



Chairman Mike Simpson

*Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and
Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations*

Budget Hearing on Environmental Management Programs FY 2015 Budget April 8, 2014 Opening Statement As Prepared

I'd like to call this hearing to order. Good morning, everyone.

We have before us today David Huizenga, Senior Advisor for Environmental Management to the Secretary of Energy. We welcome you back to the Subcommittee. Mr. Huizenga, we greatly appreciate the work you've done over the last two years. Leading a program that is fraught with such daunting technical, management and regulatory challenges is no easy task. We look forward to your testimony on these important cleanup activities.

The budget request for the Office of Environmental Management totals \$5.6 billion, a \$209 million, or 3.5%, decrease below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. I don't include in those figures the \$463 million for a federal contribution into the Uranium Enrichment Decontamination and Decommissioning Fund that has served to mask the reductions in the request for the Department's cleanup activities.

The Department is currently facing some very difficult challenges in its cleanup program. What has been proudly referred to in the past as the nation's only operating repository, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, is currently NOT operating. The recent events at WIPP are very serious and, by all accounts, are likely to have a significant impact on conduct of operations there. We hope to hear more from you today on how you are ensuring the safety of the public and our workers, as well as how the events at WIPP will impact cleanup plans there and at other sites. The public's faith and confidence in the Department's ability to protect public health and the environment as it carries out its mission is at stake.

That confidence will be particularly important as the Department enters into negotiations to modify its cleanup agreements. The Department has either already missed, or is poised to miss, cleanup milestones at a number of sites. As a result, the Department is looking to change the terms of its cleanup agreements so that it can move forward with more feasible plans. If those proposals are to be considered credible, the Department must address an embedded culture that has allowed poor project management and weak quality practices to impact progress. We are eager to hear what progress you've made to change the course of this program so that the Department can safely and reliably meet its commitments.

Please ensure that the hearing record, responses to the questions for the record, and any supporting information requested by the Subcommittee are delivered in final form to us no later than four weeks from time you receive them. I also ask that if Members have additional questions they would like to submit to the Subcommittee for the record, that they please do so by 5:00 PM tomorrow.

With those opening comments, I would like to yield to our ranking member, Ms. Kaptur, for any opening comments that she would like to make.

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