

Lance Mezga Proved Himself a Leader Right from the Beginning

Board member Lance Mezga stepped into a leadership position within weeks of his appointment to ORSSAB when he was elected chair of the board's Environmental Management Committee following the 2005 annual planning retreat. After just one year he was elected chair of the board.

While it might appear unusual that a new member would be put in a leadership role right away, it was obvious to all the board members that Lance was perfectly suited for the tasks by virtue of his qualifications and experience.

A native of the Cleveland, Ohio area, Lance earned bachelor's and master's degrees in groundwater geology from Kent State University. Upon graduation he went to work for an engineering firm in western Pennsylvania that did environmental reclamation of strip mines and underground coal mines. He returned to the Cleveland area to work for an architectural engineering firm involved in the environmental field.

In 1979 he came to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to head the Geothermal Biomass Energy Environmental Impact Assessment Program. He went on to head DOE's Low-Level Waste Technology Development Program and set up Martin Marietta's radiologic waste management organization to standardize procedures in Oak Ridge, Portsmouth, and Paducah.

In the late 1990s, he moved over to the K-25 site to run Lockheed Martin's central waste management organization and later the mixed- and low-level waste operations. He also worked to develop the first integrated burn plan

for the Toxic Substances Control Act Incinerator, coordinating shipments from other DOE sites.

When Bechtel Jacobs, Co., became DOE's prime contractor for environmental cleanup of the Oak Ridge Reservation, Lance returned to the lab to work with the Office of Science waste management program. Today he is responsible for the decontamination and decommissioning of Office of Science buildings, ensuring environmental integration across all construction projects.



ORSSAB member Lance Mezga in his office at Oak Ridge National Laboratory where he is responsible for the decontamination and decommissioning of Office of Science Buildings.

“When I left environmental management activities for the current position, I felt like I could provide a level of expertise to the SSAB in understanding the functions and workings of the construction and technical scope,” he said. “It was an opportunity to provide something to the community which fit perfectly with my technical background.

“Since I've been on the board I think we've improved the technical knowledge of the members by instituting some training programs to get everyone on a common level of understanding. We've worked very hard to engage all of the members. Everyone needs to participate and everyone's opinion is important and valid.

“With the Integrated Facility Disposition Program and the economic stimulus package that's being implemented, the board will have an opportunity to provide comment and input to planning and how dollars will be used. The board needs to be prepared to step up and take advantage of that opportunity.”

In addition to his work on the board Lance is also active as a member of the board of directors of the Waste Management Symposium. He's been a member of the symposium's Program Advisory Committee for 20 years and has been chair of the Low-Level/Mixed Low-Level Waste Treatment Committee for the last 10 years.

Lance also is secretary of the Decontamination and Decommissioning Working Group for the Energy Facility Contractors Operating Group, which is composed of all the contractors at DOE facilities.

He has served as a technical expert of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for Economic and Community Development, and the Nuclear Energy Agency on low-level waste issues.

Lance and wife Ernestine live in Knoxville and have two grown daughters, Leah and Sarah.