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ECA Offers Recommendations to Accelerate Complex Federal Environmental Cleanups

'The Politics of Cleanup' Identifies Lessons Learned that Can Apply to All Federal Facility Sites

WASHINGTON, DC — Interaction among federal, state, tribal and local parties plays a critical role in accelerating environmental cleanup at federal facility sites (Department of Energy, Department of Defense and other sites). Foremost, members of the communities affected by federal cleanup actions must effectively work with federal and state regulators and cleanup contractors if they hope to meet the public goal of cleaning up sites in a way that will permit the sites to become community assets. This is one of the main observations made in *The Politics of Cleanup*, a new research report published today by Energy Communities Alliance (ECA).

U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Chairman of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, stated: “*The Politics of Cleanup* helps simplify the complicated process of federal environmental cleanups, and shows how valuable strong community involvement can be.”

U.S. Rep. Mark Udall (D-Colo.), a member of the House Armed Services Committee whose congressional district includes the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, said: “Cleaning up the Rocky Flats site in a timely and cost-effective way was more than just a technically complex task. It needed active involvement and strong support from both Congress and state, federal, and local agencies and officials, as well as the residents of nearby communities, in addition to the dedicated efforts of the contractor and the people who did the work. I was proud to be part of the effort and am glad to see that *The Politics of Cleanup* identifies the key challenges we faced. I think this report provides valuable information about

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the lessons learned at Rocky Flats as well as useful recommendations to help address similar challenges in connection with environmental cleanups at other sites.”

The Politics of Cleanup recognizes that the environmental cleanup process at a federal facility site is not simply a technical activity, but also a political process. The report found that within a legally compliant cleanup process, there is a range of permissible future uses. There also are many different cleanup actions that the parties can employ in order to support the agreed-upon future uses. The process for identifying and resolving such issues — and the decisions themselves — constitute “the politics of cleanup.”

ECA Executive Director Seth Kirshenber explained: “We created the report to identify how all parties — federal agencies, Congress, state and federal regulators, local governments, tribal governments, and citizens — can save time and minimize frustrations throughout the cleanup process by understanding the process and what is required of each party to accelerate the environmental cleanup.”

The report identifies 15 key recommendations divided into four categories: (1) Developing goals and identifying the future use of the site; (2) Accomplishing cleanup by focusing on and refining goals throughout the cleanup process; (3) Engaging the community through consultation, coordination and ongoing dialogue; and (4) Resolving conflict to achieve goals.

In the report, ECA examined cleanup projects at three U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) locations: the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site in Colorado, the Mound Site in Ohio and the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee.

James Rispoli, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management (EM), said: “With the publication of this report, Energy Communities Alliance has made an important contribution to EM’s mission of cleaning up the nation’s former nuclear weapons complex. *The Politics of Cleanup* carefully and thoughtfully examines an often overlooked part of the cleanup effort, namely the importance of local communities, states, tribal nations and DOE working together to resolve difficult issues.”

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Oak Ridge Mayor David Bradshaw declared: “This book highlights that by working together, the Oak Ridge community has made great strides in cleanup.”

Kara Colton, Project Manager in the Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Division of the Center for Best Practices at the National Governors Association, called the report: “A great look ‘behind the curtain’ of how the cleanup process really works.”

The report was funded through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management and ECA. *The Politics of Cleanup* was written by ECA and Crescent Strategies, a Boulder, Colo.-based consulting firm.

To obtain a copy of the report, go to <http://www.energyca.org>.

Energy Communities Alliance is the organization of local governments that are adjacent to or impacted by Department of Energy activities. Our board members include elected officials and administrators from local governments impacted by DOE. ECA’s mission is to bring together local government officials to share information, establish policy positions and advocate community interests in order to effectively address an increasingly complex set of constituent, environmental, regulatory and economic development needs.

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