

November 20, 2020

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To Whom It May Concern:

The Water Authority is in receipt of the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Community Interest Form emailed on Oct. 23, 2020 to community members living near Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB) and wishes to express its concerns regarding the contents of this communication.

Particularly troubling is the fact that the RAB solicitation references the Kirtland AFB Bulk Fuels Facility (BFF) spill cleanup project and states that RAB meetings will "replace all current public meetings related to Kirtland AFB's environmental restoration efforts."

The Water Authority opposes the formation of a RAB with respect to the BFF at this time. We are concerned that such an approach may reduce outreach and transparency on the part of the Air Force and could limit input from stakeholders including the Water Authority. As you are doubtless aware, the BFF project is a priority for the utility because the impact of the fuel spill on the local aquifer and the threat it represents to the municipal water supply.

A RAB has been proposed several times for Kirtland AFB contamination sites, with the most recent survey occurring in 2016. Stakeholders previously recommended against the formation of a RAB, listing numerous concerns such as the reduction in transparency and public engagement. These concerns are still valid. The division of a volunteer board's time and resources among dozens of restoration sites, as implied in the Oct. 23 email, will inevitably result in a significant reduction in other constructive public outreach efforts, communication, and transparency on the BFF site.

In our view, this would represent a further erosion of the public outreach process—an erosion that has been occurring since 2017, at which time the Air

Force greatly reduced its support for the public field trips, technical working groups, and quarterly public meetings that had represented a welcome and unprecedented collaboration among government stakeholders.

This concern was validated during the Oct. 29, 2020 stakeholder meeting, when the Air Force stated that separate public meetings and stakeholder meetings regarding the BFF cleanup project would no longer be supported due to limited resources.

It is critical that the Water Authority, other stakeholders, and our ratepayers have access to timely and transparent information on the Kirtland AFB BFF site. The Water Authority maintains its opposition to the formation of a RAB, and requests that the Air Force work to increase and enhance its existing outreach work within the community.

Sincerely,



Mark Sanchez
Executive Director
Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

Cc:

Honorable Martin Heinrich, United States Senator

Honorable Deb Haaland, United States House of Representatives

Col. David S. Miller, Base Wing Commander

James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department

Jennifer Pruet, Deputy Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department

Commissioner James M. Collie, District 3

Timothy Keller, Mayor of Albuquerque

Councilor Pat Davis, Albuquerque, District 6

Councilor Klarissa J. Pena, Chair, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

Elizabeth Anderson, Chief Planning Officer, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority