

**Minutes of Community Workgroup Meeting #4  
Plum Brook Reactor Decommissioning  
Firelands College  
May 16, 2000**

**Agenda:**

1. Introduction & Welcome
2. Review & Approval of February Meeting Minutes
3. Review of May Agenda
4. Discussion of Old Business
5. Update on Reactor Facility Decommissioning
6. Presentation on NASA's Environmental Assessment for the Reactor  
Decommissioning
7. Questions and Discussion on Environmental Assessment Presentation
8. Update on Community Outreach Activities
9. Other Issues and Topics for the Next Meeting
10. Confirm Date for Next Meeting

The meeting began at 7:15 PM. Present were Workgroup members Jan and Mark Bohne, John Blakeman, and Robert Speers, as well as Karen Gerold of the Erie County Board of Health, (representing Health Department Director and workgroup member Steve Casali). Also present were: Tim Polich, Decommissioning Project Manager at NASA Glenn Plum Brook Station; Bill Wessel, Director of the Office of Safety and Technology Assurance; Sally Harrington, Public Affairs Specialist; Mike Blotzer, Chief of the Environmental Management Office and Manny Dominguez, Chief of the Safety Office - all of the NASA Glenn Research Center; and DeCarlo Cissel from NASA headquarters. In addition, SAIC representatives Jim Hammelman, Richard Kalynchuk and Patti Swain were present, as were Bob Hysong and Hank Bayes of Argonne National Laboratories and Chris Hallam and Shelton Poole of the Army Corps of Engineers. Susan Santos, Terry Flynn and Michael Morgan of FOCUS GROUP also attended, as did five members of the public.

Tim Polich began the meeting by introducing each of the participants and organization representatives. He then turned the meeting over to its facilitator, Susan Santos, who asked for and received approval of the minutes for the February quarterly meeting. Susan noted that copies of the minutes are maintained in the Decommissioning Community Information Bank at the

Firelands College Library as are the Decommissioning Plan, the Community Relations Plan and a set of fact sheets.

### **Decommissioning Update**

Tim then gave an update on decommissioning activities. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) - which had received the Decommissioning Plan from NASA on December 20, 1999 - has advertised, for public comment on the Plan, in the Sandusky Register and the Federal Register. The Public Comment period began in March.

Also in March, the NRC requested that an Environmental Assessment on the impact of decommissioning be conducted, a step necessary in receiving NRC approval of the Decommissioning Plan. The Public Comment period lasts a minimum of 30 days and, Tim noted, actually remains open "until (NRC) licensing action is taken." NRC will have a contractor review the Plan and will make comments within the next few months. NASA anticipates NRC approval of the plan at the end of 2000 or early in 2001, with actual work beginning in Fall 2001.

Tim is in the process of updating the Federal Interagency Agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers, which he described as "the major construction contracting," agency for the decommissioning. Other agencies involved in the agreement include the Department of Energy (through Argonne National Laboratories), the NRC and the US Department of Transportation. He also pointed out that NASA is hoping to begin work on the removal of "hot cells" from the reactor facility this summer. NASA can go ahead with this project without first receiving NRC approval of the Decommissioning Plan.

### **Environmental Assessment**

Mike Blotzer gave a presentation on the Environmental Assessment (EA). Environmental work on the decommissioning project is governed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970. NEPA requires all federal agencies to ensure that environmental planning be integrated into the conceptual stage of the planning process, when alternatives are being considered.

NEPA evaluates a number of considerations that could be impacted if an alternative is implemented. These include: land use; water quality; hazardous materials and waste management; endangered and threatened species; biological resources; noise; energy; wetlands and floodplains; air quality; radioactive materials management; traffic and parking; economic, population and employment factors. Some considerations, and how they might come into play on the reactor decommissioning project include these hypotheses: soil erosion from construction could end up in a stream; air quality could be compromised if concrete dust is not contained; the traffic from vehicles involved in the project could impact Plum Brook neighbors. NASA will evaluate all these possible impacts as part of the EA.

The EA process should be complete by the end of this summer, with its results published in the Federal Register, included on the NASA Web site and available at the Community Information Bank. Robert Speers asked if the EA results would be published in a local newspaper and Susan responded that NASA could advertise the availability of the findings, in the same manner that it advertises Community Workgroup meetings. She also offered to inform Workgroup members when the results are available.

Mark Bohne asked if NASA would coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers on the Ordnance Works cleanup at Plum Brook Station. Some of the work that has been done for the Ordnance Works cleanup - such as groundwater studies - could also be used for the decommissioning as well. NASA has prepared a fact sheet on Environmental Assessment that will be provided to all Workgroup members, distributed to the Community Information Bank and local libraries and made available upon request.

### **Hot Cell Work**

A retired NASA employee, Dale McCutcheon, asked if any core borings had been conducted in the "hot retention" tanks and expressed concern that this could result in an effect on groundwater. Tim said that some spill areas had been identified in a 1985 site study but could not recall off-hand what was done in the 1998 study. He pointed out that, during the week of May 22, he would be holding a meeting on characterization in the hot retention area and that concrete borings near the reactor vessel would be discussed. He added that there would be further characterization would take place as NASA moved closer to the decommissioning and removal of the "hot cells" would provide more data. When Dale asked a follow-up question regarding radioactivity in the water table, Tim responded that, to his knowledge, no radioactivity had ever been discovered there. At this point Janet Bohne noted that a discussion of groundwater contamination would be part of the May 24 meeting of the Army Ordnance Restoration Advisory Board (RAB).

### **Community Outreach and Web Site**

Tim spoke briefly about community outreach taking place to support decommissioning and mentioned the presentation he made to some 100 members of the Sandusky Senior Christian fellowship on April 17. He hopes to give more talks as the project progresses. Mike then conducted a presentation on a "very rough draft" of the Home Page for Decommissioning, on the NASA Glenn Web site. On-line decommissioning information has been recommended by virtually all Workgroup members, and by other area residents who had been interviewed for the Community Relations Plan. He displayed screens depicting the History of Plum Brook Station and other display boards that described the decommissioning process at last year's Plum Brook Open House and Community Information Session.  
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NASA will looking for feedback on several features of the Web page, which will include the following information: fact sheets; frequently asked questions; glossary of terms; recent announcements; workgroup meeting minutes and the names and E-mail addresses of Workgroup members. Several members offered observations and suggestions for additional material on the Web site. John Blakeman remarked that some of the public continues to view Plum Brook Station (PBS) as "the mystery behind the fence," and suggested that the Web site also include general information on Plum Brook operations, explaining, " we want the public to see what NASA normally does (at PBS)." Tim said this could be done, noting that PBS has a page on the NASA Web site and Susan suggested a site link "to learn more about Plum Brook Station."

While John suggested a separate PBS Web site, Tim stressed the need to link it with the NASA Glenn (Cleveland) Web site. Mike echoed Tim's comments, adding that NASA's goal is "to have an integrated site," and Susan added that if - after the site is constructed - the links do not appear to be strong enough, the decommissioning team would make the Workgroup's sentiments known to the Web master.

Other Web site suggestions made by Workgroup members included:

- links to US Department of Agriculture station at PBS (John Blakeman)
- links to the Ordnance RAB Web site (Mark Bohne)
- links to Fisheries and Wildlife site (Karen Gerold, Erie County Board of Health)
- more pictures of Plum Brook (Janet Bohne)
- a depiction of time-lines on PBS history and activities (John Blakeman)
- pictures of Community Workgroup members (Susan Santos)
- link PBS History and pictures (Mike Blotzer)
- pictures/history of the farms that were acquired for the Ordnance site and are now the site of PBS and (John Blakeman)

Mike suggested getting the Web site built, then adding material to it as per the suggestion of Workgroup members and the public. A member of the public suggested a Web link to Decommissioning Contractor Opportunities (of the five general public members in attendance at this meeting, three identified themselves as working with area contractors). Bill Wessel responded by suggesting that contractor representatives make sure they introduced themselves to Chris Hallam of the Army Corps of Engineers (COE), the contracting arm of the decommissioning project. Other contractor representatives asked about subcontractor opportunities and Tim said the Federal Interagency Agreement with COE was being updated to encompass pre-decommissioning work this summer and subsequent work in the next fiscal year.

Susan asked if there were any questions regarding community outreach (there were not) and mentioned how, at the February meeting she asked Workgroup member Ethel Roldan how to reach out to the area's black population about decommissioning. She promised additional NASA outreach to all minority communities in municipalities surrounding Plum Brook Station.

### **Next Workgroup Meeting and Community Information Session**

Susan and the Workgroup then agreed that another Community Information Session should be scheduled for next fall, and scheduled for the same date as a Workgroup meeting (as was done last November). The Workgroup picked Tuesday, October 17, with a Workgroup meeting (also open to the public) to be held from 6 PM to 7 PM, followed by the Community Information Session from 7:30 PM to 9 PM. Mark Bohne said he would secure the East Lounge, the spacious site of the December 1999 Workgroup meeting, for the October meeting and Community Information Session (he has reserved the room, with access for set-up available at 4 PM).

At the next Community Information Session, NASA and other experts will again staff the displays on decommissioning, as well as new displays currently under construction. New displays will depict the Environmental Assessment process, as well as success stories on decommissioning projects that have taken place elsewhere (a fact sheet on this topic is also being developed). There will also be a NASA video shown at the Information Session, which describes the decommissioning project and includes footage on last year's Open House and Community Information Session. Susan asked the Workgroup to think about any other topics for fact sheets and/or displays at the next Information Session and received the following suggestions:

- the type of qualifications, training and safety precautions that contractors at PBS will have in place (Mark Bohne)
- timelines and milestones for decommissioning (John Blakeman/Bill Wessel)
- possible opportunities for Firelands College to be involved in training (Mark)

- the results of the Environmental Assessment (Susan)
- an explanation of the low levels of radiation involved at the reactor (John B.)
- inventory and levels of inventory/levels of radiation (Bob Hysong)

Bob Hysong discussed exposure to radiation doses at PBS and noted that the public is protected by 3000 feet between the reactor facility and the fence line that separates Plum Brook Station from Bogart Road in Perkins Township. He also said he does not expect any doses to occur outside of PBS, adding that there is "a growing body of evidence," that the risk from exposure to low levels of radiation is "even less" than first anticipated. He discussed a study being conducted by the Biological Effect of Ionizing Radiation (BIR) Committee of the National Academy of Sciences. John Blakeman said he did not doubt the results of Bob's presentation, but felt that the public would still be suspicious. Mark added that, despite NASA efforts to inform the community about decommissioning, "the first time people see truck with the 'Radiation' sign," people will call NASA asking "why didn't you tell us?"

Tim pointed out that providing information on the transportation of radioactive material has been done in an orderly fashion, while gathering public support. He cited the example of GPU Nuclear, which, in November 1998, removed and transported the reactor vessel from a closed test reactor in Saxton, PA. Long-term community outreach resulted public understanding and support of the project, which will be profiled in an upcoming NASA fact sheet.

John said the public will need to know that decommissioning is safe, how much the project will cost - and who will pay for it. Susan said these questions could be answered on the Frequently Asked Questions on the Web site, where questions on where and how the material would be transported could also be answered. She suggested that, rather than a presentation on radiation at the next Workgroup meeting, there be a display on radiation levels that would also be included at the Community Information Session, to address the threat of radiation during decommissioning.

There was additional discussion of what materials were still contained in the reactor facility. Tim said there were a few "sparse pieces" of furniture left in the building, but they are located at a substantial distance from the reactors. He emphasized that "everything will be checked," for their radiation levels before they are removed. An audience member asked if there were lead and asbestos in the reactor facility. Tim confirmed their presence, (which is mentioned in the Community Relations Plan) and stated that all materials within the facility will be characterized.

Workgroup members will be notified when NASA has made additions to the Web site and will be given access to it. Their comments on Web components, including the Frequently Asked Questions, will be welcomed. The Web site will be discussed at the next Community Workgroup meeting, along with a decommissioning update, an update on pre-decommissioning activities taking place this summer and time lines for decommissioning. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 17, from 6 PM to 7:30 PM, at the East Lounge at Firelands College.

The Community Workgroup meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.