

WM2016 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 20: **Panel: Implementing Technically-Based Cleanup; Balancing Regulatory and Fiscal Complexities**

Co-Chairs: **Kurt Gerdes**, *US DOE-EM, Headquarters*
 Moses Jaraysi, *CH2M Plateau Remediation Company*

Panel Reporter: **Moses Jaraysi**, *CH2M Plateau Remediation Company*

Panelists:

1. **John Price**, *WA State Department of Ecology, Nuclear Waste Program*
2. **Dennis Faulk**, *US EPA Region 10, Hanford Operations Office*

About 35 attendees listened to presentations by the panelists, asked questions and made comments during this session. This panel session is second in a series of panel sessions designed to understand how decision makers balance the complexity of regulatory requirements with the fiscal constraints cleanup projects often face on major remediation projects. The first session in WM-15 focused on the perspective of the owners and operators of the major cleanup sites, while this year's panel discussion focused on the "regulators' perspective" of this equation. It is anticipated that the third panel session of this series will have a mix of owners and regulators discussing this decision making process of balancing the complex requirements of remediation and the fiscal constraints.

Summary of Presentations

Kurt Gerdes introduced the panelists starting with their bios and present positions as regulators of the Hanford Site Cleanup.

Dennis Faulk

Mr. Faulk is currently the Program Manager for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Hanford Project Office. Dennis has over 30 years working in the nuclear industry and the Superfund cleanup program.

John Price

Mr. Price is currently the Tri-Party Agreement Section Manager for the State of Washington, Department of Ecology, Nuclear Waste Program. John Price has a hydrology degree from the University of Arizona (1979), and is a Washington-licensed geologist and hydrogeologist. He has 35 years professional experience working primarily on radioactive waste cleanup projects. Mr. Price has completed projects in 17 states.

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Moses Jaraysi introduced the basic steps of the CERCLA decision making process to set the background to the panel discussion:

1. *The CERCLA 9 Evaluation Criteria*
2. *The Proposed Plan*
3. *The CERCLA Record of Decision (ROD)*
4. *State Involvement in the Hazardous Substance Response*
5. *Community Involvement*

Panelists introduced their experience and their roles and responsibilities in the cleanup process in general.

Gerdes and Jaraysi asked the panelists a number of questions to get their perspective and opinion on the major aspects of the cleanup process that usually require a balance among requirements and protection, fiscal constraints, and stakeholder involvement:

- a. **What is the role of EPA and the State at a Federal Cleanup Project?**
- b. **How do you strike a balance among risk reduction, cost, stakeholder interest, and State interests?**
- c. **In your opinion, how is the cleanup progressing at the Hanford Site?**

The major points the panelists made as they answered the above questions and some questions from the attendees:

- The major role of the regulatory agencies on federal cleanup projects is to ensure that the CERCLA decision making process is adhered to and is implemented appropriately to ensure good and effective cleanup is achieved. Also to ensure that:
 - o Public involvement is achieved throughout the decision making process, and
 - o Ensure that the State is involved in the cleanup oversight and completion
 - o The panelists also confirmed that if the CERCLA process is appropriately implemented, and through using the CERCLA 9 Criteria, this balance should be achieved. As alternatives are compared and evaluated against the 9 criteria, protection of the human health and environment is assured, and then the alternatives that balance the cost, durability, implementability, and State/Stakeholder acceptance are usually selected
- John Price explained the State's roles to include RCRA permitting and oversight in addition to CERCLA cleanup responsibilities.
- Both regulators stated that the cleanup of the Hanford Site is going well, with some reservation about the impacts of the funding fluctuation that makes accurate planning hard to achieve.

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- Dennis Faulk highlighted the success of remediation of the groundwater plumes both along the Columbia River and on the Central Plateau. He mentioned that members of the workforce responsible of operating the Pump and Treat Systems have taken a lot of ownership of these systems and are proud of what they are achieving in protecting the environment
- In response to a question about getting the EPA Richland Office some RCRA help and expertise to support the whole permitting process, Dennis stated that the RCRA process is implemented by the State Nuclear Waste Program, and Region 10 in Seattle provides support as needed.
- When asked about their vision for the site at the end of the cleanup activities, Dennis Faulk stated that he envisions recreational activities taking place along the river such as fishing, golfing, etc., while within the Inner Area at the Central Plateau he can see only Waste Management activities and oversight activities to maintain the long term stewardship requirements in that area.