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## **IdeaScale Final Report**

### Background

On February 4, 2010, the NRC launched its Open Government Web page to serve as the gateway for agency activities related to the White House's Open Government initiative. A few days later, the NRC – along with most other federal government agencies – opened IdeaScale, a new citizen engagement tool that was part of the Open Government activities overseen by the Office of Management and Budget.

The NRC's IdeaScale page was accessible to the public as a pilot through March 19<sup>th</sup>. During that time, the NRC accepted posts and comments that allowed the public to share ideas about how the agency can work better with others inside and outside government, improve the availability and quality of information, and become more innovative and efficient.

On April 7, 2010, in order to more fully assess whether IdeaScale would significantly enhance the agency's dialogue with the public and its stakeholders, the NRC re-opened the tool and extended its pilot through June.

### Discussion

During the pilot phase, 53 ideas were submitted in five categories (excluding Off Topic posts) from approximately 40 different individuals; two of the ideas were NRC attempts to solicit input on specific issues. Some of the ideas also prompted comments and votes for or against. All 53 on-topic ideas were initially evaluated by the Office of Public Affairs and those requiring additional detailed review were forwarded to the Office of the Executive Director for Operations; these ideas were subsequently assigned to appropriate subject-matter offices for further evaluation. Some of the ideas, particularly those related to ADAMS and the NRC web site, supported actions the NRC was already undertaking. A number of the ideas were forwarded to the groundwater task force and others were deemed unworkable for a variety of reasons. A report that includes all on-topic ideas and their NRC response has been posted to the Open Government Web page at: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/open.html>. In some cases, a moderator comment outlining the disposition has also been posted in IdeaScale. While IdeaScale can no longer accept comments, it remains open for viewing.

The Open Government working group evaluated the results of IdeaScale and compared it to other possible tools and the variety of other ways the NRC already communicates with the public, such as public meetings and opportunities for public comment on rulemakings. The working group also looked at avenues other federal agencies were exploring for increased interaction with the public. The NRC concluded IdeaScale did not fully meet the NRC's need to

initiate meaningful dialogue with the public and stakeholders and enhance transparency and openness of its processes. The working group felt the tool itself was not simple to use; did not allow the NRC to easily initiate dialogue, had confusing features such as the voting, was difficult to search easily and was not ultimately accessed by a significant number of individuals. Instead, the NRC is initiating two new communication tools that we believe will be easier to use, more flexible and do a better job of engaging the public on topics of interest related to NRC actions and policies.

## New Communication Tools

### **The NRC Blog**

The NRC blog, which will debut at the end of January 2011, will be located at [www.wordpress.com/nrc](http://www.wordpress.com/nrc) and available through the NRC website. It will feature blog posts from NRC experts throughout the agency and will address issues related to new reactors, materials, spent fuel, emergency preparedness and other topics of interest. The blog is intended to educate, inform, explain and clarify actions, roles and responsibilities of the NRC, raise awareness about the agency and its mission, and – through moderated comments -- provide a place for dialogue with the public. The NRC encourages the public and stakeholders to post comments and participate in dialogues through the blog, but the blog will not replace any existing, formal communication usage, such as *Federal Register* notices, etc.

### **The NRC Discussion Forum**

The NRC Discussion Forum is still under development, but will serve as a vehicle for live Q&A between the public and NRC staff online. It will allow a more dynamic dialogue on important and timely topics of interest to the NRC and the public. Technical details are still being worked out and there is no timeframe for the debut of this tool. Announcements of when it will become available and which topics are scheduled for discussion will be made on the web site in the future.

In addition to the above actions, an NRC working group is developing guidelines for NRC use of social media sites to expand communication to the public and stakeholders. The NRC expects to implement social media as an adjunct communication tool in 2011 and beyond as the technology continues to evolve and present opportunities; its use in 2011 will be announced in the future via the NRC website.

## Summary

The NRC welcomed the opportunity to pilot IdeaScale and determine whether it would serve as a lively place for debate, discussion and innovation. While IdeaScale ultimately was not appropriate for our needs, it helped the NRC determine other communication mechanisms that we believe will more fully reach our Open Government communication objectives.