

Interview Summary – Kirtland AFB BFF Interviews

A total of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted during the weeks of November 5 and 27, 2012. Interviewees included two CAB members, one media representative, three elected/public officials, 3 homeowner association representatives, and seven community group representatives.

Interviewees provided feedback on categories that included:

- history (familiarity with Kirtland AFB and the BFF project),
- Concerns (awareness/sensitivity of local communities to the project, on-going project activity concerns, opportunity/response to sharing concerns),
- Project and Community Communication (currently receiving project information, where do people go for information – formats, people, use of social media), and
- Public Meetings and Outreach Suggestions (suggestions for improving public meetings and project informational outreach).

History

The initial set of questions determined the background of interviewees with regard to the area and project in general. Most interviewees have lived and/or worked in Albuquerque or the project area for a long time, meaning it is a stable population and community members know the history of and information networks for the area.

Additionally, when interviewees were asked about their level of awareness of the project, and other people's awareness in their community, they indicated most people, including themselves, were aware of and knew about the fuel spill and subsequent remediation efforts. It was noted that people who live and work in or near the project area are very aware of the project, as compared to people who live in other parts of Albuquerque. Interviewees thought that there is a lot of misunderstanding and mistrust related to the project and the Air Force due to how fuel project information and activities, as well as mission support training, other environmental issues, etc., have been handled in the past. With regard to a lack of interest on the part of some community members, interviewees noted that these people either were not interested in the project or did not know enough to be concerned; interviewees attributed this to a lack of information about the project or people being busy with their lives.

People indicated they primarily learned about the project and associated activities through public meetings and the news media; secondary information sources included word of mouth which reflects people's information networks, homeowners association (HOAs), and personal research.

Concerns

People are concerned about the project and on-going remediation activities. Concerns expressed could be grouped into two categories – general and project-related. General concerns focused on concern about impacts to the area’s water resource, effects on property values, and health and social justice concerns and issues.

Project-related concerns were further segregated into general project and specific project concerns.

- The majority of general project concerns expressed were that people thought the AF/NMED/Shaw was not doing enough or fast enough, and that there was not enough money available to do the job. Two respondents felt that the AF has stepped up to the plate in the last three years and is acting responsibly.
- Specific project concerns were mainly about poor communication, e.g. people do not know who talks or reports to whom, who owns the problem in terms of long-term management, and that no clear answers are given to people’s questions at meetings. Other specific project concerns included a need for more technical support for contamination removal and a review of other similar scale projects; project sampling procedures – e.g., why the number of samples being taken, the extent of the plume is not known yet; and a concern about SVE vapors getting into the air.

Most interviewees indicated they had shared their concerns with the project, and while two interviewees indicated they were not aware of any efforts to address their concerns, two other interviewees felt their concerns were received favorably and addressed by the AF. Two respondents commented that they have not had any real dialogue with anyone from the project and felt the meetings were dominated by a small group of people.

Project and Community Communication

How to get information

The majority of people do not currently receive any information from the project outside of attending meetings, or from other non-AF sources such as the ABCWUA. This reflects that no active dissemination of project information out to the community is in place. If people do receive information from the AF, it is mainly in the form of a press release or a meeting notice. If people have questions or want more information, they will call someone. Most people indicated their primary information sources are the internet, mainly the AF and NMED web sites, and the ABCWUA which is seen as a trusted source for information. Followed by meetings, people indicated personal communications and information from the KPC rounded out how they obtained project information.

Interviewees indicated that the best way to provide information is electronically - via the internet, providing links to other web sites, receiving emails, and using webinars to educate people about different aspects of the project. The next preferred way to have project information shared with people was a one-page information sheet that could be copied and shared further with others. Additionally, people indicated the current format and structure of public meetings are good as is.

Other communication methods commented on by interviewees included continuing communication with elected officials so they would be in the know when queried by their constituents, to provide information to the ABCWUA, and to share project information at other public meetings being conducted in the community. Other suggestions shared by interviewees included making a monthly activity summary/executive summary available to the public, have open project discussions around a table that the public can attend; provide documentation of people's concerns expressed at public meetings and responses as captured through meeting minutes and to make those available to the public through the web site; and to update information distribution lists with sign-in sheets from public meetings.

How often to get information

With regard to frequency of providing project information, most people indicated they preferred to receive new information as it becomes available or as is necessary to share information. Many interviewees like the quarterly schedule currently used by the AF for the CAB meetings. It was suggested by some interviewees to have AF meetings for community members who are closer to the plume every two months or more often if necessary, and have meetings scheduled routinely so people can get familiar with the project. Other suggestions were to have AF meetings two times a year, and for the AF web site to be updated at least every two to three weeks otherwise people stop using it because they perceive the information as out-of-date.

Where to get information

Most respondents indicated they use local media sources as their news source – specifically, the Albuquerque Journal and television channels 7 and 13. The next commonly cited news source was the internet. Other news sources mentioned included project meetings; monthly ABCWUA meetings; meetings with the Congressional delegation, Base Commander and state administration; email; and information flyers.

In order to understand how people share information, interviewees were asked to identify the first four people they would go to for information about environmental issues in Albuquerque. The primary people or organizations identified by interviewees included ABCWUA staff, AF civilian staff and leadership, the City of Albuquerque staff and resources, NMED staff, and

elected officials/representatives. Additionally, people identified various individuals and organizations in the community they go to for information about the project and other related subjects, indicating a broad network on which people rely for confirmation or additional information; general community members and organizations mentioned included the U.S. Geologic Service, state engineer's office, Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and Economic Forum, neighborhood associations, Cesar Chavez Community Center staff, and long term area residents.

When asked about using social media such as Facebook for sharing project information, most respondents indicated they, personally, would not use that sort of resource. However, many respondents indicated that while they may or may not use it, it would be a good informational resource for others in the community.

Public Meetings and Outreach Suggestions

People provided a lot of constructive suggestions on how to improve the structure of public meetings and sharing information with the community. People also provided good suggestions on other aspects of information networking that they suggested the AF utilize.

Most interviewees indicated they have attended the AF project meetings. Of those who indicated they have not, they were asked why they did not attend. Two interviewees indicated they rely on others for information. Other reasons given for not attending project public meetings included someone saying he did not feel there was much an individual could do about this type of problem, while another indicated they were busy enough with other job activities. Another interviewee indicated they did not attend the AF meetings because it seemed to them that only misinformed people attended and there was no way to change their minds.

When interviewees were asked for suggestions to improve the current structure of meetings, seven interviewees indicated they found the meeting structure to be fine as it currently is. Interviewees provided suggestions for improvement, which were grouped into three categories: general comments, meeting specific/structure, and project specific/topics.

- General comments stated that the AF has a history of distrust and information withholding that takes time to overcome; there is not enough technical perspective involved in the project; the AF should be forthright in the information that comes up; and a suggestion to use the monthly elected officials' events to share project information with a larger audience.
- Comments about meeting specific/structure included:
 - Giving the community more opportunity to participate more through suggesting agenda items, submit written questions, or through smaller, breakout groups where there would be more interaction.

- Having more chairs and microphones, have a time limit on questions and comments from the audience, and to provide more clarity about the meeting agenda in meeting announcements and notices.
- Using a professional moderator or facilitator who can guide the meeting and remind/enforce meeting ground rules.
- Using the same power point format by all presenters at a meeting and making their presentations more substantive and educational for the audience (like those given by NMED).
- Improving graphics to show the well and plume locations with street names for a frame of reference and to include the correct scale on maps.
- Answering questions asked and provide more follow-up by the AF and its contractors.
- Needing to formalize and identify roles and responsibilities of those involved in or with the CAB.
- Occasionally conducting the meetings more like a community gathering where people could get to know each other.
- Checking for possible scheduling conflicts of the AF meeting with the City Council and/or the ABCWUA meetings.
- Comments specific to the project and related topics included:
 - Providing more technical information such as how fast the project is moving, what is being done, have test results available and present on relevant aspects at a meeting, be prepared to discuss the groundwater predictive models, and how the plume will be cleaned up.
 - Providing project information in plain English, with no technical jargon or acronyms without explanation; and conducting another teach-in, perhaps on geology.
 - Discussing other aspects of environmental remediation occurring at the base for context of this work and illustrate the work completed thus far.

The majority of interviewees indicated that meetings on a weekday, Monday through Thursday, are best for meetings, and that evening times were best, specifically with start times beginning at 5:30pm at the earliest and 7:30 pm at the latest so that people who work can attend the meetings. A suggestion was also made to have an occasional meeting on the weekend so those who could not attend during the week may be able to attend a project meeting and get information. Some additional comments made included to have more meetings since project activities are happening quickly, have meetings at schools where parents are, and to have better notification/identification of the meeting's purpose.

Interviewees were asked about other people or organizations in the community that should be included in project outreach efforts. Community members identified included Bruce Thomson, 3 mentions, Dave McCoy, 2 mentions, and others with one mention each: Bob Aly, Jim McKay, Amigos Bravos – Michael Jensen, Eric Nuttal, and John Hawley. Various community organizations and entities identified to be included for informational purposes only were water resource groups such as Agua es Vida Action Team and Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly, area Pueblos, faith based groups, area food pantries, SWOP (Southwest Organization Project), medical community in the international neighborhood, NAIOP, and the major area employers (Sandia, Kirtland, APS, UNM, and the City of Albuquerque). Neighborhood associations and area neighborhoods to be included: Elder Homestead, Siesta Hills, Trumbull Village, South San Pedro, and Coalition 6. Interviewees identified elected officials should be included, specifically Maggie Hart-Stebbins, Representative Martin Heinrich, Art de la Cruz, the City of Albuquerque, as well as others at all levels. Other community entities included the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, the Albuquerque Journal, area schools and school organizations, and to coordinate with the ABCWUA and/or John Stomp.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Community members in and around the project area are currently getting most of their project information from AF public meetings and secondary sources such as the newspaper and presentations at other meetings. To ensure accurate and comprehensive project information available to the public in addition to the quarterly CAB meetings, it is suggested to increase the sources of project-generated information through mechanisms such as:

- A dedicated project-specific web site where background information, project updates, documents and figures, and other informational resources can be shared with the community. Additionally, the web site can be used as a way for people to ask questions or share concerns with the project without having to attend a public meeting;
- A monthly project update sheet that can be emailed to a project distribution list and uploaded to the project web site. The project distribution list would be updated regularly with public meeting sign-in sheets; and
- Continue with the quarterly AF public meetings; however, begin instituting some suggested improvements such as using a locally based facilitator to guide the meeting and ensure identified ground rules are followed, provide comment/input cards so community members can suggest meeting topics, and provide the meeting agenda in the meeting announcements provided to the public. One of the other items that would contribute to a more structured quarterly meeting would be to formalize the CAB.

It is also suggested to take organizations up on offers to provide information for their periodic newsletters/mailers. One example is The Elder Homestead neighborhood association issues their own newsletter every 2 months; they have a general meeting in April; their meetings are in the spring and winter, every 3rd Thursday. Another possible outlet is to identify those elected officials who put out regular information/conduct regular constituent events and see if the project can provide a brief update once or twice a year.

Community Relations Recommendations

In order to meet the informational needs of the community and interested public which by extension works toward the goal of having an interested and informed public participating in the selection of the final remedy, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Issue a project update newsletter.
 - a. Begin with monthly issues and then revisit frequency within six to eight months to see if reducing to quarterly would still meet the informational needs of recipients. If new information becomes available in between issues, use this format to share the new information for visual recognition of project-related information by recipients.
 - b. Keep length to one to two pages.
 - c. Use plain English and graphics to illustrate information.
 - d. Issue electronically
 - e. Post on auxiliary BFF project web site (see below) and send to CAB distribution list, elected officials, KPC, NMED, HOAs, Cesar Chavez Community Center.
2. Ensure outreach/information dissemination to broad community stakeholders.
 - a. Utilize CAB and Kirtland PAO contact information to cover full range of stakeholders.
 - b. "Stakeholders" refers to project area elected officials, HOAs – Elder Homestead, Siesta Hills, Trumbull Village, South San Pedro and Coalition 6, KPC, NMED, ABCWUA, community members and groups interested in the BFF project such as area water resource groups and community interest groups such as Coalition 6, area Pueblos, Southwest Organization Project (SWOP), and the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, Economic Forum, and the Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce.
3. Launch an auxiliary BFF project web site.
 - a. This would be done through Shaw so there would be flexibility in format and information provided.
 - b. Provide additional project information through this web site to include complete quarterly sampling reports, project update newsletter, CAB information – e.g.

project background, meeting agendas, frequently asked questions, and a comment/question form for submittal to the project team.

- c. Update regularly, at least monthly to ensure current information is available.

4. CAB Meetings

- a. Institute ground rules for meetings – e.g., time limit on questions and comments from the audience, once someone has asked a question/made a comment – allow others to do the same, and respect those who are speaking.
- b. Formalize the CAB and its members through establishing a charter and instituting procedural activities at meetings such as a roll call of CAB members in attendance.
- c. Provide more chairs and use a standing microphone for questions and comments from the audience.
- d. Provide question/comment cards for those who would rather not speak in the public forum so they can be heard and/or provide suggestions on future topics to be covered at the CAB, provide copies of the presentation as handouts.
- e. Record questions asked/comments made and compile these into the frequently asked questions to be provided on the auxiliary BFF web site; be sure to announce this at the CAB meetings so people are aware this is being done and information will be available on the web site.
- f. Identify 3 primary message points regarding project activities to be conveyed at each CAB meeting. This will help in keeping information provided at a manageable level for presenters and the majority of attendees. Be aware of/careful about using technical language in presenting and answering questions.
- g. Use the occasional CAB meeting to “teach” the public about an aspect of the project such as regional geology, technologies used in the project, RCRA process, etc.
- h. Be sure to answer people’s questions to the best of project people’s ability.