

Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation 97-6

to the U.S. Department of Energy

Recommendations and Comments on the Rocky Flats Fiscal Year 1999 Budget

Approved July 3, 1997

OBJECTIVE:

The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board desires to examine and understand the RFETS budget in sufficient detail so it can provide useful objective input into planning for and progress towards cleanup and closure at the site.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- RFCAB has been impressed with the level of effort from the Planning and Integration representatives of the Rocky Flats Field Office to provide as much budget information as they have been able to do based on limitations imposed by DOE-Headquarters. Their responses to our information requests have been both timely and thorough whenever possible.
- RFCAB is pleased with the new effort on the part of the Department of Energy to integrate its previously separate budget and planning processes into one life-cycle planning process. This is a logical step that makes the overall RFETS planning process more efficient and easier for stakeholders to understand. It should therefore, if kept simple, also make it easier for stakeholders to provide input.
- The overall budget process used by the site has improved over the previous year. RFCAB particularly appreciates the priority designation system for ranking tasks. The tools supplied by the site for our comprehension of the budget were of value, but are not always user friendly and sometimes required significant explanation to be understood.
- The Board was also pleased to have been given access to draft budget documents early in the process, such as the pre-draft (February 14, 1997) version of the Ten Year Plan. If it were not for this draft, we would have gone another four months before seeing any version of the plan other than the July 1996 original draft.

- Regardless of the commendable effort provided by RFFO staff, the Board has been extremely disappointed with the four month delay from DOE-Headquarters in releasing the February version of the Ten Year Plan (or Accelerating Cleanup: A Focus on 2006 as it is now called) and associated budget documents. RFCAB moved quickly at the beginning of the year to form a budget subcommittee, only to be faced with delay after delay in receiving FY99 budget information. Because of these delays, several participants discontinued their participation in the subcommittee and our ability to focus on the task to examine the budget was diminished.
- Because of all the uncertainty with the Ten Year Plan, RFCAB has been unable to review a specific proposed FY99 budget. We have therefore been unable to provide comments on the particular activities planned for FY99. In contrast to last year's planning for the FY98 budget, this has been a major step backwards. Because of all of the different TYP cases that are being considered, it was a very difficult task for the subcommittee to try to determine which documents to focus on.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board supports a site budget that accelerates closure of the site in a responsible manner that maximizes cleanup and safety to the workers and the public, and reduces the mortgage costs in the near term.
- The federal government must look at the long-term benefits and savings, and not just the short-term costs for this project.
- RFCAB cannot support a specific dollar request at this time without clearer understanding of closure plan details and a sense that the site is truly focused on accelerating cleanup.
- It is important that DOE demonstrate that it is able to use the money wisely. All necessary steps should be taken to increase efficiencies in doing business at the site as a means to save money. The site should be able to demonstrate steps taken to increase efficiency and the results of this effort.
- In order to avoid many of the problems encountered in this year's stakeholder budget review, DOE-Headquarters should work closely with the sites on preparing for stakeholder involvement in the FY2000 budget and beyond. A schedule should be developed early in the process and should be followed. Budget documents and information should be provided in clear formats well in advance of comment deadlines. Public participation in the FY2000 budget must begin in October 1997 in order to allow stakeholder input at the beginning of the two-year budget cycle.

The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board is a community advisory group that reviews and provides

recommendations on cleanup plans for Rocky Flats, a former nuclear weapons plant outside of Denver, Colorado.

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