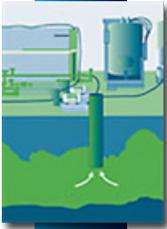




# DOE Embraces ITRC's Approach to Remediation Process Optimization



ITRC guidance and training on remediation process optimization (RPO) have found a receptive audience—the U.S. Department of Energy. DOE has embraced the benefits of RPO, which is the systematic evaluation of existing remediation systems to improve effectiveness and efficiency, while reducing risks and costs. Beth Moore, a hydrogeologist in DOE's Office of Environmental Management (EM) Office of Groundwater and Soil Remediation and an ITRC RPO Team member, reports that upper-level EM managers at headquarters are strongly urging DOE contractors to take advantage of the online training that ITRC's RPO Team offers. All sites are scheduled to take the training, and some sites are receiving hands-on instruction to implement the RPO methodology.

In January 2006, ITRC offered its basic online RPO training class—“What Is Remediation Process Optimization and How Can It Help Me Identify Opportunities for Enhanced and More Efficient Site Remediation?” Realizing the value of the course, DOE requested that it be offered again to target participation by DOE contractors, and in July, ITRC offered the class again. DOE participants have also taken and benefited from the RPO Team's follow-on class, “Remediation Process Optimization—Advanced Training,” which was offered in April and September.

Beth Moore says that DOE is gung-ho on contractors receiving RPO training as a way to bring them onboard as collaborators in conducting RPO evaluations. “When DOE has independent RPO experts visit a site to assess how a remediation system can be improved, our contractors can feel threatened. They may worry about losing their jobs because they're being paid to operate these systems.” Beth says that the ITRC training classes help DOE contractors understand the purpose of RPO and the contractors' role in finding ways to improve system performance, capture cost savings, and reduce risks. In examining ways to improve and streamline remediation operations, contractors contribute their practical understanding of how a system works. Their experience, combined with the input from knowledgeable third parties, will improve remediation and lower the costs of cleanups across the complex. Beth says, “Our contractors have come to realize that RPO is a positive process.”

In August 2006, an RPO team of experts headed by Beth Moore visited DOE's Hanford site in Washington state to evaluate a pump-and-treat system and a soil vapor extraction system. The team evaluated the performance of the existing system, including the wells and treatment components, and assessed the site exit strategy and direction on a final site remedy. The resulting RPO report, containing recommendations for optimizing Hanford's groundwater treatment systems and lowering costs, is currently being considered by DOE managers at headquarters. Beth says that the report has been well received by DOE. Dave Becker of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a member of both the ITRC RPO Team and the RPO team that visited Hanford, says the evaluation went well because the contractors knew what to expect—their training had prepared them to work with the RPO team.

In October, an RPO team evaluated remedial systems at DOE's Paducah, Kentucky site. Dave Becker says that the team is drafting its recommendations and will submit the report to DOE HQ soon.

While DOE is taking the lead in promoting RPO training among DOE contractors, states can also get on the RPO bandwagon. POCs in states with DOE sites can encourage their colleagues who oversee DOE work plans to take the training.