

Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation 98-14

to the U.S. Department of Energy

Comments on the Natural Resources Management Policy

Approved June 4, 1998

Background

In 1994, the Future Site Use Working Group (FSUWG) was convened to make recommendations to DOE, CDPHE, and EPA regarding the future use of the Rocky Flats site. In 1995 FSUWG recommended that the buffer zone be preserved and managed as open space; that the industrial area become an employment center; and that the Federal government have the long-term obligation to clean up RFETS to background levels when technology is available. DOE; RFFO in cooperation with Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative (RFLII) have assembled all of RFETS policies regarding natural resources management into the Natural Resources Management Policy (NRMP) with the aid of stakeholders. The site will implement these policies until such time as DOE relinquishes stewardship of the Buffer Zone. The following are comments, recommendations, and concerns expressed by the RFCAB.

Comments, Recommendations, and Concerns

1. The issues surrounding prescribed burns are intensely complicated ones. There is high potential for contaminant resuspension with increases in erosive forces, the result of any such burn. Plant uptake of radionuclides and VOCs needs to be better understood before any decisions are made. These two issues are tempered by the need of ecological communities to regenerate. RFCAB recommends that the site use all technologies and methods available for contaminant characterization within the Buffer Zone, and we recommend that the site attempt to discover any other techniques to regenerate ecological communities before discussions concerning burns continue, and that the site keep RFCAB well informed of all attempts to find and implement alternatives. RFCAB recommends that a comprehensive plan for public education and involvement be developed and implemented for continued burn discussions.
2. Weed control is another very complicated issue. Due to the extreme sensitivity and rarity of several of the plant communities onsite, the encroachment of noxious weeds may cause irreparable harm and may cause the extinction of those communities from the site. Aerial application of herbicides and the use of prescribed burns have been considered as two methods of

weed control. The use of either of these two options could potentially cause more harm than the weeds might cause. This is another issue that requires extensive discussions with public input and education. There may be an alternative to these options that would quickly resolve this issue. Therefore, RFCAB recommends that the site make every attempt to find such an alternative, and that RFCAB be kept informed of all attempts to find said alternative before implementation of any weed control procedures.

3. Since the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse has been listed as threatened, we recommend that the site open mouse management discussions to public participation. We also recommend that the site continue involvement in the Habitat Conservation Plan's development led by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.
4. RFCAB is concerned over the ability of the site to retain a sustainable ecology after DOE relinquishes stewardship of the site. Will the site require perpetual human management?
5. RFCAB is concerned that budget shortfalls may lead to a lack in environmental remediation (ER) and restoration. There has been some discussion about delaying ER until all D&D activities have been completed. RFCAB recommends that any future discussion concerning this issue include stakeholder and public input.
6. RFCAB recommends that the site develop some general assumptions in the near-term, with the aid of stakeholders, concerning long-term stewardship of the Buffer Zone and include them in the NRMP. RFCAB states that the Buffer Zone will remain open space post-ROD. Who will manage the Buffer Zone and what is that entity's input into management decisions up until ROD?
7. RFCAB recommends that the Federal Government make a commitment to continued involvement in Buffer Zone management and cleanup post closure.

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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