

# FEDERAL FACILITY REMEDIATION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

## [Summary and Highlights of February 5, 2009 Discussion]

This all-afternoon session brought together nine federal government agencies/ departments, the State of Alaska, environmental interest groups and community members to discuss the current status of remediation (past and future work), obstacles, and strategies to address the obstacles. [List of participants is attached.] Larry Mercurieff (Seven Generations Consulting) facilitated the session. The discussion aired community concerns and then evolved into a collaborative discussion, which produced a list of challenges and potential solutions. The discussion ended with a verbal agreement to continue positive discussions such as this to address further action on the potential solutions that were identified.

### SUMMARY

The US Army's Office of Regional Environmental Affairs (Brad Wright) opened the session and provided introductory remarks. Brad Wright introduced the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (Rob Rosenfeld), who also made opening remarks. The facilitator, Larry Mercurieff (Seven Generations Consulting) next spoke for several minutes to set the tone and expectations for the discussion. Next, everyone in the room introduced themselves.

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Ken Andraschko) provided a brief overview from the perspective of the federal government. This presentation included an explanation of how remediation projects are prioritized and funded, which included the roles of the Executive and Legislative branches of government in the process.

The Alaska Community Action on Toxics (Pam Miller) provided an overview from the perspective of the community. The presentation included: concerns about government secrecy, burden of proof of health impacts, community needs for information, community desire for more research, concerns that the State regulatory agencies take the side of the military, and the community's desire for a more collaborative approach. Rob Rosenfeld then spent several minutes further articulating the issues raised by the Alaska Community Action on Toxics.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (Jennifer Roberts) provided a brief overview from the perspective of the State. The presentation included: coordination between the State and Federal government, State desire for more community involvement on development of regulatory standards, and lack of funds for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program.

The group next identified challenges and possible solutions.

## CHALLENGES

- High turnover among government remediation site project managers
- Different understandings with respect to the government-to-government relationship
- Lack of US Congressional and State legislative awareness of remediation needs
- Limited finances in communities to fully engage in the remediation process
- Lack of community-based participatory research on contamination issues
- Burden of proof for health impacts is on the community
- Government use of community, including elder, observations and knowledge
- Shortage of funding
- Access to information on contaminated sites
- Challenges of multi-agency coordination
- Use of technologies that are appropriate for arctic conditions

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (top 4 priorities are in bold)

- Educate Federal agencies about community/native culture
- Use independent facilitator for RABs
- Make community input a higher priority
- Provide communities with the ability to conduct independent assessment of risk
- Assure stable funding for remediation projects
- **Tribal capacity building; provide technical assistance to communities**
- **Encourage tribes to set their own priorities for remediation projects**
- **Improve government-to-government consultation protocols**
- Share best practices
- Ask SOC to consider a demonstration project to build a model for the future
- **Conduct more collaborative discussions such as this in the future**

*[Summary by Brad Wright, Army Liaison to Alaska, 303-844-0959; 6 March 2009]*