visit, three D&D projects were toured, setting the backdrop for detailed discussions on topics such as planning, work instructions, permits, decontamination approaches, characterization strategies, personnel safety, and more.

Among the questions from those attending the panel session was the possibility of a tri-lateral cooperation agreement between the US, Canada and the UK given the wide overlap in areas of interest. One such area – the start-up and commissioning of facilities to enable cleanup and D&D missions – was highlighted in the panel discussion. In response, Mark Gilbertson noted the bridges for 3-way partnership are already in place since Canada and the US each have cooperation agreements with the UK.

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

Following this, lead panel organizer Christine Fahey has recommended that WMS 2016 consider the merit of a three-country panel to discuss mutual cooperation and benefits realized.

The inaugural edition of the *AmeriCanada Exchange* was released during the panel session. This eight-page publication provides a more detailed explanation of the highlights that were presented by the panel members. Requests for soft copies of the publication may be made through Rosa Elmetti at DOE (rosa.elmetti@em.doe.gov) or Rob Mason, at CNL (robert.mason@cnl.ca).