



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION VII
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Administrative
Record
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Mr. Jim Dwyer
Facilitator, St. Louis Site
Remediation Task Force
4515 Maryland Ave.
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Dear Mr. Dwyer:

Re: Initial Draft of the Task Force Report
(Dated August 2, 1996)

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) comments on the initial draft of the Task Force report are provided below. As you and most members of the Task Force are probably aware, EPA's views on an acceptable remedy for the St. Louis site are not entirely consistent with those adopted by the Task Force. A diversity of viewpoints within the Task Force was fully expected and this is not a concern in and of itself; however, EPA will play an independent role in the evaluation and approval of any proposal advanced by DOE, and therefore, it could be important for the Task Force to have a general understanding of what EPA looks for in an acceptable remedy.

The Superfund statute (CERCLA), the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Contingency Plan (NCP), and EPA guidance define the statutory, regulatory, and administrative constraints on acceptability. This framework has been devised to allow flexibility in remedy selection while ensuring sound technical judgement, consistency, and compatibility with national priorities.

Broadly speaking, EPA may concur on any remedy proposed by DOE that is legal, protective of public health and the environment, and cost-effective. The balance between protectiveness and cost-effectiveness is generally achieved through risk analysis. It is a Superfund program expectation that careful evaluation of site risks, incorporating reasonable assumptions about exposure scenarios and expected future land use, will help to prevent implementation of costly remediation programs that may not be warranted. In this case, risk-based decision making tends to support a more balanced approach to remediation than recommended in the draft Task Force report. An example of a fully protective and more cost-effective approach, that could be achieved for less than half the cost of the Task Force recommended remedy, is as follows:

- Further reduce the volume of soils that need to be managed by establishing cleanup goals based on reasonably anticipated future land use. Affected areas, in addition to the Mallinckrodt plant, lend themselves well to this approach given the largely commercial and light industrial settings in which the contaminated properties are located.
- Use remote commercial disposal to manage only the highly contaminated soils (e.g., >500 pCi/g). The distribution of contaminants is such that 90% of the radioactivity, or curie content, is contained in 10% of the volume. A maximal approach may be justified for these materials based on the risks they could pose even under conditions of limited exposure.
- Use local, onsite, or in-place options to manage the more dilutely contaminated soils. 75% of the contaminated soil volume contains less than 50 pCi/g. These soils do not leach significantly and may pose significant human health risks only under the most conservative lifetime exposure scenarios. It is difficult to justify great expense to manage these dilute soils on the basis of risk.

In accordance with the NCP, the preferred remedy is subject to modification based on state and community acceptance. In reviewing any remedy proposed by DOE, EPA will seek to assure that state and community inputs are accommodated to the extent allowable within the framework of CERCLA acceptability. Recommendations by the state of Missouri and/or the Task Force may ultimately have an overriding influence on the nature of the selected remedy; however, these inputs are only two of many factors which must be considered in the context of the CERCLA analysis.

With this understanding in place, the following comments are offered in the interest of accuracy and completeness:

In general, the report seems to devote little attention to scientific rationale for the recommendations provided, and that which is provided is qualitative in nature. If any of the quantitative assessments on health risks or impacts to environmental media reviewed by the Task Force contain information supporting the cited concerns, it would strengthen the report considerably to include this rationale.

Page 17, last paragraph --While the working group may have "...ultimately determined that the available data are insufficient to support a conclusion that the existence of radioactive contaminants at SLAPS does not present a serious threat to human health and the environment, and that SLAPS must therefore be cleaned up in order to eliminate such risks..."

(Although I was unaware that such a determination was made), this paragraph may leave the mistaken impression that the hydrogeological panel made such a determination. The panel, in fact, found that the data is sufficient to conclude that the existing flow models are technically sound and conservative in approach. The identification of data gaps does not negate the significance of existing data.

Page 33, Item No. 6 --This point may be misleading to the reader. It should be clarified that the indicated carcinogenic risks are not related to exposure to surface water or groundwater, but rather, derive from hypothetical, worst case scenarios in which an individual engages in intrusive behavior on the SLAPS itself. No significant, actual exposures to any member of the public has been identified.

Page 33 --The summarized findings of the hydrogeological panel may be misleading due to the omission of some important points. Item No. 1 is incomplete. In the panel report it is explained that the indicated off-site migration of contaminants is expected to be small and not result in significant impacts to surface water or sediments, consistent with available water quality data. Item No. 2 is incomplete. The panel report goes on to explain that the indicated impacts on sediment quality are due primarily to historic stream bank and gully erosion, and that current impacts do not appear to be acute.

Page 38, Institutional Controls --The definitions provided are not consistent with generally accepted practice in the field of hazardous waste site remediation. This point is not made to suggest that there must be consistency here, but merely to indicate that this is a potential point of confusion. "Institutional controls" are generally considered to be legal and administrative controls only, e.g., government ownership, deed and land use restrictions, and water use restrictions. All engineering controls such as excavation and removal, capping or other containment techniques, and even fencing are categorized as "engineering controls".

Page 41, 2nd paragraph --This sentence seems to inaccurately suggest that comprehensive exhumation of all contaminants and remote disposal is the only means of mitigating ongoing risk and eliminating uncontrolled conditions.

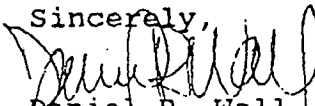
Page 43, 3rd bullet --The evidence indicates that ongoing migration of contaminants is "limited" rather than "extensive".

Table 1, Interim Measures --Just for the record, we would like to comment on the appropriate use of interim signing and fencing. Such measures should be taken in time-critical situations where significant health risks ($> 1 \times 10^{-4}$) could occur.

from near-term exposures. Potentially significant health risks at many of the St. Louis sites are indicated only under very conservative, hypothetical, lifetime exposure scenarios. In our view, it would be inappropriately alarming and potentially counterproductive to fence and sign such areas as the Ballfields, the Riverfront Trail, and Coldwater Creek.

On balance, the draft report seems to accurately capture the collective opinion of the Task Force. Please call if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,


Daniel R. Wall
Remedial Project Manager
Federal Facilities/Special
Emphasis Branch
Superfund Division

cc: Dave Adler, DOE
Bob Geller, MDNR

**ST. LOUIS DOWNTOWN SITE
ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD
CONTENTS**

October 26, 1998

Document No.	Title Description	Author Affiliation	Recipient Affiliation	Document Location	Document Date
		<u>Volume 8a</u>			
9809251029	USEPA Comments on Initial Draft of the Task Force Report	USEPA - Region VII	Task Force	Vol. 8a	8/96
9810231002	St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force Report, Final	Task Force	Public	Vol. 8a	9/96
9808041047	United States Department of Energy Oak Ridge Operations Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping Meetings, Transcripts	Brown & Wingo Court Reporting		Vol. 8a	12/90
9808211055	USDOE Response to Questions from St. Louis County Radioactive and Hazardous Waste Oversight Commission.	USDOE - Oak Ridge	RHWO	Vol. 8a	10/93
9808211071	Community Relations Plan	USDOE/BNI	Community	Vol. 8a	9/93