

IN QUEST OF THE FINAL REMEDY: WHAT'S NEXT FOR CLEANUP PROGRAMS?

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I feel that the logic following the above title has been that over the years scientists and engineers have been very process oriented. We have been concentrating on how to do this and how to do that. To my delight, I believe we are at a stage now where we can talk in terms of a results-oriented strategy. We are at a position where we can talk in terms of stability. That is a tough word. That is a chosen word. What does stability mean? Does it mean that there is no further contaminant migration? Does it mean that there is no further human health risk? What does stability mean? Well, I feel it means different things to different people. It may mean that institutional controls will accept risk and allow us to stabilize contaminant migration and discontinue further remediation depending upon the site. So the question then comes under what conditions should we leave things in place. If we are going to leave things in place, what does stewardship mean? Is it a technical issue? Is it a legal issue? Is it a policy issue? These are some of the concerns that are going to be addressed here this morning.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on Dr. Ernie Moniz's opening presentation. To those of us that work in the vadose zone, our little hearts were beating because we heard the words "vadose zone" mentioned over and over and over again. This is kind of a good/bad story. The good is that Ernie will be memorialized forever as the champion of moving the science of vadose zone characterization and monitoring forward. The bad news is that at this stage we finally realize that we do not understand how contamination gets from the land surface to the water table. This may be late in the game but it is better that we realize this fact now rather than later. This lack of understanding has serious stewardship implications.