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Attendance
Chair, Commissioner Barney Trujillo, Rio Arriba County; Fabian Trujillo, proxy for City of Santa Fe; Councilor Steve Girrens, proxy for Los Alamos County; Mayor Alice Lucero, City of Española; Governor Raymond Loretto, Pueblo of Jemez.

A. Call to Order – Chair Trujillo
Chair Trujillo called the meeting to order at 1:47 p.m.

B. Confirmation of Quorum – Chair Trujillo
Executive Director Andrea Romero took attendance and Chair Trujillo confirmed there was a quorum.

C. Approval of Agenda – Chair Trujillo
Chair Trujillo asked the Board to review and approve the agenda as presented. Councilor Steve Girrens moved to approve the agenda. Governor Raymond Loretto seconded the motion to approve the agenda. Chair Trujillo called for a vote to approve the agenda. The Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the agenda.
D. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Chair Trujillo
Chair Trujillo asked the board to review and approve the meeting minutes as presented for
the RCLC Board meeting that was held on November 13, 2015.
Councilor Steve Girrens moved to approve the meeting minutes.
Fabian Trujillo seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes.
Chair Trujillo called for a vote to approve the minutes.
The Board voted unanimously in favor of approving the meeting minutes.

E. Discussion/Action Items
1. Briefing from NM Congressional Delegation
   Executive Director Andrea Romero stated that the Congressional delegations sent their
   regards and asked to be excused from the December meeting as they had no reports for the
   Board.

2. Presentation by Dave Nickless, EM-LA, on Treatment of Remediated Nitrate Salts
   (RNS)
   Mr. Nickless thanked the board for the opportunity to present on the supply of nitrate salts
to be remediates at LANL. Nickless informed the Board that he has been at LANL since
Fall 2008. Due to the WIPP event that occurred in February 2014, the particular waste
   treatment, the nitrate salts, is now infamously characterized. A Los Alamos drum reacted in
   the underground WIPP facility that came from Nitrate Salts waste stream. There is currently
   a group of drums that is stored in Los Alamos that are of the same variety as the drum that
   reacted in the underground.

   The waste stream originally came out of TA-55, the LANL plutonium facility. One of the
   main operations at that facility is to recover plutonium out of different waste materials and
   residues. Most of the evaporative salts processed as part of the 3706 Campaign date back
   to the mid 1980s. Most of the drums were stable for close to three decades until the errors
   in the processing of the salts that led to the reaction at WIPP. The nitrate salts were mixed
   with organic kitty litter, which as a chemical make up, caused the breach of drum 68660.

   The waste stream uses nitric acid. Residue is taken that contains plutonium to be reclaimed
   or recovered and is later purified. After the plutonium is leached out and recovered, a
   spent acid is leftover. That spent acid goes to an evaporator in the plutonium facility. The
   evaporator recycled the nitric acid as much as it could back into the process, and then it
   was left with an evaporator bottom. After this process they were left with a concentrated
   solution of nitrates. In the 1980s they cooled the supersaturated solution, and as the
   solution cooled the salts would precipitate out. Those salts were scraped out into bags and
   a number of bags were placed into 55 gallon drums. Those drums were stable in storage
   for 30 years.

   Research was done at New Mexico Tech in Socorro that called for the addition of zeolite,
   the active ingredient in “kitty litter”. For every liter of nitrate salt present, at least 1.2 liters
   of zeolite, or kitty litter, had to be added. The mistake that was made in this process was
   substituting a modern, organic, “green” kitty litter in lieu of the zeolite, or inorganic kitty
   litter.

   All of the remediated nitrate salts that LANL currently has in storage are at the Waste
   Characterization, Reduction and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF). They were, of course, not
remediated correctly, which caused the breach in 68660. WCRRF will likely be facility that will be used to remedy the problem by reprocessing waste.

Looking forward, LANL has looked at a number of different technologies and processes that could be used to fix the problem. Nitrate salts are considered oxidizers, which means they will react with most organic materials, which creates a problem if they are in the environment as they were in 68660. Nitrates also have the ability to provide oxygen. The unique property of oxidizers means that a fire involving an oxidizer cannot be extinguished in a traditional means, e.g. by cutting off the supply of oxygen, because the nitrate provides oxygen salts itself. The nitrate salts acted as the oxidizers and the organic kitty litter as the combustible material in the drum that reacted at WIPP in a process referred to as “thermal runaway”.

LANL has narrowed the options down to two processes to remediate the drums that were initially processed incorrectly. The most simple and effective of the two options that will reduce the potential for the rest of the waste to ignite is the addition of zeolite (an inorganic material) to the drums, the material that should have been used in the first place. Another process, a wet process, would be the addition of cement or grouting material making a cement matrix. Other options include incineration, vitrification, types of chemical reactions. Any of these processes would of course have to be permitted by the state of New Mexico.

Temperature plays a very important role in the safe handling and treatment of this waste. The waste is cooled prior to treatment, and the rates of how fast the reactions occur is based on the temperature. The waste is currently stored in a facility that is designed to handle contamination at Area G. The plan is to keep the waste cooled as it is stored and then to get it even colder prior to processing. It will then be transferred to the WCRRF and treated there.

One of the initial errors in the packaging of the nitrate salts was that LANL didn’t have the proper permits to do so. That is part of the reason the state took enforcement action against the Lab. Moving forward the lab will be fully engaged in with NMED to ensure that the proper permitting is in place. There are a variety of specialists at the lab who are making sure that the lab is processing and storing the waste properly, and NMED officials are sitting in on these meetings.

Before the Lab moves forward there will be an independent review of the procedures and the people that ensures that the lab is prepared to move forward safely and effectively. It will take some time and effort to be ready for that review but it is essential to go through.

There are currently two buckets of waste that need to be treated: one is Remediated Nitrate Salts (RNS), and the other is Unremediated Nitrate Salts (UNS). The plan is to treat the RNS first and the UNS thereafter. This treatment will eliminate the possibility of ignition in the nitrate salts drums and clear the waste so that when WIPP reopens the drums can be moved along with the other TRU waste already up at the hill back into the underground and move forward with the closure of Area G.

Other national labs have been able to learn from the mistakes made at LANL, and errors that occurred during the treatment of the nitrate salts have been used to improve standard operating procedures in other parts of the lab.
Mayor Alice Lucero asked Mr. Nickless if he knew of the reopening date at WIPP. Mr. Nickless stated that a date had not been determined yet, but they’re working hard and would like to have the facility open by the end of the calendar year 2016. They’re determined to not let schedule pressure force WIPP to reopen before it is ready.

Councilor Steve Girrens asked Mr. Nickless what the shelf life of one of the drums of nitrate salts is before the drum is no longer reactive. Mr. Nickless stated that that answer is unknown. This waste stream was created inadvertently and it’s hard to say how long the salts will be reactive over time. It currently appears that the reactivity is decreasing over time but there isn’t a definite answer regarding a so-called “shelf life”. This waste stream will have to be handled again at some point to determine its continued safe storage and transportation.

Chair Trujillo asked Mr. Nickless how long he estimated the new treatment would take, and Mr. Nickless estimated that around one drum a day could be remediated. There are currently 60 drums to be treated. This is only an estimate, though, as a final remediation plan has yet to be decided on. He reaffirmed, though, that trying to stick to deadlines on a schedule was not the priority, and safety and effective treatment are the most important.

3. Presentation by Gil Vigil, Executive Director of Eight Northern Pueblos on 2016 Strategic Objectives

Gil Vigil thanked the Coalition for the opportunity to present and Governor Raymond Loretto for hosting the meeting at Jemez Pueblo. He introduced Jovanna Archuleta, his deputy director at Eight Northern and a member of Nambe Pueblo. Mr. Vigil is a member and former Governor of Tesuque Pueblo.

Mr. Vigil stated that the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council (ENIPC) exists to serve not only the people of the Eight Northern Pueblos, but also the people of all of northern New Mexico. Their office is intended to serve Native Americans, but they will frequently see non-natives at their door. Their policy is, however, that if they are unable to help a non-native directly, they will work to find the resources to help them some other way. They do not want to totally turn anyone away.

ENIPC was established in 1961 and it is a consortium of the Eight Northern Pueblos of Nambe Pueblo, Picuris Pueblo, Pojoaque Pueblo, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh, Tesuque Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo, and Taos Pueblo. At the time it was established, tribes didn’t have the capacity to run their own administrations, and they looked to the Council as a consortium for guidance. The governors of the pueblos are able to come together to develop programs for pueblo members.

The Council backs runs the Peacekeepers Domestic Violence program, providing services to victims who are Native American or who are being victimized by a Native American and to offenders who are Native American or who are victimizing a Native American. They seek to raise awareness of domestic violence by offering the following services advocacy support, training and awareness programs, crisis intervention, and legal assistance.

The Council also runs the Office of Environmental Technical Assistance (OETA) to assist 22 Pueblos and Tribes in New Mexico and Texas in promoting the enhancement of
environmental resources, environmental health and in the protection of tribal lands from environmental hazards and pollutants. The Council also promotes higher education and sponsors scholarships, WIC, employment training, and programs that aid pueblo members in obtaining health insurance, as well as others.

The Circle of Life Behavioral Health program provides adult and adolescent outpatient services as well as maintaining the New Moon Lodge, an inpatient facility with up to fifteen beds for adult Native American males. The New Moon facility is always full, demonstrating the dire need for residential behavioral health treatment. Unfortunately there is no facility for females at this time. The Butterfly Healing Center in Taos maintains a bed capacity for 15 Native American male and 10 females from the various tribes.

There are gambling addiction services as well as Medicaid application and public assistance services. The Council has offices in Albuquerque, Espanola, and Taos. The Council provides childcare assistance programs in six of the pueblos. They fund six families that take care of children in the pueblos, and also offer a Head Start program to provide early childhood education to the children of the northern Pueblos.

The Council’s Food Distribution Program is a federal program that provides nutritional foods to low-income native and non-native households residing on a reservation and to households living in approved areas near a reservation that contain at least one person who is a member of a federally-recognized tribe.

Gil Vigil gave credit to Jovanna Archuleta for the development of the Art & Farmers Market that was held back in October. It was the first annual event and they are planning on holding another this year. They are working on a grant that will allow for the funding of advertising for the second Market.

For future endeavors, Mr. Vigil expressed concern for the veterans of northern New Mexico and the pueblos. He has attended several veterans conferences focused on providing assistance to veterans, but there is too much bureaucracy to deal with and the veterans get frustrated trying to see anything done. The Council is looking to open an office and employ Veteran Services Officers (VSOs) to help the veterans to obtain the benefits they deserve without having to fight with bureaucracy in order to do so. The Council believes it is very important to help veterans utilize the services they have earned when they chose to serve their country.

Mr. Vigil also stated that the Council is working on compiling a portfolio that he would like to present to the RCLC when it is complete. That portfolio will present the history of the ENIPC and the goals, objectives, and strategic plans of the Council as well as future endeavors. He assured the board that he was staying in touch with Andrea and that he was looking forward to working closely with her and the members of the RCLC.

4. Board Member Action Items
a. Review Calendar of Engagement Opportunities
Chair Trujillo asked the board to review the proposed 2016 potential opportunities for travel and engagement. The Board had requested this schedule of potential engagement opportunities at the November board meeting.

5. Updates
a. Budget and Executive Director Services RFP Update from Brian Bosshardt

Brian stated that the only change in the RCLC budget was payment for one month of Executive Director Services. Behind the budget update is a copy of the RFP for the board members to review. Proposals are due to Los Alamos by December 22. The proposals will then be distributed to board members and the January meeting can potentially be used for interviews depending on the number of proposals received.

b. Executive Director Update from Andrea Romero

Andrea informed the board that a lot was accomplished at the intergovernmental meeting in New Orleans that took place before the Thanksgiving holiday. The groups that participated include the Energy Communities Alliance that the RCLC is a member of, the Environmental Council of the States, the National Association of Attorney Generals, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governor’s Association, and the State and Tribal Government Working Group. Governor Loretto was in attendance and Andrea included a list of priorities that were decided upon during the meeting. The five major areas were decision-making, budget commitments, communication, process improvements, and waste storage and disposal.

The ECA also held a meeting to talk about what they would be working on in the coming year. The main areas of focus were engaging local governments and increasing budgets for cleanup.

Mayor Alice hosted a meeting with Senator Martin Heinrich on the SCMC issue at the Espanola City Council chambers where attendees heard from contractors, practitioners, government advocates and Sen. Heinrich regarding the reality of contracting issues and efforts to combat additional funds leaving New Mexico for SCMC procurement. Senator Heinrich reiterated his commitment to addressing this issue and ensuring that we do try to keep our procurement local and follow the progress on the changes.

Finally the board members had expressed interest in being participating players in the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and Andrea attended a meeting about how that park will be designated and what is going on so far in regards to planning. Andrea will continue to liaise with those planners and keep the board informed. Governor Loretto mentioned that at the intergovernmental meeting he learned from some of the Native American tribes in Washington that they were displeased that they were not included in the planning of the parks. He felt that the situation was similar in northern New Mexico and he expressed his wish that the local tribes would participate more.

G. Adjournment

Chair Trujillo stated that no one was present for public comment and adjourned the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

Attest:

___________________________________
Commissioner Barney Trujillo, Chair

___________________________________
Andrea Romero, Executive Director