

## ***LRA brainstorms viable options for depot Land use group talks through 25 plans***

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Three hours of brainstorming by the local Land Reuse Authority produced a wide-range of ideas for the Umatilla Chemical Weapons Depot after it is closed. The LRA met Thursday at Tamastlikt Cultural Institute in Mission. The LRA has the task of planning for the future use of the depot, which was slated for closure - possibly as soon as early 2011.

Dana Mission Support Team's executive director Brian Cole prodded the group into combing through 25 areas of possible development. It is part of his "building communities process" to prioritize reuse strategies.

"This process will put virtually everything on the table," Cole said when he started his discussion. "I've been at it now since early July. Members of the LRA have been at it for over 20 years. In that time - three months for me and 22 years for Bill (Hansell) - undoubtedly you've heard dozens if not hundreds of reuse ideas. ... Every time I hear one I think is it likely to be captured in this process? The answer is "yes" every single time."

Cole planned to hammer through the 25 strategies in an hour. Instead it took three hours to cover them all.

Some ideas were sloughed off quickly - such "value-added fisheries" - while environmental restoration, value-added agriculture and infrastructure development - inspired long discussions. Environmental restoration included ensuring groundwater recharge, possible parks and recreation opportunities or a wildlife preserve.

"Value-added agriculture" spawned talk of processing and packaging of foods close to their sources here in Eastern Oregon.

Don Horneck, extension agronomist with the Oregon State University research station in Hermiston, suggested storing wine in the igloos formerly used for weapons storage at the depot.

Carla McLane, Morrow County planning director, suggested opportunities with biomass - planting poplar trees and then processing them.

That discussion led into infrastructure demands.

McLane spoke of a real need for Morrow County to have road access to the depot

grounds, perhaps at Patterson Ferry Road, which leads to Interstate 84 and the Columbia River.

LRA members also wanted to know the costs of connecting the depot's rail lines to main lines in the region and talked about using the old airstrip, although the one on the depot has deteriorated after it was decommissioned. The group also said it wanted to take advantage of any usable buildings on depot grounds.

Port of Morrow Director Gary Neal warned the group not to duplicate efforts with economic development already under way.

"As we look at this, I think you've got to look at it as windows of pockets of opportunity that are unique to the site," Neal said. "And you can't just say let's build another industrial park out here when we've got another one near the place."

At its November meeting, the LRA will finish the second step of Cole's process. Members will go through a list of 85 "key success factors" like available workforce, financial resources and infrastructure and rate each. In the end Cole will tabulate them and those most feasible will come out with the highest numbers.

"Clearly what we're talking about is 'What's your vision? What do you want for this?'" Cole said. "... It basically will formulate and prioritize those 25 and give us specific examples of what those 25 are ... This whole process generates a strategic plan."