

A personal comment on the GEP Process from Peter Waggitt

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My involvement with GEP began in March 2007 when I was appointed to represent the International Atomic Agency as an Observer to the Plenary Group and a full Member of GT3. I was very happy to be able to contribute an international perspective to what has been a most interesting experience. The concept of a multidisciplinary group of this type is unique in my experience. In the past although I have worked on many uranium mining related projects where interaction with multidisciplinary stakeholder groups was an integral part of my work. However, the depth of scientific involvement that has been seen in the GEP was an advance on what I had experienced before. Whilst my own contributions may have been small I did feel that I was able to remind the group of the need for taking heed of international good practice from similar situations in other countries and the importance of being aware of International standards in general and the IAEA relevant standards in particular.

Budgetary and time constraints prevented my attending every meeting but over the 3 years I was able to contribute at the more significant meetings. The debates were often intense but there was an overall desire to complete the task on time and in an equitable and realistic manner. As is often the case some parties would not easily move from long established points of view and sometimes one felt that other considerations were behind the positions of some parties. However, the meetings were professional and arguments were settled on scientific grounds in almost all cases.

The problems of the long term maintenance and surveillance of former uranium mining and processing sites is one that has been worked on in a number of countries, including the United States of America, Canada, Germany and Australia. In my opinion none of them has had such a dedicated approach as that demonstrated by the GEP programme. Certainly I feel that nobody has the perfect answer yet but the GEP programme did take account of work in other countries as well as drawing extensively upon the extensive local knowledge of the GEP members when formulating its recommendations.

I think the project has had a hard time getting to its conclusions but the GEP as a whole should be congratulated for their hard work and perseverance. I suspect that some further work in the spirit of the GEP would be a good project to continue.