

MINUTES

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 30, 2013

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE:

MEMBERS: Chairman Raybould, Vice Chairman Eskridge, Representatives Anderson(1), Hartgen, Vander Woude, DeMordaunt, Nielsen, Thompson, Anderson(31), Anderst, Mendive, Monks, Morse, Trujillo, Smith, Rusche, Woodings

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Reps. DeMordaunt and Vander Woude

GUESTS: Jeff Feeler, Simon Bell, Gerry A. Geis, and Judy L. Mager, US Ecology; Orville Green, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality; Mackensie Herrick, Snake River Alliance; Roxana Eixenberger, Idaho Democratic Party; Bill Jarocki, Arkoosh Eiguren

Chairman Raybould called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Mendive** made a motion to approve the minutes of January 24, 2013. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Jeff Feeler, US Ecology President and Chief Operating Officer, explained US Ecology was a North American Hazardous Waste Company. They own and operate hazardous and radioactive waste treatment and disposal facilities. He said the company has been publicly traded since 1984 using the symbol: ECOL. US Ecology is headquartered in Boise with 450 employees, 100 of those employees work in Idaho. He said they offer services in transporting, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste. Four of their landfill facilities in the U.S. and Canada do not receive radioactive waste; however, the facility in Richland, Washington, is engineered for radioactive waste. He noted that the Army Corp of Engineers is their largest customer. He also noted US Ecology is one of the three companies which have captured 80 percent of the market and the growing market is estimated at \$9 billion.

Terry Geis, General Manager, Idaho US Ecology Facilities, said the company had two rail transfer facilities in Mayfield, Idaho, along Simco Road plus a treatment, storage, and disposal facility in Grand View, Idaho. He explained the facility in Grand View opened in 1973 but US Ecology acquired the site in 2001. There are 60 people employed on the site and historically the company pays over \$2 million per year in tipping fees to the state. They pay state income taxes totally \$1.4 million and they contribute \$23 million annually to Idaho's economy in payroll, taxes, capital spending, supplies, and so forth.

Mr. Geis explained two charts which illustrated the composition and detail of the landfill. He said it was a reliable structure that keeps the hazardous waste securely contained. (A copy of the charts will be in the Committee Secretary's office until the end of the session. Following the end of the session, this will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.)

Mr. Geis, noted the positive working relationship between government agencies administering the environmental regulatory acts and US Ecology. In 2006 the company was given "Star Status" recognition by OSHA. He added that US Ecology had a very strong compliance record with no outstanding compliance concerns.

In response to questions from the committee, **Simon Bell**, US Ecology Vice President of Operations, said the nuclear waste from the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL) is licensed waste and is regulated. He said the Grand View site could accept the INEL non-regulated waste. He said that US Ecology does not compete with the municipal waste commerce. They are, however, very competitive within the hazardous waste arena. He explained that their hazardous waste facility operated on privately owned land.

Responding to a question from the committee regarding the growth factors driving the company, **Jeff Feeler** said growth was volume based and was dependent upon overall industrial activity. He noted the company relied heavily upon event or project-based business with specific startups and termination dates. He added that US Ecology was not immune to economic down turn but with the economy improving and their acquisition of the Canadian and other U.S. hazardous waste facilities, the company was continuing its growth pattern.

Mr. Simon, in response to an additional question regarding treatment of heavy metals, said that when the waste goes to the Idaho facility, the chemists and engineers, with the guidelines from the Environmental Protection Agency, treated the material and then put it in a location protected by clay and natural soil. To answer a question relating to the uniqueness of the particular Grand View site, Mr. Simon said he was unsure if the site is replicated in other areas but the natural clays of the site were especially conducive to building landfill. And, the process of mending the soil was unnecessary.

In answer to questions regarding site monitoring for Cell 16, a new depository under construction, **Mr Geis** said they were building five additional groundwater monitoring wells. Each facility has both up-gradient and down-gradient monitoring. He explained the preparation process for new depositories and said the report then goes to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. In response to an additional question on maintenance of Simco Road, Mr. Geis indicated **S 1313** was able to appropriate money from the tipping fee to the county. Ultimately, the county and US Ecology are still negotiating upkeep and maintenance responsibilities.

Mr Geis responded to a question from the committee regarding the life of the landfill. He said there was probably 60 more years of landfill operation. Regarding the leaching process, he explained that the fluid leachate is collected in a trench, from the trench it is pumped into treatment, and then into a settling pond where it evaporates.

To a question from the committee regarding the Legislature's role in encouraging business expansion in the state, **Mr. Bell** said Idaho agencies had been good working partners. He suggested raising the weight capacity for their trucks to 129,000 pounds would benefit their rail to land transport. In addition, he asked the state to continue the partnership of road maintenance.

In response to the same question, **Mr. Feeler** said they were pleased to be in Idaho and their five-year plan was hopefully to expand; however, he noted the Legislature could be proactive in lowering the corporate income tax which he noted was one of the highest in the nation.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Representative Raybould
Chair

Jean Vance
Secretary