V.   EVALUATION OF MECHANISMS AND VEHICLES: Lessons from the Case Histories Concerning Mechanisms and Vehicles for Public Involvement

Numerous initiatives and activities can enhance public involvement in government decision-making. Following on our previous work (Ashford et al., 1991), the present study focused on three types of initiatives, i.e., those that:

a)   Provide for broad-based outreach to, communication with, and education of the community

b)   Build skills and capability in the community

c)   Provide for increased public participation in, and access to, government decisions.

The first two are always instrumental to something else -- in this case, to increasing public involvement in government decisions about environmental contamination. Communication,   i.e., the two-way provision of information, and capacity building are seen as fundamental to meaningful public participation in decision-making. Citizens and communities need information about the contamination -- such as information about extent and level of contamination, routes of exposure, possible health effects, etc -- and about alternatives for cleanup in order to participate effectively and meaningfully in government decisions about remediation and cleanup. Governmental authorities need information from the community -- such as information about populations at risk, location and use of contaminated areas, health problems, community networks and resources, preferences for future use of contaminated sites, and other community concerns and values -- in order to characterize the contamination and risk, as well as to develop and implement effective and acceptable cleanup strategies.

In addition to information, citizens and communities need the knowledge, skills and resources to process and use the information gleaned or provided in order to level the playing field in any public participation exercise. The knowledge and expertise may already exist in the community, in which case it may need to be mobilized or enhanced, or it may be absent, in which case it will need to be created.   Government can play an important role in both. But capacity building goes both ways. Government officials and bureaucrats may also need skill-building programs to enhance their appreciation of and capacity for effective and meaningful public participation.

Although necessary elements, information and skill may be insufficient for effective public participation. Historically disenfranchised and economically disadvantaged communities may have or be able to acquire information and skill, but lack the resources and power to influence government decisions for any number of reasons.

This section examines the extent to which the variety of public involvement mechanisms found in each of the case histories addressed the three categories of initiatives listed above. Clearly, there is some overlap between and among these categories.

Participation in decision-making can be an empowering and skill-building process in and of itself. Capacity building and participation programs may involve dialogue, i.e., communication. It is useful, however, to examine community involvement mechanisms in terms of these different categories of activities, because it may help illuminate different factors that impact the success or failure of public participation initiatives. The section goes on to generalize and discuss some of the findings identified in each of the case histories.

A.   **Providing for Broad-Based Outreach to, Communication with, and Education of the Community**

In most of the communities studied, communication was an integral part of the community involvement process. Indeed, in no community did we encounter significant complaint about a lack of information at the time of our study.[1] Government agencies used a variety of mechanisms and methods to provide information to members of the public about health studies and about workplans, priorities, timelines, and strategies for cleanup and remediation. Some methods focused solely on the one-way provision of information from the government to the community or, in the case of community surveys and interviews, information was solicited from the community by the government. But in all cases, concurrent mechanisms and methods were put into place to foster two-way communication, i.e., to give the public an opportunity to ask questions, raise issues, discuss preferences, and generally interact with each other and with the involved governmental agencies. Table 5-1 provides examples of the types of methods/activities employed by the agencies and/or by their formally established public participation mechanisms for broad-based outreach, communication, and education in the communities studied.

Table 5-1 and the case histories themselves illustrate the continued popularity of public meetings as an important method for communicating with the larger public. Both the agencies and the more formally structured public participation mechanisms they created or encouraged used public and/or open meetings as a way to provide information to the general public about their activities and to solicit feedback, comments, views, and perspectives from local residents. For example, the Lead Steering Committee Bartlesville linked its meetings to broader public meetings in order to inform the community about the agencies' health and environmental studies. The Bartlesville Select Oversight Committee took an additional step; it moved its meetings from City Hall to the West Side, the site of the contamination. In South Valley, the Design Review Committee linked its public participation activities to regularly scheduled meetings of community organizations. The public Summits in Rocky Flats and South

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[1] This was clearly not the case in the past. Many of our study communities had a long history of a lack of information about the contamination in their midst. See especially, Rocky Flats and St. Louis.

Valley/Albuquerque were ground breaking efforts to involve and create partnerships with the broader public.

This is not to suggest that all public meetings were problem-free mechanisms for promoting agency/ community dialogue. Indeed, in some cases, community members complained that the agencies just talked at them (St. Louis); that the agency presentations were too technical (Bartlesville Lead Steering Committee); or that the time allocated for public comment or dialogue was insufficient (St. Louis). Indeed, members of the public voiced the common litany of well-known problems associated with this mechanism. These include problems of: logistical accessibility (time of day, location and frequency of meetings); substantive accessibility (e.g., excessively technical presentations/information); and cultural/interpersonal accessibility (e.g., lack of confidence in public speaking; dominance by the more outspoken members of the community; dislike of conflict), as well as socioeconomic barriers (more immediate or pressing concerns, obligations, etc.). However, the agencies used public meetings in all seven of our study sites, as did many of the formally-structured stakeholder involvement mechanisms in these communities. It appears that public meetings still play an important role in public participation processes.

The production and dissemination of printed information is also routinely used by agencies and the public participation mechanisms they create to provide information to the broader public. This information was mailed by mailed to residents directly or made available to them at public meetings, through existing community organization, or through information repositories, like local libraries. Educational and technical workshops -- in some cases for local school children (Saltville) -- are popular with both the agencies and the communities. In some communities, workshops were designed primarily to "educate," -- that is, to provide information (hazards of eating fish from the local river in Saltville). In other cases, workshops were designed primarily for capacity-building (see below).

The cases provided some specific lessons about agency communication, outreach, and education efforts targeted at the general public in contaminated communities. For example,

!	By prioritizing communication with the affected community, an agency can help build trust or rebuild the credibility of other involved agencies. ATSDR did this quite successfully in Bartlesville.

!	Community members (e.g., the environmental activists in Saltville) can commend an agency's communication efforts, but mistrust the message being communicated. This is testament to what can happen when the community is not given what it considers a meaningful role/voice in agency activities or decisions. In Saltville, members of the Mountain Empire Environmental Team (MEET) wanted real input into decisions about study design and the contractual

terms under which the health studies would be conducted. Absent this, they were not inclined to trust the study results, which they agreed were communicated to them quite admirably.

! Limiting communication and outreach to those groups or organizations that seem the most interested, receptive, and cooperative can create problems in the community and for the agency. In Chattanooga, for example, ATSDR focused its activities and worked most closely with a grassroots group, Stop Toxic Pollution (STOP). Community residents did not identify this group and suspected that the agency choose to work with STOP because it was predictable and safe. This hampered communication and participation efforts.

! Public meetings are not simply avenues of communication between the public and the agency. They are also important forums for the equally necessary and important process of intra-community communication. The citizens of St. Louis used these meeting extensively as opportunities to learn from each other about the site, health risks, and options for cleanup.

! Tight agency control of public meetings can anger community members who see and use meetings as venues for intra-community communication. See the St. Louis case history.

! To maintain community involvement and prevent citizen burn-out over time, it is important to develop methods that ease the burden of public participation.   A variety of means were implemented in our study communities, e.g., holding meetings in the affected community (e.g., the Bartlesville Select Oversight Committee); linking public meetings to regularly scheduled meetings of community organizations (e.g., the Design Review Committee in South Valley). In addition to timing and location, attention to agenda topics and format are also important.

Table 5-1. Examples of Methods Used by Agencies and by Formal Public Participation Mechanisms for Broad-based Community Outreach [2]

Methods/Activities Λ = primarily 1-way communication M = 2-way communication	Community	Used by	
		Govt agency	PP Mechanism
M Public meetings, round table discussions, "availability" sessions	Bartlesville Saltville Chattanooga Albuquerque Sandia Rocky Flats St. Louis	T T T T T T	T T T T T
Λ Community surveys/ interviews	Bartlesville Chattanooga Albuquerque Rocky Flats St. Louis	 T T T	T T
Λ Information center	Bartlesville St. Louis	* T	
M Poster sessions	Saltville	T	
Λ Mailings; printed information, e.g., fact sheets, reports, newsletters	Bartlesville Saltville Chattanooga Albuquerque Sandia Rocky Flats St. Louis	T T T T T T	 T T T T T
Λ Educational Workshops	Saltville Chattanooga Albuquerque Rocky Flats	T T T T	 T
Λ Planned use of the media	Bartlesville Sandia Rocky Flats	T T	 **
Λ Speakers Bureau	Sandia Rocky Flats		** T
Λ Web Site	Sandia Rocky Flats		** T

* Established by the cleanup contractor
** Planned or under discussion

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[2] This table is not a compendium of mechanisms/methods found in each of community sites. Rather, it provides examples of the types of communication mechanisms/methods commonly used and a sense of their relative frequency.

B.   Building Skills and Capability in the Community

As discussed above, initiatives designed to promote communication and education, as well as those designed specifically to increase participation (as discussed below) also build capacity. Table 5-2 presents those mechanisms found in our cases that focus first and foremost on capacity building.

In Bartlesville, the state environmental agency provided a technical assistance grant (TAG) to a coalition of the previously warring factions within the community (the Bartlesville Coalition). The Coalition used the TAG funding to hire technical advisors to help them understand the proposed cleanup plan and related technical issues and to help them educate the broader public about this plan. The state agency was thereby able to address two important community problems -- the need to build capacity and the need to foster intra-community communication and conflict resolution. Later, the Coalition was instrumental to broadening the cleanup process to pursue the wider goals of the affected community.

In Chattanooga, the first capacity building initiative was funded by private foundations. Only later was the community a recipient of an environmental justice (EJ) grant. Formed by trusted people outside the affected community, the Chattanooga Creek Community Involvement Project (CIP) helped provide equity, tools, and opportunities to minority, low-income people of the impacted community so that they might effectively participate in public processes and decision- making. More than a year after the formation of CIP, a Community-University Partnership (CUP) Grant, funded by EPA's Office of Environmental Justice was an important vehicle for building capacity in South Chattanooga. This grant enabled the Tennessee Technical University to work with the South Chattanooga community to help local residents understand the scientific and technical aspects of the cleanup and to participate in the related decision-making processes. Eventually, the grant was restructured to channel more funds to the community directly through (1) the creation of job training programs, (2) the provision of supplies and equipment, and (3) the creation of a community-based and controlled community newsletter. This grant also built local capacity, awareness, and networks for collaboration in the community around the contamination. The CUP helped the community develop a capacity for and interest in participating in decision-making, as well as a sense of community cohesion. It also provided a sense of empowerment, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency in the community, which began to develop an ability to design and implement projects without outside assistance. The discussion by some residents about the need to establish a representative community board to work with EPA and other groups on an ongoing basis is further testament to the success of this capacity building initiative.

Table 5-2. Skill and Capacity Building Mechanisms at the Sites

Community	Government Grants to the Community to Build Intellectual Capacity	Government Grants to Local Institutions to Build Intellectual Capacity	Government Grants to Build Infrastructure (supplies & equipment, newsletters; conditions to encourage new industries)	Technology and/or Information Transfer to Local Agencies, Contractors, or Minority Businesses Directly Related to Cleanup	Community-Created Self-help Groups or Privately-funded Efforts
Bartlesville	State TAG to the Bartlesville Coalition				
Chattanooga	EPA/EJ Community-University Partnership Grant		EPA/EJ Community-University Partnership Grant		Chattanooga Creek Community Involvement Project
South Valley, Albuquerque	EPA TAG to San Jose Community Awareness Council			EPA Technical Assistance to Minority Businesses	
Sandia, Albuquerque		DOE-funded SW Center for Environmental Excellence and Opportunity		DOE & county-funded SW Center and Bernallilo Health Department Technology Transfer Program	
Rocky Flats	EPA TAG to Rocky Flats Cleanup Commission; State funding of Citizens' Environmental Sampling Committee		Local funding of Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative (RFLII)		
St. Louis	DOE-funded Panel of Experts to assist the Task Force				

In the South Valley, Albuquerque, the EPA awarded a TAG to the San Jose Community Awareness Council in early 1990. The TAG improved the ability of this important community group to participate in the Design Review Committee and other participation processes in a meaningful way. The Design Review Committee was a mechanism set up by EPA to involve the relevant parties in cleanup strategies at the site. As with other TAGs, the group used some of the grant funds to hire its own technical advisor, who routinely attended meetings of the Design Review Committee along with members of the Awareness Council. The TAG helped the community group participate in the process as an equal partner. This may be one factor that accounts for the relative success of the participation mechanisms described in the next section below. In addition, technical assistance was given to minority-owned businesses to facilitate their becoming involved in cleanup work.

At the Sandia site in Albuquerque, Sandia and DOE devoted significant resources to building the capacity of local institutions and to foster capacity- building partnerships between DOE/Sandia and the local community. With DOE funds, the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (TVI) established the Southwest Center for Environmental Excellence and Opportunity to increase the number of Hispanics in environmentally-related careers; to strengthen the infrastructure and capacity of Hispanic businesses to participate in clean-up activities; and to increase the understanding and participation of the local Hispanic public in DOE environmental management programs. In addition, the Bernallilo County Health Department Technology Transfer Program, funded DOE and the county and administered by Sandia, was established to build the capacity of local institutions to maintain the quality of their groundwater by transferring innovative technologies known to the DOE and other federal agencies for the identification and cleanup of subsurface groundwater contamination. The program allowed the County Health Department to identify cost-effective technologies and then work with local companies that might purchase the necessary equipment and be hired as contractors by the local authorities. A second focus of the partnership was to disseminate information to other local health agencies facing similar issues, thus building the capacity of local institutions as well.

At Rocky Flats, a TAG was awarded to the Rocky Flats Cleanup Commission (RFCC), a broad coalition of grassroots environmental and peace groups that had been active in monitoring the activities at the plant and highly critical of DOE and other regulatory agencies. Local and municipal governments contributed to capacity building through some of the programs implemented by the Rocky Flats Impact Initiative (RFLII), a public involvement mechanism established through a formal intergovernmental agreement. The RFLII focused on jobs for displaced nuclear production workers and helped create the infrastructure to encourage fast-growing industries to locate in the area. These programs helped build local capacity through technology transfer, training, support of research and development, and assistance to workers and companies. A unique effort to increase citizens' familiarity with scientific and technical aspects of site investigation

was accomplished by the State Department of Public Health through the establishment of the Citizens' Environmental Sampling Committee.

In St. Louis, the DOE sought to enhance the technical capacity of its only formally structured public involvement mechanism, the St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force, by providing funds for the Task Force to establish and obtain technical assistance from an independent and balanced panel of geological and hydrogeological experts. The Task Force used the Panel to obtain a better understanding of the technical issues to make more effective decisions.

Lessons collectively learned from the cases were:

!   Capacity-building and participation mechanisms can be designed to address simultaneously the environmental (scientific and technical), economic, and social issues in an affected community (see, for example, what occurred in Chattanooga and South Valley).

!   Involving citizens in actual technical work, as did the Citizens' Sampling Committee in Rocky Flats, can both empower and give them a special understanding of the complexities of the scientific issues involved in cleanup and related issues.

!   As in Bartlesville and Chattanooga, residents of economically disadvantaged communities may prefer that environmentally-related grants address larger community issues and concerns. Instead of funding environmental awareness and education programs, they may prefer to use agency funding and resources for capacity building, job training, and economic development.

!   The issue of economic development in impacted communities can be addressed through technical assistance, both in the form of TAGs to communities (as in Bartlesville and South Valley), and though publicizing opportunities for technical assistance (TA). The Superfund Summit in South Valley included a Community Economic Partnership Seminar that provided information specifically for minority-owned businesses on such topics as bonding requirements, bid packages, and obtaining loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA).

!   A sustained capacity-building initiative coupled with public participation initiatives can help a community once described as "fragmented" and without identifiable leaders develop the cohesion, spirit, and ability to translate its concerns and ideas into action. See, for example, the Bartlesville Coalition.

!   The agencies can help reduce intra-community conflict by catalyzing a coming together of opposing interests. In Bartlesville, the promise of a TAG caused opposing factions (CAT, BEIC, and WAR) to work together and develop a shared vision for cleanup.

!   Mechanisms that function over a long-enough time can provide opportunities for discussion that can lead to personal relationships and a new-found understanding of different points of view. See, for example, the Bartlesville Coalition, the CUP in Chattanooga, and the FSUWG in Rocky Flats.

!   Partnerships with respected community organizations can be the key to successful capacity-building efforts. In Chattanooga, for example, the CUP worked with existing community, neighborhood, and residents'organizations. In South Valley, the Design Review Committee worked closely with the San Jose Community Awareness Council. In Albuquerque, Sandia and DOE funded a successful partnership with the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute, an organization well-known to and highly respected by the communities in Albuquerque.

C.   Provide for Increased Public Participation in, and Access to, Government Decisions

The cases in this study were chosen because the public participation activities in these contaminated sites were considered relatively successful by both the involved agencies and the communities. As noted in earlier sections, agencies (and communities) establish or facilitate the creation of more structured approaches to public participation in contaminated communities to accomplish several goals. In broad terms, public participation mechanisms can be used to:

> ! To exchange information;
> ! To influence agency decision-making by providing advice or recommendations
> ! To provide a forum for community dialogue, decision-making, consensus-building;
> ! To build support for community support for decisions;
> ! To empower disenfranchised populations affected by the contamination

Clearly, there is overlap among these goals of public participation, and the mechanisms used to achieve them can vary widely. As noted above, in our study communities, public meetings were the preferred vehicle for reaching and involving the broader public. Additional mechanisms are generally put into place to deal with specific issues or to operate over time.

At the study sites, many, and in some cases most, individuals interviewed were pleased with the more structured opportunities for community and stakeholder involvement in their communities. In some cases, the agencies established these opportunities up front; in other cases, the communities created or re-fashioned the opportunities themselves. At the same time, the cases reveal a variety of problems with the participation efforts. They were not fully satisfactory to the communities. Different

stakeholders -- affected citizens, activists, other members of the community, local and state officials, local business, and parties potentially responsible for the contamination (PRPs) -- had a variety of complaints and criticisms about agency performance. Many offered valuable suggestions for improving the participatory process.   Few, however, considered the public participation processes in their communities to be abject failures. They were often at least somewhat satisfied with the process and with the influence they had or were having on agency activities and decisions in their communities.

Using criteria constructed for this report, our analysis suggests that, taken together, the public participation mechanisms used in these communities can indeed be considered relatively successful. Before examining what may account for this success [see Section VII], it is useful to identify the types of structured mechanisms found in these communities, as well as the some of the generic lessons gleaned from their experience.

Although called by different names, the range of structured public participation mechanisms found in the study communities was rather limited. These mechanisms can be grouped into two broad categories: 1) those that provided for sustained and ongoing participation, such as committees and task forces -- most often structured as stakeholder involvement; and 2) those that were intensive, one-time or short duration events, such as those called "summits" in three of our study communities (South Valley, Rocky Flats, and St. Louis). Some mechanisms established to build capacity or to enhance interagency cooperation also may provide opportunities for participation, and these mechanisms are discussed separately in the previous subsection and the section that which follows. The use of public hearings to communicate with and involve the larger public in agency activities and decisions has also been discussed previously in subsection A. Here we examine the more formally structured public participation mechanisms found in the study communities.

1. Mechanisms for Sustained and Ongoing Public Participation

Each community in this study had mechanisms in place to provide for sustained public participation over time (Table 5-3). These committees and task forces were established by different levels of government or by the communities themselves. In some cases, the membership of the group was determined by the initiating agency; in other cases, the agency vested this responsibility in the community. In most cases, members came from various stakeholder groups, often including the governmental agencies themselves. In only one case -- the Citizens' Sampling Committee in Rocky Flats -- were members of the committee drawn exclusively from the affected, exposed community (for the limited purpose of sampling), although the CUP program in Chattanooga involved organizations based in the affected community and a local university.

Most of these mechanisms focused on more than one issue. While all of them dealt with issues relating to contamination and/or cleanup, many were active in the closely

related issues of future site use, economic development, and jobs. Only one (the Health Advisory Panel in Rocky Flats) focused primarily on health effects. These mechanisms dealt with both technical and non-technical issues. For example, the technical experts on the Design Review Committee in Albuquerque's South Valley helped develop comprehensive site maps of the contamination; the Site Remediation Task Force in St. Louis evaluated alternative treatment technologies and developed consensus on the preferred technical approach to remediation; and the CABs in Rocky Flats and Sandia routinely addressed a variety of technical issues. Non-technical issues included general concern about the community's safety, health, and economic condition, as well as its priorities and preferences for cleanup and future site use. In some cases, these mechanisms created smaller working groups to deal with specific issues. At times, these small groups were open to non-members -- creating additional avenues for involving the larger public. These included, for example, subcommittees of the Health Advisory Panel in Rocky Flats; working committees of the Rocky Flats CAB, and working groups of the St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force.

Most of these committees and task forces were established for the purpose of influencing agency decisions by making specific recommendations, providing advice, and/or commenting on agency plans and activities. In some cases, a primary purpose of the group was to develop consensus on specific issues. For example, the Bartlesville Coalition had to reach consensus on deferring cleanup responsibility to the state; the Future Site Use Working Group (FSUWG) in Rocky Flats achieved consensus on phases for agency cleanup activities, cleanup levels, and future site use; the Site Remediation Task Force in St. Louis developed consensus on remediation options, priorities, and preferred disposal sites. In some cases, the mechanisms not only influenced, but actually became the entity responsible for making the decision. For example: the Citizens' Sampling Committee did not trust previously done agency sampling and decided to sample additional sites. They also decided how to analyze their own data. The Rocky Flats Local Impact Initiative (RFLII) decided on a community-based strategy to facilitate re-employment of its displaced nuclear production workers. Through the Community-University Partnership (CUP) in Chattanooga and the Sandia-supported Southwest Center for Environmental Excellence and Opportunity in Albuquerque, community organizations were able to create or help design job training and skill-building programs for members of their communities.

The mechanisms enjoyed different degrees of autonomy. In some cases, both participating members and non-participating community residents believed the mechanism was either controlled by or too closely identified with the initiating agency or with a particular stakeholder group (e.g., Sandia CAB, Rocky Flats CAB). In other cases, participating stakeholders were satisfied with their degree of autonomy, but members of the community questioned their independence (e.g., the Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative and the Bartlesville Lead Steering Committee). This affected community perceptions of and trust in the mechanism.

Each mechanism also varied in its assessment of how accountable the agencies were or would be to its recommendations and the extent to which it would be able to influence agency decision-making. In many cases, the impressions of agency accountability and the mechanisms' degree of influence were mixed, (e.g., Sandia and Rocky Flats CABS and the St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force).   As discussed both earlier and later in this report, the extent to which the community finds the agencies accountable and responsive depends upon the explicit or perceived purposes of the public participation mechanism. Communities that expect to engage in shared decision-making will expect a high degree of agency response to their recommendations (see, for example, FSUWG in Rocky Flats and the St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force). If, however, the agencies consider the primary purpose of the public participation mechanism to be providing information and an opportunity for dialogue, they may feel that they have been as accountable and responsive as they ever intended to be. These differing purposes of and expectations for public participation within and between the community and the agency may explain the common finding of mixed accounts of agency accountability and responsiveness and of community influence on agency decision-making.

The case histories also provide examples of the extremes of accountability and influence.   The EPA was unwilling to defer cleanup responsibilities to the state of Oklahoma without the concurrence of the affected community in Bartlesville. In St. Louis, the DOE initially released recommendations to consolidate and store radioactive waste in the community, despite well-known and broad-based community preferences for a different option.   Later, a high ranking official promised that his agency would not force any decision about permanent waste storage on the community, essentially implying that the community would have veto power over agency decision-making in this area. In Rocky Flats, the Future Site Use Working Group (FSUWG) worked intensely and independently to develop consensus on recommendations that would balance environmental and health concerns with business and development interests. Initially, the agencies did not respond to these recommendations, but jointly developed a cleanup agreement perceived as Αflying in the face Α of the group's work.

2. Mechanisms Designed for Intense, One-time or Short-Duration Participation

Unlike those mechanisms with defined (even if changing) memberships that function over time, some public participation mechanisms are designed to provide intense, short-term opportunities for a more undifferentiated target audience. If seldom held, public meetings fall into this category. In two of our study communities, however, we found a different and additional type of short-term, broadly-based public participation mechanism -- the summit (Table 5-4). In Albuquerque, a collaborative partnership of community organizations, government, and industry to address contamination in the South Valley resulted in a three-day Environmental Justice and Superfund Summit, considered highly successful by all involved. Numerous groups, often with a history of contention, worked together to plan and implement the Summit. These disparate groups had compelling reasons to cooperate, and the collaborative planning process

was considered a breakthrough in the community. The Summit linked and addressed the issues of environmental restoration and economic development in an atmosphere characterized by mutual respect, a commitment to improved communication, an acknowledgment of the usefulness and validity of different kinds of knowledge (scientific, technical, experiential, political, etc.), and a sincere desire to improve networks and collaborative strategies among the involved groups. This Summit provides a fine example of how stakeholders with different interests and concerns can work together for the greater public good.

Two Summits were held in Rocky Flats. The idea for Summit I emerged when a number of stakeholders suggested the need for a "big picture" conversation between the community and agency decision makers. The first day of Summit I, a two-day event, was far less harmonious than the Summit in Albuquerque, primarily because community members were not adequately involved in the planning process. However, participants were able refashion the agenda and define the set of issues to be addressed during the Summit. Agency responsiveness to the outputs of the Summit (i.e., a community consensus on eight priorities for cleanup) was demonstrated in a "Summit Report Back" event held two months later. At this event, the manager of Rocky Flats reported that the DOE and the regulators had agreed to shift funds to deal with one of the top priorities identified by Summit participants. Summit I participants tentatively scheduled a second Summit to be held in the following year.

Summit II was held in the context of considerable community dissatisfaction with the agencies' draft "Vision" for the site and the contractor's cleanup plan. Learning from the mistakes of Summit I, the agencies gave the community considerable control over the purpose, focus, and design of Summit II. Like the first Summit, it provided an exceptionally effective forum for developing broad-based community consensus on issues relating to the cleanup of Rocky Flats. Participants and groups with different backgrounds and interests were able to identify common values and goals in a climate of mutual respect, and develop a high degree of consensus on a community vision for Rocky Flats. Vocal community members omitted from the ongoing participation mechanisms were present and participated in a major way at the summit.   Again, the agencies held a follow-up meeting to respond to the outputs of the Summit and produced a written document that detailed the agencies'responses to the community's recommendations.

In both Albuquerque and Rocky Flats, there was a high level of community satisfaction with both the process and outcomes of the summit activity. Critical to their success were:

> ! Significant community control over the planning and implementation of the event;
> ! A climate of mutual respect for different views; and
> ! Rapid agency follow-up and response to the outcomes of the events.

In St. Louis, the summit was convened by DOE in the wake of public outrage over the agency's decision to locate a bunker at the SLAPS site for permanent storage of the waste. To enhance its credibility, a high ranking DOE official attended the summit which was designed to bring all parties together to discuss practical, long-term solutions that would be cost-efficient, expedient, and supported by the public. This official's acknowledgment of the public's opposition to the DOE plan and his promise that the agency would not force its proposal on an unwilling public helped redefine the DOE's relationship with the public. This official promised that the agency would work with the public to develop a solution and he revealed a $15 mil package to undertake interim remedial actions. His willingness to "listen" (defined by the community as heeding as well as hearing its preferences) restablished the trustworthiness of the agency, which will be dashed again if the DOE does not follow through on abiding by the community's preferences. The promises made or perceived as being made at the Summit has created community expectations that the DOE will remove the waste from the area.

Collectively, the cases suggest some specific lessons for enhancing public participation in, and access to, government decisions. These include the following:

!   Agency accountability to its public participation processes is essential. The credibility of the process is undermined when agencies do not respond to the public's input, suggestions, or recommendations. Participants deserve to know if and how the agencies plan to incorporate their input into decisions. Participants need an opportunity to: (1) hear why their position or recommendation has been rejected; (2) clarify or re-argue their positions; and (3) debate and challenge the agency's decision.

!   Agencies can demonstrate their commitment to public participation by involving personnel who can make or significantly influence agency decision-making. It is a mistake to limit attendance and participation to agency community involvement or public relations staff. Community members (as in Saltville and St. Louis) and participants in stakeholder processes (e.g., the Sandia CAB) want access to agency decision-makers.

!   Staff turnover in public participation mechanisms can contribute to a perception that the agency is inconsistent and incompetent. What the public perceives as inconsistent or conflicting information can also contribute to a sense of agency incompetence and untrustworthiness. In St. Louis, citizens who participated in public meetings often voiced this complaint.

!   As with the Lead Steering Committee and Select Oversight Committees in Bartlesville, inequalities in a community can be easily reproduced in structured community/stakeholder involvement mechanisms. Care must be taken to ensure

that membership in such groups does not simply reflect the existing power dynamics in the community.

! The CABs in our cases suggest that a focus on technical issues can lead to professionalization of the participatory mechanism. The representativeness of the process in undermined if effective participation requires a high level of technical literacy.

! Closely related to this is the issue of elitism in stakeholder processes. This may be the result of structural considerations in how the mechanism is set up, e.g., in Rocky Flats, interested persons had to go through a formal application process. Or, as above, it could be a consequence of the types of issues brought to the group.

! The relative merits of self-selection versus government-driven selection of membership in public participation mechanisms must be examined. Neither may produce the desired representativeness. This can occur when only the more vocal and activist community members choose to attend/participate in community involvement activities, e.g., as with many public hearings. But it also can happen when government intentionally or unintentionally excludes certain groups from the selection process. For example, in forming its Select Oversight Committee, the Bartlesville City Council intentionally did not appoint members from two established (and warring) community groups -- BEIC and CAT.

! It is difficult to ascertain who represents the interests of the silent majority in public participation processes. Community members may not identify with involved activist groups (e.g., STOP in Chattanooga and MEET in Saltville). Participants in stakeholder processes selected to represent "the community" may feel unable or unwilling to do so (e.g., Sandia and Rocky Flats CABs). Although government representatives ostensibly represent "the people," citizens, especially those from the more disenfranchised pockets of the community) may not trust them to act in their interest (see, for example, Bartlesville). For additional discussion, see section VII.

! There is tension between using too large or too small a participative mechanism. If too small, the participants may not represent the broader interest of the community. If too large, consensus-building and/or conflict resolution may be difficult to achieve (see, for example, the Design Review Committee in South Valley).

! Limited participation in formal mechanisms (like public meetings, advisory committees, etc) does not necessarily mean that the public is not interested or have concerns. The mechanisms must find ways to go to the community rather

than expect the community to come to them, e.g., by holding their meetings in conjunction with regularly-scheduled community activities.

!   Mechanisms that function over time help build the personal relationships and mutual understanding needed to develop community consensus on difficult and contentious issues. The FSUWG in Rocky Flats and the Bartlesville Coalition are fine examples of how this can work. If well-designed, intensive, short-term community involvement mechanisms can do the same. This is amply illustrated by the Superfund Summit in Albuquerque and Summit II in Rocky Flats.

!   It is not just working together, but working together on an equal basis that helps build trust and mutual respect. In South Valley, the participation of the community-based San Jose Awareness Council in the Design Review Committee was valued and respected by members from government and industry. Members of the Bartlesville Coalition helped ensure equality and trust by a establishing a voting structure that gave the two groups from the affected community (CAT and WAR) two votes to BEIC's one. (BEIC largely represented the business interests of the wider community.) These groups also suggest that maintaining effective relationships requires an ongoing effort and a need to revisit previously made commitments.

Before addressing the broader issue of what accounts for successful public involvement in contaminated communities, the next section examines issues of interagency coordination raised in the study sites.

Table 5-3. Structured, Ongoing Public Participation Mechanisms in the Study Communities

Community	Initiated By	Members Selected By	Composition	Purpose	Key Issues
Bartlesville Lead Steering Committee Select Oversight Comm Bartlesville Coalition	State agency Local gov't Community	State agency Local gov't Community	Individuals and media Individuals Representatives from 3 community groups	Information, advice Advice Advice, decision	Cleanup, health Cleanup, econ devel Cleanup, economic development
Saltville Saltville Team	Federal agency	Agencies	Fed/state agencies	Information, decision	Cleanup, health
Chattanooga Chatt. Creek Task Force Comm/Univ Partnership	Local gov't University	Agencies Community	State/local agencies University/community organizations	Information Advice, decision	Contamination Cleanup, jobs
Albuquerque- So.Valley Design Review Com	Federal agency	Community	Multi-stakeholder	Information, advice	Cleanup
Albuquerque - Sandia Citizens Advisory Board	Federal agency	Community Steering Committee	Multi-stakeholder	Advice, information	Cleanup, Other Sandia activities
Rocky Flats Health Advisory Panel Citizens' Sampling Com RFLII FSUWG Citizens Advisory Board	State agency State agency Local gov't Community Fed/state agency	State agency Community Community Community Agencies/comm.	Independent scientists Community residents Multi-stakeholder Multi-stakeholder Multi-stakeholder	Advice, oversight Advice, decision Advice, decision Advice, decision Advice, information	Health, exposure Cleanup Cleanup, future use Future site use Cleanup, Other
St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force	Federal agency	Federal agency	Multi-stakeholder	Advice, decision	Cleanup, future use

Table 5-4. Other Public Participation Mechanisms in the Study Communities

Community	Initiated/Sponsored By	Funded By	Purpose	Issues Addressed
Albuquerque - So.Valley Summit	Community, government, industry	EPA	Build partnerships	Cleanup, economic development
Rocky Flats Summit I	Federal/state agencies, PP mechanisms, community groups	DOE	Dialogue, priority setting, consensus building, advice	Cleanup
Summit II	Federal/state agencies, PP mechanisms, community groups	DOE	Dialogue, consensus building, advice	Cleanup, economic issues
St. Louis Summit	DOE	DOE	Dialogue, conflict resolution	Long-term solutions for cleanup