

Moab Tailings Project Steering Committee Meeting

January 28, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

PUBLIC MEETING

Council Chambers, Grand County Courthouse

125 East Center

Moab, Utah 84532

The following individuals were present:

Committee Members:

Mary McGann, Committee Chair, Grand County Council
Bill Jackson, Grand County Road Department
Zacharia Levine, Grand County Community and Economic Development
Jerry Pruitt alternate for Kelly Thornton, Department of Workforce Services
Amy Tendick, National Park Service
Nicollee Gaddis-Wyatt, Bureau of Land Management
Rani Derasary, Moab City
Dana van Horn, Grand Water & Sewer Service Agency
Joette Langianese, Grand County representative resident
Anthony (Tony) Mancuso, Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands
Evan Tyrrell, Solid Waste Management Special Service District #1

Staff Russ von Koch, Grand County UMTRA Liaison (non-voting staff for MTPSC)

Moab UMTRA Project:

Sasha Robertson, Deputy Federal Cleanup Director, DOE, Office of Environmental Management
Joe Ritchey, S&K Logistics, Senior Program Manager, Technical Assistance Contract
Honora Thompson, Pro2Serve, Public Affairs Manager, Technical Assistance Contract
Barbara Michel, S&K Logistics, Staff Support Specialist, Technical Assistance Contract

Citizens, Other Agency Representatives, and Media:

Chrystal White, Friends of Arches and Canyonlands National Parks

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

Per Resolution 3198 at least seven committee members were present to constitute a quorum.

2. Introductions

The Chair asked those present to introduce themselves. The members introduced themselves by stating their names and who they represented.

3. Review of Minutes from the October 29, 2019 Meeting

The Chair asked the members about their review of the October 29, 2019 minutes. Rani noted that the introductory sentence in item number 4, Citizens to be heard was repeated. Rani moved and Joette seconded a motion to approve the minutes with the deletion of the redundant sentence.

During discussion, Evan asked about the phrase “prone to failure” used to describe the standard NRC tailings cover design that was made during the October Moab UMTRA Project Update. Sasha asked Joe to provide more information about cover design and he informed the members that he was leading a team to research cover design options. Joe explained that about 20 covers had been constructed at tailings sites and most had rock covers including the Mexican Hat site where there had been a problem. He related that following decades of experience, it has been found that dust accumulates in the spaces between the rocks that allow plants to grow. Eventually the roots present maintenance issues. Evan explained that he had previously worked as a contractor for the DOE’s Office of Legacy Management and had been the site manager responsible for Mexican Hat. He recounted that the Mexican Hat site had problems related to how the bedding layer was constructed that led to erosion but no tailings were released. He suggested that “subject to performance issues” might be a better way to describe experience with the standard cover design. It was agreed that the October minutes should not be changed.

The motion to approve the minutes with Rani’s suggested revision passed unanimously.

4. Citizens to be heard – (part one)

The Chair noted that a citizen had submitted a video for the committee to view showing dust at the Moab Site on Thanksgiving Day. She explained that Zacharia had agreed to present the video using the council chamber’s presentation TV/computer, but he was not yet in attendance. Mary asked for a motion to move the Citizens to be Heard agenda item to a time later in the agenda. Tony so moved and Rani seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous consent. *Liaison’s note: See part two of this agenda item after agenda item 6.*

5. Review of Status of Amendments to Resolution 3170 and Related Actions

The Chair updated the members about the status of the amendments to Resolution 3170 recommended at the committee’s October 29, 2019 meeting. Mary reported that following the advice of the county attorney, the procedural components of resolution 3170 that guide the MTPSC, including those recommended at the October meeting, had been incorporated into a set of bylaws for the MTPSC. Mary informed the members that the County Council had approved both a new resolution and the bylaws. Copies of Resolution 3198 (2020) and the Bylaws of the Moab Tailings Project Steering Committee were distributed to the members. Joette asked if the Council would still have to approve changes to the Bylaws. Mary said yes, but that they would not have to be recorded like resolutions. Mary additionally informed the members that the county attorney was recommending that other committees also have bylaws. Russ mentioned that he would be emailing copies of the fully approved resolution and bylaws to the members.

6. Moab UMTRA Project Update

The Chair recognized Deputy Federal Project Director Sasha Robertson to provide an overview of work and progress at the Moab Site.

Sasha began by informing the members that the Project’s FY 20 budget was \$45 million. The budget is the same as what was approved for FY 19. She reported that the Project had moved 270,000 tons of tailings to the disposal cell at Crescent Junction since the 10,000,000 ton celebration in October 2019 and that it has operated 1,245 work days without a lost time injury or accident.

Sasha reported that the Project is conducting pre-design work for an alternative cover for use at the Project’s Crescent Junction Site that would be less subject to performance issues. As part of this process, the Project is also looking at other strategies that could be more cost effective and perform better including excavating future cell areas to a deeper depth which would also reduce the site’s foot print.

Sasha noted that the Project is monitoring the snow pack, but that it is too early to predict. Tony noted that snow pack is currently at 120% of average and that the percent of annual snowpack is fluctuating weekly.

Sasha concluded her presentation by noting that the Project is engaged in a comprehensive review of its air monitoring program including Crescent Junction. The study will determine if any adjustments to the existing program are necessary as a result of the changes at the Moab and Crescent Junction sites.

Mary asked if members had questions about the presentation and began by asking if plants would still grow on an alternative cover. Joe responded that they could, but that such growth would be anticipated.

Joette asked for more information about the air quality monitoring program. Joe responded that monitoring of air dispersion is a possibility and that there would be no changes to the air quality monitoring stations until after the review is completed.

In the discussion that followed, Mary informed the members a local delegation will be going to Washington DC at the end of February to meet with legislators and the DOE to encourage their continued support for the Moab Project at the current level or possibly with an inflation increase. She also reported that a group of 20 to 30 Congressional representatives had requested a budget increase for the Project of up to the \$85 million level. She noted that such a big increase could be disruptive if it were only a one-time allocation and asked for member comments. Joette asked how the Project would address such an increase. Sasha mentioned the potential for infrastructure improvements such as higher load capacity rail cars and improvements to the site's water system. She mentioned that for higher tonnages to be moved it would be necessary to both hire more employees and negotiate with the Union Pacific Railroad and noted that the Project would have to determine the balance between infrastructure improvements and employees.

Zacharia reported that Congressman Curtis would be giving the welcome address at the Canyonlands Business Summit this year; that Lt. Governor Spencer Cox would be giving the keynote address, and that two members of Senator Romney's staff would be attending. Both Zacharia and Mary encouraged members to attend the summit on February 10th.

4. Citizens to Be Heard – (part 2)

Before playing the video requested in Citizens to Be Heard – (part 1) above, Zacharia explained that the video was submitted by Michael Adkison.

Liaison's note: The 1 minute 32 second YouTube video was time-stamped at 3:49 PM November 28, 2019 on Thanksgiving Day. It appeared to be filmed from a location adjacent to State Route 279 near its junction with US Highway 191. The video depicted the effects of wind blowing on weeds in the foreground and showed airborne dust over the tailings conditioning beds in the background. The wind seemed to be blowing towards the slopes of Poison Spider Mesa.

In the discussion that followed viewing the video, Mary and Joette noted that dust has always been a concern. Sasha reported that the Moab Project uses water trucks to reduce the potential for dust during drier periods and that the Project has a team that meets monthly to discuss how to improve operations including dust control. She reported that not much can be done on Thanksgiving. Bill asked if the Project had used dust suppressants. Sasha noted that everything added to the pile adds to their rail shipping costs and Joe mentioned that magnesium chloride had been tried in the past and that both it and the tailings are very salty.

Sasha replied that the Project welcomes ideas. Joette asked about having a “hot line” number that people could call. Sasha informed the group that the number for the Project’s on-call manager is on a sign at the main entry gate for use during off times. Joette suggested that it would be a good idea to have an article about dust in the newspaper and how to call to report dust as the windy spring period is coming. Tony observed that public perception about air quality is important and that the public needs to be informed about the air quality monitoring program, what it shows, and that it is being monitored. He commented that when the wind gusts at 45 mph, not much can be done to control dust.

Sasha stated that the Project welcomes ideas for dust control. Joe mentioned that the Project has two air quality monitoring programs: the environmental monitoring program that has been discussed and a state and federally required fugitive dust program that measures opacity. He explained that the environmental staff who measure opacity also coordinate with the water truck drivers to control dust. Bill asked what the staff would do in response to a call about dust. Sasha responded that the manager would evaluate the situation and make a decision.

Evan asked about real time monitoring of air quality. Russ explained that the radioactivity data takes three months to collect. Joe explained that they do real time monitoring of employees, but as Russ indicated the air quality monitoring is determined as an average exposure collected over a three month period.

Joette asked Russ to ask Michael Adkison for his ideas about dust control, to inform him of the posted on-call manager phone number, and to inform him that the committee had discussed the video and dust control with Project staff. Sasha said that if Michael has a question that he should forward it to the Project. Rani asked Russ to also forward the on-call manager phone number to the committee members.

Amy asked if more air quality stations could be placed in the valley. Russ described the multiple locations in the valley and observed that all sites away from the Project area reported levels well below the allowable annual limits. Evan asked, as food for thought, that if it were possible to correlate higher particulate levels with dust, then real time monitoring could be justified. Joe observed that the complexity of air quality monitoring, along with changes at the sites, are reasons why the Project has initiated its comprehensive review of the air quality program. Sasha noted that they had recently filled another air quality position.

7. Discussion of Moab UMTRA Project Progress and the Project FY 20 budget.

This topic was addressed during the discussion in item 6 above.

8. Air Monitoring and Liaison Activities

The Chair introduced this topic. While Russ was re-initiating the projection system she asked the members if they had any stakeholder updates.

Evan informed the committee about additional recycling opportunities available at Grand County’s recycling site on Sand Flats Road. Sasha said, subject to DOE policies, the Project would look into using the local recycling facility.

Russ initiated the liaison’s status update. He reviewed the long term annual progress towards transporting the tailings from the Moab Site to the Crescent Junction Disposal Cell and then discussed the data from the third quarter 2019 air quality report. Overall the moving average data was fairly similar to the second quarter except that gamma readings have gone up some at the Arches, Crescent Junction, and West Thompson stations. Russ observed that they have been higher before, but should be watched. He noted

that the station near the northwest boundary near the junction of SR 279 and US 191 continues to have the highest off-site readings, but is still within the allowable limit and that data from the other off-site stations reported continues to be well under allowable limits. Russ noted that the Project had started freshwater injection in December below the pile to protect the river as usual during the winter months.

After presentation of the third quarter air quality data for the Moab Site, Joette asked about potential air quality changes related to the inversion in the fourth quarter. The conversation transitioned to a discussion about looking at the data for the October to December period over several years to see if there were any changes. It was agreed that Russ should present this information at the May meeting so that the members could see changes over a longer period.

Joette initiated a discussion about the length of time between air quality reports and the possibility of more frequent reports. Russ explained that some of the measures are so minute that a long period is needed for collection. Sasha noted that quarterly air quality reporting is standard DOE procedure and that any additional work would have to be justified to support the additional cost of more frequent monitoring reports. Zacharia suggested that the frequency of the air quality reports be addressed as part of a future presentation by the Project about their air quality monitoring program. Joe Ritchey informed the members that the Science Moab group will be hosting a panel discussion with dryland scientists titled Mad Max, Dust, & the future of Moab at the Helipad at 6:30 PM on March 10. Joette suggested that Michael Adkison also be informed about the Science Moab presentation.

Following the standard update items, Russ showed a few slides of the Moab Project Site depicting how the Project opened the “face” of the tailings pile in December 2019 to allow for venting and testing of the hydrocarbon diesel-fuel-like odors that had been detected in a portion of the pile in late 2018. Russ asked the Project team members if there was any new information from the testing. Sasha responded that the early data again pointed to hydrocarbons similar to those associated with diesel fuel and that additional analysis is on-going.

Russ continued the UMTRA Status PowerPoint by presenting: 1) an overview of how the Moab UMTRA Project transports and processes the mill tailings and mill debris at its disposal cell at Crescent Junction, 2) how Project team members are placing the interim cover over a filled section of the cell using clean materials excavated from a future cell disposal area east of the current working cell, and 3) a few slides showing the rock cover on the standard NRC cell cover to the west of the working disposal cell area.

9. Stakeholder Updates

Liaison’s note: Please see Evan’s earlier remarks in the first paragraph of item 8.

10. Future Agenda Items

The Chair asked the members if they had any suggestions for topics to be addressed at future meetings. Evan quickly recounted several suggestions. Mary asked him to submit his list to Russ after the meeting. Evan forwarded the following list after the meeting on January 28, 2020.

1. Presentation from DOE on the current air monitoring program for the Moab UMTRA site, including Crescent Junction and background monitoring stations
2. Presentation from DOE on the current groundwater monitoring plan, including groundwater flow modeling (i.e., what direction is it moving), contaminants of concern (COCs), and contaminant distribution analysis
 - a. Based on today’s discussion of uncovering old diesel contamination, I wonder if these associated contaminants have been ruled out

3. Presentation from DOE on the history and current status of the Vicinity Property (VP)_Cleanup Program
4. Discussion from DOE on their long-term budgeting planning (commonly referred to as “Life Cycle Baseline” in the DOE world) for the Moab UMTRA and CJ Sites
5. Presentation from DOE on the basis for the engineering design and construction QA/QC for the Crescent Junction disposal cell
 - a. Note: inadequate construction QA/QC appears to have been a major factor in the performance issues that have been observed at the Mexican Hat Title I UMTRCA Site.

11. Future Meeting Dates

The Chair noted that the remaining scheduled meeting dates for 2020 are shown at the bottom of the agenda. *Liaison’s note: the meetings are **May** 26, July 28, and October 27. All meetings will be held at the Grand County Courthouse in the Council Chambers from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M.*

12. Adjourn

Joette moved to adjourn the meeting and Tony seconded the motion. The Chair adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 4:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S/s Russ von Koch, Grand County UMTRA Liaison

Approved

Date

Mary McGann, MTPSC Chairperson
