



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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DOE Responds to Advisory Board Recommendations

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Oak Ridge Office has responded to two recommendations made by the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB). ORSSAB is a federally appointed citizens' advisory board that makes independent recommendations on DOE's Oak Ridge environmental management program.

In September 2011, ORSSAB presented a recommendation to DOE regarding how they could handle the disposition of almost 1,100 canisters of uranium-233 (U-233) currently stored at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Building 3019. U-233 is man-made in reactors and has nuclear properties similar to weapons grade plutonium. Weapons-usable fissile nuclear material requires strict safeguards, tight security, and criticality control.

Several years ago, Congress directed DOE to dispose of all U-233 stored in Oak Ridge. But, because of the characteristics of U-233, and the safety and security requirements to handle it, properly disposing of this material poses difficult technical challenges

In 2011, a plan was developed that makes some of the U-233 available for re-use, some of it would be disposed directly at the Nevada National Security Site, and some would be downblended prior to final disposal. Downblending all of the material was the original idea, but it would have been very expensive. Re-use and direct disposal make the project much less expensive.

The board agreed with this approach and recommended implementing the plan. In addition, the board also recommended that additional funding for the project be added to the annual DOE Oak Ridge cleanup budget.

DOE responded to the board's recommendation at the January 2011 meeting saying it had already started shipping Zero Power Reactor plates, the largest component of the planned transfers for re-use, and that the disposition of U-233 is fully funded in fiscal year 2012

ORSSAB's second recommendation, issued in November 2011, addressed automating the information gathering process for completed remediation activities.

Each year DOE Oak Ridge prepares the Remediation Effectiveness Report, which charts the progress of remedial actions on the Oak Ridge Reservation. Currently facility managers must complete almost 180 sheets for the report. As more and more sites are remediated, the amount of

documentation to be collected will increase significantly.

The board recommended that DOE pursue an established method to automate the information collection process. The recommendation called for a system to compile long-term stewardship information for controlled areas that would include remaining contaminants and physical hazards, regulatory requirements, and land use controls.

DOE responded during the January 11 ORSSAB meeting that it had contracted with a company to develop a web-based application to track and house all land use control information on the reservation. The system is being populated with information and is being tested.

Complete recommendation wording and related responses can be accessed at <http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab/recc.htm>.

ORSSAB meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. The February 8 meeting will be held at the DOE Information Center, 475 Oak Ridge Turnpike. In March ORSSAB meetings will move to the Office of Science and Technical Information Building at 1 Science.gov Way on the east side of Oak Ridge, fronting the 100 block of Oak Ridge Turnpike. Additional information about the board is available at www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab or by calling (865) 241-4583 or 241-4584.

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