

WM2017 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 38: Creating Sustainable Client-Contractor Partnerships to Improve Project Performance

Co-Chairs: **Bill Shingler**, *Fluor Corporation*
 John Longenecker, *Longenecker & Associates*

Panel Reporter: **Judy Connell**, *Fluor Corporation*

Panelists

1. **Mark Lesinski**, *President, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories*
2. **Fred Hughes**, *Program Manager, Fluor Idaho*
3. **Stuart MacVean**, *President, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions*
4. **Jeff Stevens**, *Deputy Site Director, Fluor-BWXT Portsmouth*
5. **Phil Breidenbach**, *President, Nuclear Waste Partnership*
6. **William Johnson**, *President, Mission Support Alliance*
7. **Thomas Foster**, *President, Savannah River Remediation*
8. **Alan Parker**, *President, Mid-American Conversion Services*

Though the title of the session was client-contractor partnering, the panelists broadened the topic to include other site contractors, employees, regulators, and other stakeholders. Each of the eight panelists represented projects at various stages of maturity, with different missions, and different clients in different countries; however, they all had two things in common: none could do their jobs without partnering and formal facilitated sessions were effective in getting alignment among all the participants.

For **Alan Parker**, who as President & CEO of Mid-America Conversion Services is charged with getting the Depleted Uranium Hexafluoride plants at the Paducah and Portsmouth sites up and running, the contract transition has just ended and the Partnering Agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is about to be signed. While the Idaho Cleanup Project Core is just slightly less than a year into operations, which began June 1, 2016, partnering with the site's union-represented employees has been critical to getting the job done efficiently. "We had an instance where we transported material across a small bridge on the site," shared **Fred Hughes**, Fluor Idaho's President and Project Manager. The truck stopped on the bridge to change out cabs due to union jurisdictional requirements. When we sat down with the unions, we were able to understand the issue and figure out a win-win scenario that eliminated changing out the cab and made the work more efficient.

Other projects, such as the D&D work at Portsmouth led by Fluor BWXT Portsmouth (FBP), and the site services and infrastructure support provided to the Hanford site by the Mission Support Alliance (MSA) have had more time to develop cross-cutting agreements with the DOE as well as other site contractors. Similarly, the two prime contractors at DOE's Savannah River Site (SRS) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions and Savannah River Remediation – have longstanding partnering relationships with other site contractors, non-DOE agencies such as the Department of

WM2017 Conference Panel Report

Homeland Security and the FBI, and specific projects such as the Salt Waste Processing Facility. These working relationships are as one panelist put it, “the grease that makes the engine run.”

At Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, the construct of the contract required a 6-month transition period that included managing operations. “This made the transition very complex,” said **Mark Lesinski**, President and CEO of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL), “and partnering with 23 different unions and a client who was also assuming a new role, became even more important. We knew up front that we would have an issue in changing the pension plan to a defined contribution plan, so we started meeting with the unions early and often to agree on a path forward.” While **Phil Breidenbach**, President of Nuclear Waste Partnership that manages DOE’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, quipped he is “no expert in partnerships,” which he compared to marriage, he did share some personal insight. “Partnerships are built on integrity,” he said, “and that integrity, that trust is what makes a partnership work.”

Everyone agreed that successful partnerships are built on mutually aligned goals, values, expectations and standards. Simply said, a partnership is a long term win-win relationship based on mutual trust and teamwork. Successful partnerships have done the legwork and taken the time to define and articulate what success really looks like. They have common goals, established criteria for evaluating progress, and a process for calibrating objectives along the way.