

## **Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation 96-14 to Delay Setting Final Soil Action Levels**

**Submitted to the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and the  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**

**Approved October 3, 1996**

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The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board (RFCAB) recommends that the Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) delay setting specific Soil Action Levels (SALs) for Rocky Flats until EPA has issued the Radiation Site Cleanup standards as a final rule and some basic uncertainties are addressed. RFCAB does not support the adoption of the draft standards on an interim basis.

RFCAB is uncomfortable with the fact that the EPA Radiation Site Cleanup Draft Regulation, upon which the draft Soil Action Levels are based, is a draft standard that has not gone through the rulemaking process. The *Response to Public Comments* on the Draft Rocky Flats Vision and Draft Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement (RFCA) states that "If these proposed standards are changed when the final EPA rule is promulgated, the RFCA will be modified accordingly." We question the utility of basing a major action on a draft regulation, which, if modified upon final promulgation, would require the action to be revisited.

RFCAB has heard from DOE and the regulators that the proposed Soil Actions Levels are meant to be interim. There is no guarantee, however, given future site and Congressional priorities, that there would be additional cleanup after actions to meet the interim action levels are complete.

Despite RFCAB's recommendation to delay setting the SALs, RFCAB does not recommend that all activity cease at the site until the final standards are adopted. A review of the current Ten Year Plan for Rocky Flats lists the following as the most urgent risks at the site:

- Highly Enriched Uranyl Nitrate (HEUN) removal;
- Liquid Residue Stabilization;
- Solid Residue Stabilization;
- SNM Consolidation; and

- SNM Stabilization.

RFCAB believes that resources at Rocky Flats should be directed toward eliminating the most urgent risks, as outlined above. Because there is no assurance that addressing these more urgent risks will not cause additional soil contamination, it would be appropriate to delay major environmental restoration until these activities are completed. RFCAB also believes, however, that it is important to move ahead with environmental restoration if there are areas in which soil contamination presents urgent risks through erosion to surface water, seepage to groundwater or other exposure pathways. In such circumstances, environmental restoration should be done to the maximum level possible and RFCAB's *Cleanup Principles and Critical Reporting Elements* should be utilized in these cases.

While RFCAB is recommending a delay in major environmental restoration activities, we do expect that the federal government will address these activities. It should also be noted that RFCAB has recommended that ultimate cleanup of Rocky Flats be to average background levels for the Front Range when technology allows for this in a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive manner. Therefore, we view any future soil action levels that fall short of average background as being inherently interim in nature. We expect DOE to pursue technologies that will lead toward achievement of the goal of average background levels. We also expect that cleanup levels will be reviewed on a regular basis to see if they can be improved upon.

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The Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board is a community advisory group that reviews and provides recommendations on cleanup plans for Rocky Flats, a former nuclear weapons plant outside of Denver, Colorado.

[Back to Index CAB Recommendations](#)

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