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DOE's Top Environmental Cleanup Official Visits Paducah Site

PADUCAH, Ky. – Cost-efficiency is a top priority as the Department of Energy makes challenging decisions on how to best use environmental cleanup dollars, said Dave Huizenga, Senior Advisor of DOE Environmental Management (EM).

“We’re trying to manage projects in a responsible way for the taxpayers and to get work done at your facilities,” Huizenga told those attending the semiannual DOE Site-Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) Chairs Meeting at the Luther F. Carson Center in Paducah. He spoke April 18 at the start of the two-day conference.

Support from DOE and the community has helped the Paducah Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) grow to 18 members who are very active in advising the Department on cleanup issues, said Reinhard Knerr, DOE Paducah Site Lead.

“We hope to continue that partnership with the community as we move forward,” Knerr said at the meeting.

Attending the meeting were representatives of eight DOE cleanup sites: Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Idaho Falls National Laboratory; Nevada National Security Site; Hanford, Wash.; Portsmouth, Ohio; Savannah River Site in South Carolina; Los Alamos National Laboratory in Northern New Mexico; and Paducah.

The Paducah conference marked Huizenga’s first face-to-face meeting with SSAB chairmen; he held a teleconference with the group last fall.

Huizenga thanked attendees for their interaction during difficult budgetary times. EM needs help strategizing cleanup work complex-wide with a flat annual budget, he said.

“A lot of things can be solved through more transparent understanding of each other’s positions and concerns,” Huizenga said.

After speaking briefly, Huizenga held roundtable discussions with board chairmen about their concerns. Paducah CAB Chairman Ralph Young said afterward that he found Huizenga engaging and interested in the cleanup issues at the various sites.

“I think he was really interested in future use at the Paducah Site and our approach to use the site not only for reindustrialization but historically to preserve the heritage from the Cold War,” Young said.

The CAB also wants to see continued environmental protection and recreational opportunities in West Kentucky Wildlife Management Area around the Paducah Site, as well as a continued DOE site presence in the future, Young said.



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Young told Huizenga the board advocates recycling the roughly 9,700 tons of scrap nickel stored at the Paducah Site. The Paducah nickel ingots, as well as about 5,600 tons of shredded nickel scrap at Oak Ridge, are contaminated with low-level radiation and would have to be decontaminated before they could be recycled for possible limited use in the nuclear industry.

DOE is studying ways of cleaning the nickel, and Huizenga told SSAB chairmen that he hopes “the technology is really there” because recycling would be beneficial.

Before leaving the meeting, Huizenga presented Judy Clayton, immediate past chairman of the Paducah CAB, with an award for exceptional leadership.

Huizenga then toured DOE’s Paducah Site for the first time to learn about the nickel as well as ongoing cleanup work. SSAB Chairs Meeting attendees toured the site a day earlier.

Huizenga visited one of four large buildings in which uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) is enriched for use in nuclear fuel. He learned about work to clean up and demolish the Feed Plant, a Cold War-era facility that produced UF₆ and fluorine, and about progress being made to remediate contaminated groundwater beneath and adjacent to the Paducah Site.

Huizenga also saw roughly 66 acres of old burial grounds that are part of the Paducah cleanup program. He was briefed on the 200-employee facility that Babcock & Wilcox Conversion Services operates to convert about 41,000 cylinders of depleted UF₆ into more stable material over 25 years.

After the tour, Huizenga talked with DOE site staff before leaving for Barkley Regional Airport, where he met with a small group of Paducah area community leaders.

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DOE-EM Senior Advisor Dave Huizenga, right, and DOE Paducah Site Lead Reinhard Knerr look at a three-dimensional model of the Paducah Site's groundwater system. University of Kentucky College of Design students assembled the model for the Paducah Citizens Advisory Board. The model was displayed at the Site-Specific Advisory Board Chairs Meeting in Paducah, where Huizenga spoke April 18.



DOE-EM Senior Advisor Dave Huizenga, right, is greeted by LATA Kentucky Projects Manager Craig Jones April 18 during Huizenga's first visit to the Paducah Site. Huizenga learned about multiple environmental cleanup projects. LATA Kentucky is DOE's Paducah cleanup contractor.