PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: AUGUST 12, 2008
7:00 p.m.

GREENPORT SCHOOL
720 FRONT STREET
GREENPORT, NEW YORK 11944

Catherine Coghill, Moderator

PANEL MEMBERS:
Mr. James Johnson, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security
Dr. Luis Rodriguez, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Mr. Chuck Pergler, Tetra Tech, Inc.

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REPORTED BY: Sandra A. Deschaine,
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**PRESENTATION**

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**QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

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**FORMAL COMMENT SESSION**

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acceptable. So thank you again for coming.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Folks, that concludes the presentation portion of the agenda, which means we're now ready to begin the question-and-answer period. Just a reminder, we're asking that if you have a question, please be sure that it's a clarifying question based on the presentation that was given, so if there was something that wasn't quite covered that you need a little more information to put everything together, that's what this period is for.

Having said that, we're asking that each person who has a question come to the microphone. If you'd like to leave us with your name and organization or not, that's fine, and please be sure to remember that it's one question. And the gentlemen at the front will be sure to work with you and answer your question. So at this point in time, what I'd like to ask, if anyone does have a question, to please come forward. We'll make sure we go from there.

MS. HOLTZMAN: Thank you very much.

At the end of your comments you mentioned that you estimated the economic costs of escape of pathogens, and you focused on animals, you said it
was 2.8 billion to animals, primarily from the loss of our exports. My question is, what is the cost expressed in the consequences of human life, if these pathogens, which now can affect humans, escape? What is the cost for human beings? My name is Elizabeth Holtzman.

MR. PERGLER: For the data that I put up on the board, the cost of 2.8 billion to 4.2 billion is the result of the escape of a Foot and Mouth Disease virus and the economic consequences to the livestock industry. Foot and Mouth Disease does not affect human health. For Rift Valley Fever and Nipah, there is not as much data, both of which affect human health. There is data in our document, but it's not as robust as the case studies that we were able to use for FMD virus. One example that we do cite for Rift Valley Fever, Rift Valley Fever working group estimated a cost of $50 billion. But again, you really have to read the study to fully understand that and the assumptions there. Again, we just didn't have as much data available to us in comparison to the Foot and Mouth Disease virus.

THE MODERATOR: Next question, please?

Yes, Ma'am.
MS. O'KANE: My name is Debbie O'Kane, and I live in Orient Point. I would just like to know why Rift Valley Fever has been chosen to be studied on Plum Island when we have a -- it's being studied now; is that correct? It's not part of what you're researching at the Biosafety Level 3? Okay. Why it would be proposed to be studied at the Biosafety 4 level when we have such a huge population of mosquitoes that we deal with on a regular basis during our spring, summer, and fall months, and we really have a hard time controlling that population. And Rift Valley Fever is a vector born illness if I'm not mistaken; is that correct?

MR. PERGLER: Before I get to your question, I missed a very important point in my last response. The three pathogens that we carried out, they do not have human-to-human transmission, so I just want to bring that out.

MS. HOLTZMAN: That wasn't my question. My question had to deal with pathogens that did affect humans, not ones that didn't. So I'd like an answer to that.

MR. PERGLER: Actually, my answer still stands, and that is, we don't have as much information on what the actual cost would be. But
where we can disclose, we certainly did, so that
the reader can make a comment that you would like
to see more extensive analysis, or where you think
we can improve the document, so that's an extremely
valuable comment that you've got, and I hope you
give it formally as well.

DR. RODRIGUEZ: The questions about
the reason why the Rift Valley Fever would be
studied. I guess the -- there has been risk
analysis of Rift Valley Fever, and there is a high
risk that Rift Valley Fever might come into this
country in the same way that was not a virus, for
example, came from infected mosquitoes brought from
abroad, perhaps in airplanes. If that is the case,
unlike West Nile Virus, Rift Valley Fever affects
both livestock and it produces disease,
particularly in sheep and cattle, but is not so
serious disease. But they serve as amplifiers of
infection.

People get infected with Rift Valley
Fever; and, again, most of the infections are not
lethal, people don't die of it. But there is a
number, a subset that varies from outbreak to
outbreak, and most of these have been documented in
Africa, where a percent of the population will
develop disease, and a percent of those that develop disease would die. So the reason that we need to do studies on Rift Valley Fever is that there is no test -- a license vaccine for Rift Valley Fever to be used in this country, so we're very vulnerable to the introduction of these disease. We don't have means to control it. We don't have a facility in this country where we can test.

There are three or four candidate vaccines today that have been developed by several scientific groups around the world. However, none of them have been tested for efficacy in cattle or sheep, and there is no facility in this country where that work can be done. So the goal of adding Rift Valley Fever to a research program in NBAF is that it will allow having a Biosafety Level 4 facility, it will now allow to test those vaccines in order to have better preparedness to prevent the natural introduction of Rift Valley Fever to this country.

MS. O'KANE: But once again, doesn't that pose a risk when we have such a high population of mosquitoes here on the East End of Long Island?
DR. RODRIGUEZ: The way that this research is carried out, particularly when you deal with infected mosquitoes, it is probably not going to be the main focus of the research. The research will probably be to vaccinate the animals, and then you will take the virus, not mosquitoes, but just small amounts of virus, and then inject the cows or sheep to see the effectiveness of the vaccine. So the likelihood of that release going, you know, mosquitoes being released is not the main focus of the research, as we foresee the NBAF facility having.

Now, when insects are used in other places to do research on any zoonotic agent, there is extreme number of measures that are taken to prevent the release of those insects. It's like an onion, where you have layer over layer of safety measures. For example, you have an accountability requirement, where you have to count the number of mosquitoes that you start working with, and you go into a place, like a cage, that's all enclosed, and before you leave that cage you have to account for every mosquito that you were working with, and like that. And then there is mosquito netting outside, there's mosquito traps. This is work that is being
done, for example, at laboratories in Laramie, Wyoming, or in Fort Collins, Colorado, where they work with these agents. That's the way they handle these, so there hasn't been, as far as I know, no history of a release of mosquito born or vector born disease from these laboratories, as far as I can say.

MS. O'KANE: I've done a lot of research over a number of years on this, and I believe I read somewhere that Rift Valley Fever is a disease that can be used in biological warfare. Perhaps you can refute that, but I just wonder if that's the reason why you will be studying it.

MR. JOHNSON: In terms of biowarfare, was your question?

MS. O'KANE: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: The new facility, NBAF has no plans to do bioweapons research, biowarfare.

It's illegal, and there's treatises in the United States. We adhere to those. We purely are doing the research for foreign animal diseases, emerging diseases that we don't know about, and we need to be in a better position to respond to. As far as warfare and everything, that is not the purpose of this facility.
MS. O'KANE: Not that you would be developing but are you researching it because it might be weaponized and used as a weapon?

DR. RODRIGUEZ: I don't have knowledge of Rift Valley Fever specifically being identified as a biowarfare agent, so I don't know. I don't know if the rest of the panel has any information.

MS. O'KANE: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Next question, please.

Okay. We're going to now open up the floor to the formal comment period. So a couple things I'd like to reiterate. First of all, if you do not wish to make a comment tonight, that's fine. All comments received by the Department of Homeland Security, whether they receive them in writing or this evening at the meeting, or if you wish to go home and compile a letter and submit it later, rather than tonight, all those comments, Department of Homeland Security looks at everything equally. So whatever you feel comfortable with, and how you would like to submit comments, please feel free to do so. As long you do make sure, if you do submit them in writing, that the comments are postmarked by August 25th.

Also, as part of the formal comment
process this evening, just to make sure everyone realizes how this will work. In that under the National Environmental Policy Act, when we open the floor to formal comments, if you pose a question in your comment, we will not be responding to them verbally tonight. And I don't want you to think that that's a mode of disrespect by the gentlemen at the front of the room. What we have to do is take each comment that we receive and go back and do a scientific analysis and breakdown and make sure we address it technically in the final EIS.

So just to make sure everyone understands, if you pose a question tonight, we're not answering them or we're not being disrespectful, we're following the requirements that are put forth in front of us.

At this point in time, I'd like to go ahead and call the first person that signed up. Please do remember, out of respect for everybody here and at the other sites, you have three minutes to speak, and I'll be up here at the front of the room just making sure you're aware of how much time is left on the clock. Our first speaker this evening is Melanie Norden.

MS. NORDEN: My name is Melanie Norden, and I reside in Greenport, New York, and
thank you for the opportunity of speaking on this issue tonight. I prepared a host of comments which far exceed three minutes, but I will divide them into subject matter.

Many of us on the North Fork are very concerned and have persistent and serious concerns regarding safety and security at Plum Island; concerns that are shared by the US Government Accountability Office, which has twice, in recent years, both in 2003 and 2007, reported on security and safety issues there. Though the DHS has indicated its intent to replace Plum Island with a new modernized facility, that replacement may not occur until several years hence, if at all.

In our view, the Island is today, and will in the foreseeable future, vulnerable to security breaches and pathogen theft, because physical security arrangements are incomplete and grossly limited. Moreover, we question whether the Island's obsolete infrastructure is adequate to support even a Biolevel Safety 3 Lab. Given the Island's history of incidence, we also question whether it will ever be able to adequately meet the level of security and safety required of a Biolevel Safety 4.
Let me summarize some of our safety and security concerns. The lack of a full-time federal protective service presence on the Island; the fact that there is not a no fly zone over the Island; that there is limited surveillance of the Island’s periphery, the areas outside of the biocontainment and administrative buildings are surveilled by stationary closed circuit television cameras, which are utterly insufficient; that the island is easily accessible to the general public; and that there were limited, if any, no trespassing signs to advise the public it is a Government facility, so boaters and fishermen line its banks regularly; that Plum Island’s fire brigade has limited hours of operation, and that local fire departments and emergency personnel have not been adequately trained in specific procedures regarding the handling of hazardous pathogens and materials, and are limited in their response capabilities if a full-scale fire were to break out on Plum Island; that background checks on students, foreign researchers, cleaning and maintenance personnel who have access to pathogens and work with or around infected animals are not routinely undertaken, are
not done in all cases, and that those same students, foreign researchers, and maintenance personnel are not required to follow strict decontamination procedures and are not fully escorted at all times when and if they do so.

We also share the GAO concerns regarding the lack of incidence response plan for incidence exceeding Plum Island security capabilities. Some of us are also concerned about decontamination and remediation issues, but I'll address those in my next comments. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next speaker is Jane Finalborgo.

MS. FINALBORGO: Hi. I'm here tonight to read a statement from Congressmen Tim Bishop, and that statement is as follows:

"Thank you to the Department of Homeland Security for holding this important public meeting, as well as the other agencies for their involvement. Thank you to the concerned members of our community for coming out this evening. I regret that a prior commitment prevents me from attending tonight.

"I understand that by statute Plum Island must be considered as the possible location..."
of the new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, a Biosafety Level 4 facility to meet the needs of Homeland Security Presidential Directive NAAN. I want to reiterate my strong opposition, and the opposition of almost every elected official on Long Island, to placing a Biosafety Level 4 Facility on Plum Island.

From the moment DHS became involved at the Plum Island Animal Disease Facility, I have received repeated assurances from the highest levels of the Department that it would not be a suitable location for BSL-4 research. I first received this assurance in a meeting with Senator Clinton and Secretary Ridge in June of 2003. At the time, DHS put out a statement which read as follows:"

"'The Island setting and biocontainment facilities of Plum Island permit safe and secure research. Plum Island's biocontainment facilities operate at a Biosafety Level 3. DHS has no plans in the near or long-term for a Biosafety Level 4 facility.'"

"Subsequent to that meeting, Secretary Chertoff echoed the view that Plum Island would not be a location for BSL-4 research. Simply put, it
is our opinion that Plum Island's proximity to major Metropolitan areas on Long Island and Connecticut make it an unsuitable location for BSL-4 research, which investigates highly infectious diseases that affect both animals and humans.

"While we can all agree that Plum Island is not a suitable location for a BSL-4 Facility, I do believe that it can still play a vital role in our Nation's bio and agro-defense, as it has for more than half a century as a Biosafety Level 3 Facility. I do not believe that the Federal Government would be wise to abandon its multi-million dollar investment in Plum Island, including $60 million in infrastructure and security upgrades which are planned over the next few years.

"While I understand the need for the NBAF, I do not believe it would be prudent for our Nation to place all of its bio and agro-defense needs in one basket. Additionally, there is still an important role for an upgraded Plum Island to play, with its unique geographic assets and existing infrastructure. Our community has given so much over the past half century to securing this
Nation. Asking us to house a BSL-4 is simply asking too much. Again, thank you for coming tonight, and I hope you will listen closely to the voices of this community.” Thank you.

(Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: Ed Romaine is our next speaker. The next gentleman. He left.

MR. NYCE: It should be Ed Romaine, but he left. My name is David Nyce. I'm the Mayor in the Village of Greenport. I had not intended to speak. Ed's assistant said that he had to leave, asked me if I would stand in.

Basically, two comments. One, I'm an advocate for Plum Island as a facility. I'm not an advocate for it to be a Level 4. In the study you state that the Island being an island is an asset for containment of. I would argue that, should something happen, the Island that we are on, exacerbates any problem that may happen. We have one means of egress and that is to the west. So should something happen, it's accentuated here. So while it may be easier contained on an island, should something happen, it's also much more contained on this Island. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Marie DHS notes the commentor's opposition to the Plum Island Site Alternative.
MS. DOMENICI: Good evening. I just first would like to express my disappointment that there were at least five elected officials that were here earlier this evening, but because they had other events and things that they had to attend, they're not standing here to tell you their viewpoints on whether or not this should be an upgrade or not. So I think in the future, when you have elected officials who are participating, you should really give them the time, because the're spreading their time around to various events, and what they have to say is equally important, is what I have to say as a taxpayer.

My comments, some of them were already commented on, but I will quickly go over what my concerns are. The aerial view of Plum Island is accessible on the Internet. And since Plum Island is not a travel destination, I'm concerned as to why visually it's accessible for the Internet. I think this is something that Homeland Security should really look into. And I heard some comments earlier today from an elected official that was very disturbing, you'll probably read about it the paper tomorrow. It has to do with a terrorist in August 12, 2008, Greenport, NY, Greenport Evening

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Plum Island, so I would ask you to look for that tomorrow in the newspaper somewhere. There is a no fly zone over Plum Island, and that is disturbing.

You know, as Joe Q citizen, when I speak to you and I look at issues from the perimeter, and I see these things as gaps, I mean, I'm not a rocket scientist, but these are glaring gaps to people on the outside looking in.

It's my understanding, and I've been to the Island on August 1st, you should know, there's only partial perimeter video monitoring around the Island, and that's extremely disturbing to me, because you do not have a perimeter monitoring system, where boaters can come right up to the Island, so you're not visually -- you know, making this surveillance available by video camera.

Now, if I go into a 7-11, I'm on video and you can see the size of the cup of coffee I bought, how many sugars I put in it, and if I put whole milk or half and half. So the fact that the Island is video void on some of the Island is really very, very disconcerting to me. When I was entering the ferry the other day, I was stopped as I was boarding the ferry, and I brought my purse as a prop because I was asked to stop and have my bags
searched, and I will tell the search was like this
(demonstrating). Okay. You can enter the boat.
So that, you know, I don't say the gentleman wasn't
doing his job. I'm saying the protocol is not
working.

The other thing is the shoreline.
Again, I speak about that, you really need to
have -- boaters can't be coming up to the shoreline
and fishing. It doesn't seem like that's a secure
ting. There is access, where if you bring
your boat around, you can walk up on the beach.
I'm concerned about the water waste that is dumped
into the gut. Is anyone doing water testing there?
And you guys haven't done a remediation on an oil
wave since 1998, there was 30,000 gallons. You
remediared nine, and if you can't secure what you
have now, the Biolevel 4 is not even an option.
Thank you for our time.

(Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: Elizabeth Holtzman.

MS. HOLTZMAN: I'm a former member of
the United States Congress, and I want to thank you
for the opportunity to speak. I've been a resident
of the North Fork for almost a half a century, I
and my family. I want to say, first, that I don't

Comment No: 2 Issue Code: 21.1
See response to Comment No. 1.

Comment No: 2 Issue Code: 12.1
DHS notes the commentor's water quality concerns. The NBAF EIS Section 3.3.2.1.4 describes
current waste treatment on Plum Island. The existing wastewater treatment plant was built in 1995
with a major upgrade in 2004. The treatment plant is a 60,000 gallons per day state permitted tertiary
treatment facility. EIS Section 3.7.2.1.2 describes Plum Islands current stormwater permit and
Section 3.13 and 3.13.7 describes liquid and solid waste disposal methodologies; EIS Section
3.13.7.3. describes the insufficient capacity of the PIADC treatment plant for future NBAF needs and
potential options to ensure capacity. NYSDEC issues and oversees environmental operational
permits which include any required testing or monitoring reports.
I believe that risk has been properly assessed in this Environmental Impact Statement. I want to go at it in a number of ways.

First, let me say, the statement in the Executive Summary that says, "Normal operations pose no threat to the surrounding community" is absurd on its face. There's no way that -- let's assume for a moment that the operations are normal, but that assumes that all of the material, the construction, the pipes, the filters are perfect, otherwise the normal operation does pose a hazard. And if we're going to assume that the construction and the material is perfect, well, we're living in a fairyland.

I mean, all we have to do is look at what's happened in New York City just now where they discovered that the building department which is supposed to inspect concrete couldn't do that, and dozens and dozens of high-rise buildings will have to be reinspected because the concrete wasn't poured properly because there was fraud. And if you think the federal government is exempt from fraud, you might just want to look at some of the GAO studies. Just look at Iraq. I myself, when I was in Congress was involved in uncovering major...
fraud in actually the Department of Agriculture Finance Programs.
Let me say, too, that not only is that statement absurd on its face and based on assumptions that nobody could agree with, but the idea that the risk is low to none, again, a quote, except for fire from accident, is another absurdity. Accident. Of course accident can happen in the construction, but we don't want to talk about fraud. Or there can be accidental operation of all kinds of things. People might slip through the security. There might be negligent operation of the facility. All we have to do is look at what happened a few months ago when an Air Force plane carried nuclear weapons. This was a whoops. Well, what about a whoops here. A whoops here means that humans beings are going to be affected.

No discussion of risks caused by intentional acts. Think of what happened now with anthrax. In light of that, can anyone here, can anyone here, say that the risk is minimal, negligible or whatever. You have people who are crazy. I was a former prosecutor. You have people who are crazy. You have people who are disgruntled.
employees. You have people who are angry at their family, their lovers, their whatever. This is too great a danger to human life, and this EIS doesn't deal with these issues.

(Applause)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Mark Alessi.

MR. ALESSI: Good evening. I'm Marc Alessi. I represent the people of the first district in the New York State Assembly, which goes from Orient Point, Fishers Island, Plum Island, Shelter Island to Brookhaven town. I have two federal facilities in my district: Brookhaven National Lab and Plum Island. And I think I would like to contrast the two. And I think what we're dealing with here is a community, as you're hearing from the comments tonight, that is trying to build its trust level with the facility, but the communication and the dialogue between Plum Island and this community seems to be a more recent dialogue.

I attended one of the first community forums that Plum Island held in quite a number of years just last year. I'm new to the elected office. I'm in office three years now. So I don't
have any resentment to the fact, but other legislators and prior elected officials who wanted to reach out and know more about the facility and maybe told more about the facility and have a better understanding, were rebuffed. And when that happens and they're not able to communicate with their constituents, that's a problem. So I applaud the administration for their outreach now, but you have to understand some of the trepidation. The community is just building their trust level. Brookhaven National Lab had the same issues ten years ago. Not only were they not a good neighbor at the time, they were an irresponsible neighbor back then, and there was some problems in terms of contamination of our groundwater. But they were able to reach out to the community and have an open dialogue and an honest dialogue, and they went through a mediation process. And now I think there's a certain trust level with the community. Actually, I think they're celebrating. It's more than ten years. It's twenty-five years since they put together a citizen advisory panel that continues that dialogue and that open conversation about what's occurring at the lab. I think that would be important here.
But with this kind of history, we understand the economic benefit that the facility has provided to this community in Connecticut and millions of dollars of salary, and we understand that it has provided a great deal of beneficial science, and I guess we're proud of that, as we're learning about that. But as a Level Safety 3, you are taking a look at disease that's passed animal to animal. Level 4, you're looking at disease that's passed animal, potentially, to humans. And because we haven't had the ability as a community to have that kind of dialogue, we're not sure if we're completely comfortable with the current protocols. So to ask us to sign on and be supportive of something that's even more dangerous, could be very problematic for us. So I think I speak on behalf of the majority of my residents when I say no to Level 4, and let's continue to the dialogue on the current protocols.

(Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Next name is Jenn Hartnagel.

MS. HARTNAGEL: Good evening. My name is Jenn Hartnagel. I'm here representing the group for the East End. On behalf of my organization, I
I wish to express our firm opposition to the construction of the National Agro and Bio-defense facility at Plum Island. Just for the record, the group for the East End is a professionally staffed conservation advocacy and education organization dedicated to the protection of Eastern Long Island's fragile and diverse environment.

To begin, the landscape that existed at the time Plum Island was opened in the early 1950s has changed dramatically. The population of Suffolk County has grown 450 percent. Although you will have and will surely hear a number of well-reasoned comments regarding potential health and human safety risks, we would like to focus our comments on the potential environmental harm that could and may accrue with this potential upgrade.

To begin with, water consumption and quality. The upgrade would require the consumption of more than 36 million gallons of water per year. The present water assumption is 17 million gallons per year. If the availability of water was not an issue, perhaps the doubling in the amount of water that will be needed will not present a potential problem; but, as a matter of fact, the twelve freshwater supply wells that draw from Plum Island...
To move on to air quality. The DEIS points out that the facility will likely produce something on the order of another 140 tons of combined air pollutants each year and every year for the life of the facility. Our region is already a nonattainment area. And we do not feel that this is a prudent proposal. We do not believe that the DEIS adequately reflected the scope of the potential air quality impacts as they relate to the specific policy objectives of our region.

To move on to wastewater. The DEIS points out that the facility would likely produce as much as 50,000 to 125,000 gallons per day of treated sewage that will have to empty out into the sound or a sewage treatment facility will need to be constructed. To move on to energy. We are
concerned that there is a defined need for a significant increase in energy. To move on to my conclusion. There are three specific reasons we feel that this facility should not be upgraded: The increased human settlement. We are concerned with the potential long-term environmental impacts. And finally, we are concerned that this DEIS has taken only a very general look at the Plum Island site and has not fully integrated the potential impacts associated with the construction operation for the next fifty years. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Sandra Sinclair is our next speaker.

MS. SINCLAIR: Good evening. I'm here just as an individual and a taxpayer. I think that many important scientific points have been made against putting a Level 4 Facility at Plum Island. I'm going to just say some things that I think are common sense. We live in a time of rising seas. There is absolutely no question that in the next years to come the seas around us are going to rise. The second is that I'm not old enough to remember the hurricane of 1937. I don't know if anybody else here is of that age, but it tore Fire Island...
completely in half. Now, we haven't had a really 
major hurricane here in a very, very long while, 
but we are due. I think this is a foolish 
proposal. I think that your work is important; the 
work that you're doing is important. I think it 
needs to be done, but it certainly does not need to 
be done here.

THE MODERATOR: Bob Ghosio.

MR. GHOSIO: My name is Bob Ghosio, 
Junior. I am a Southold town trustee. The reason 
I'm coming up is basically because as a Southold 
town trustee, our job as elected officials in our 
town is to insure that our wetlands are protected, 
that our beaches are protected, and that we 
administrate most anything that happens on publicly 
owned and town-owned waterways.

We have 162 or 165 miles of shoreline 
here in our town, and I would have to say that as a 
former researcher myself, I do appreciate the work 
that we do here at Plum Island. I understand the 
importance of doing that kind of research. But 
also, I'm hearing from my constituency that there 
are grave concerns about the potential for 
releases; and more specifically, in my particular 
case, because we have tides coming through the gut.
that come into our town, we are concerned about the affluent releases from Plum Island. The only thing I would strongly, strongly advocate, is in the process of this study, that we insure that we have studied how we're going to clean the affluent from the sewage or from any other wastewater releases that there are. We want to insure that the safety of our fisheries are maintained here in our town. The fisheries here are one of the most important industries that we have. It bolsters our economy. It's very important.

So I'm asking that you take the time and make the effort to insure that we have a plan for mitigation in case of release into the waterways, and to do anything that we can to keep any affluent to come from this, the facility now or even if it goes up to a Biolevel 4, that it be cleaned, and we maintain the health of our fisheries here in Southold. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Julia Erlic. I'll make sure I'm pronouncing it right. It's Julia, last name is spelled E-R-L-I-C. Is Julia still here? In the event that she stepped out or would like to come back, I'll just keep an eye out for her.
eye on that; we'll give her an opportunity to speak if she comes back in the room. Scott Russell.

Okay. Gwynn Schroeder.

THE FLOOR: Can I speak?
THE MODERATOR: I'm sorry, Sir, we're following the list. Have you signed in to speak?

THE FLOOR: No.

THE MODERATOR: Why don't you step over here, and we'll get you signed in.

MS. SCHROEDER: Hi. My name is Gwynn Schroeder, and I'm a resident of Cutchogue. I'm very concerned about workers' safety. My husband is a union guy. And I wanted to specifically talk about the Millstone Nuclear Reactors that are just eight miles away from Plum Island. And I confirmed today with NRC, Region I, that you are, in fact, in the emergency planning zone. And generally, for nuclear reactors, there's two ways you can go with emergency planning: You can either evacuate or shelter. And what I'd like you to address, I haven't seen Millstone addressed in the DEIS at all whatsoever. So first, I would like you to address the fact that Millstone is situated where it is. The Island is in the EPZ, and if you're going to shelter workers or if you're going to evacuate...
The other issue is do you have potassium iodide on the Island, so if there is a radiological release from Millstone, if there is an accident, that they have access to that, and there are policies and procedures in place to make sure it's distributed to the workers. If the policy, if your plan is to evacuate, how are you going to secure the Island and more specifically the pathogens? And I think the fact that there's a nuclear power plant just eight miles off the coast of Plum Island, might be a big red flag and say, well, folks, this isn't the best place to do this. And I, like a lot of other people, I'm not crazy that they're doing Biolevel Safety 3 work there, but we can live with it, as long as you address the GAO issues that have been brought up by others. And I would just like to say, some people had mentioned the anthrax release, and there was an article in the New York Times, I guess a couple of days ago, and sort of in support of the no action at this time, I'm quoting Keith Rhoades, who was an investigator with the GAO. And this was from his testimony at a congressional hearing in October.
"Nationwide, an estimated 14,000 people work at about 400 laboratories and have permission to work with so-called select agents which could be used in a bioterror attack." And he goes on to say, "With so many people involved there is insufficient federal oversight of biodefense facilities to make sure the laboratories follow security rules and report accidents that might threaten lab workers or lead to a release that might endanger the public."

So I think there was also an article yesterday in the Washington Post, and it talks about how the Mississippi site was put on the short list, even though it ranked fourteen out of seventeen of the considered sites. So we're going to have a new administration one way or the other, and I think you should put off making a decision until that time. Thanks so much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Edward Webb is our next speaker.

MR. WEBB: My name is Edward Webb. I'm the president of the Oyster Pond School Board of Education. We are the School District that is closest to Plum Island. Fishers Island might argue that with me, but I still think we're a little bit
closer. Some of us in this room may remember the Ivory Soap commercial years ago. It went something like this. Ivory Soap is 99 and 44 one hundredths percent pure. I've always wondered about the .66 percent that is perhaps unpure.

From a safety and health standpoint, I guess my concern is that if there is any risk at all, and nobody has said that we are a hundred percent risk free, why would we want to expose 110 kids in our school district, K through 6, to any risk that we have control over? Some risks in life we don't have control over. Other risks we do have. This is a risk that apparently we have some control over. So that's my question. Why would we want to put kids at risk?

Another thought is that I'm told that pathogens are transported by land to the facility, so that means that they go right by our school. I don't know if it's daily, or weekly, or monthly, but they are transported right past our school.

And finally, I just want to comment that I did visit Plum Island recently. Dr. Barrett and his colleagues gave us a very Nyce tour of the Island, treated us to a Nyce luncheon and showed us the facilities. I must say that I was very
impressed with the quality of the operations and
the security that was explained to us. Certainly a
lot of the pluster back in the 1950s when I was a
kid. We used to sneak on to the east side of Plum
Island in our barber boats and test the security to
find out how long it would take them to discover us
and kick us off the Island. So that's my comment.
Thank you very much.
THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Sir. Debra
O’Kane is our next speaker.
MS. O’KANE: Good evening. My name is
Debbie O’Kane. I live in Orient Point. I think I
can speak from experience on the issue of a
proposed upgrade to a Biosafety Level 4 Facility at
Plum Island. As the former executive director of
the North Fork Environmental Council, I have served
on three different Plum Island committees on the
federal, county, and local levels. There is no
disputing the fact that the type of work being done
presently on Plum Island, such as the development
of cutting edge diagnostic tools and the creation
of vaccines for diseases such as Foot and Mouth is
essential to national security.
But one of the four criteria for
choosing a site for a Biosafety Level 4 Facility is
DHS notes the commentor’s support for the research conducted by DHS. DHS’s mission is to study
foreign animal and zoonotic (transmitted from animals to humans) diseases that threaten our
agricultural livestock and agricultural economy.
community acceptance. Our elected officials from all of our federal representatives to state assembly man Mark Alessi, who just spoke a little while ago, to Southold town supervisor, Scott Russell, all of them have stated their opposition and with good reason.

The issue of an upgrade to a Biosafety Level 4 Facility at Plum Island has been on the table a number of times over the years. Actually, since 1999, when we first learned of a proposed upgrade from an article that appeared in the New York Times. Since then the community at large has been in strong opposition to an increased intensity of use at the Plum Island facility. Fear and mistrust has been a part of the East End for many years, and a history of accidents, unsafe practices, and lack of conforming to federal and state mandated regulations didn't do much to allay the community's fears.

Over the years the U.S.D.A. at Plum Island was charged with violating both the Federal Clean Water Act and the Federal Hazardous Waste Law. The facility was charged with exceeding water discharge permit limits, operating without an effective discharge permit for a year, storing...
approximately 5000 pounds of hazardous chemicals
without obtaining a proper storage permit, along
with serious OSHA violations. In 1998, the New
York State Attorney General's office filed a suit
against Plum Island for violating the terms of its
wastewater permit over a period of three years.
In 2000 the U.S.D.A. was operating
three incinerators without the required state
permits, and New York State DEC cited Plum Island
for incinerating regulated medical waste in units
that were not permitted for this type of waste
management. The DEC documented oil spills that
contaminated both soil and groundwater. I believe
the clean up this particular oil spill is still
ongoing. Plum Island's track record on the
environmental issues isn't great, and today's basic
safety and security questions remain.
We have been told that an evacuation
plan isn't necessary for the North and South Forks,
but the community at large believe that one is
needed. The issue of an evacuation plan has been
raised at numerous meetings over the years. Does
the CDC in Atlanta have an integrated emergency
management plan for evacuating the surrounding
area? Also, I'd just like to mention the no fly
Given the amount of community concern and opposition to Biosafety Level 4 Facility, I would like to propose that Homeland Security take another look and support and maintain the Level 3 Facility on Plum Island, with its primary purpose of studying Foot and Mouth Disease, and siting the Biolevel Level 4 Facility in a more suitable location. Thank you.

( Applause )

THE MODERATOR: Mark Haubner.

MR. HAUBNER: Mark Haubner. Thank you for your time, consideration. I'm from Akwa right in the path of any kind of evacuation. The issue tonight I would like to address is the background checks on all personnel entering the biocontainment areas. In 2003, the GAO conducted an investigation on the operations of BEATIC and found numerous safety concerns. This resulted in twenty-four recommendations by the GAO. And almost five years later, according to the follow-up report dated in December of last year, six of those recommendations have still not been implemented.

First and most alarming, it is still...
unclear whether background checks are being conducted on contractors and visitors entering the biocontainment areas. It’s particularly alarming because of the recent news of Dr. Bruce Evans, a biodefense researcher himself was responsible for the anthrax attacks in 2001. According to the GAO report, the U.S.D.A. had no procedure, referring back to 2003, for insuring that contractors and visitors entering the biocontainment areas did not have criminal backgrounds.

GAO recommended background checks for all individuals using a system such as the one used by the National Crime Information Center. The report states that the DHS was developing a memorandum of agreement with the FPS, which is the Federal Protective Service, but had not been finalized due to budget concerns. Has the memorandum of agreement been executed and are background checks being conducted?

The report goes on to state that the DHS has not fully implemented our recommendation that the Department insure that individuals involved in laboratory activities in the biocontainment area, including students and regardless of citizenship, be approved in
accordance with the law. Furthermore, background checks are not being conducted on students, and this is a deliberate decision made by the U.S.D.A. I'm going to skip over a couple of things that they do require students to do. But any remaining risk, quote, is acceptable according to the U.S.D.A., compared to the benefits of educating these individuals. The GAO report concludes that we continue to find it troubling that students are not subject to any type of background check before handling animals infected with diseases that have been determined to pose a severe threat to animal health and the economy. I agree strongly with the GAO conclusion, that anyone interested in doing harm and who had access to the biocontainment areas could walk away with valuable information, including lab layout procedures, et cetera. I do not feel that all of these issues have been thoroughly addressed at this time.

I'm prompted to ask what, number one, sorry, who is creating the acceptable risks status of any given security plan, which is finally implemented? And number two, what, if any, directives or legal consequences are in place to
guarantee compliance with the GAO security recommendations, whether or not the facility goes to BSL-4? Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Joan Fleck. Take your time.

MS. FLECK: Excuse me. I’m a slow walker. I am old enough to have lived through the hurricane of ’37, ’38, whatever. I saw a thirty-eight foot cruiser in the crotch of a tree on Merrick Road. I saw Great South Bay pushed out dry at Patchogue 2 1/2 miles away. I know the force of a Category 3. I am fearful that we are in for another Category 3 in the near future.

My question is, what is the maximum number of cattle that you house on the Island? And in the event of one of these flooding, furious hurricanes, and they have to be done away with, how long does it take to totally incinerate every animal that is housed there?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Ma’am.

Mr. Callis, you’re next.

MR. CALLIS: My name is Jerry Callis. I live on the North Fork, and I moved here as the first U.S. Department of Agriculture employee to work at Plum Island in 1953. I worked for U.S.D.A.

DHS notes the commenter’s concern regarding potential hurricane impacts to the NBAF and commenter’s assumption that all NBAF lab animals will need to be destroyed with carcass sterilization in the event of a hurricane. Sections 3.4, 3.6, and 3.14.3.2 and Appendix E of the NBAF EIS, address NBAF design criteria and accident scenarios associated with weather-related events such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding. DHS notes the commenter’s concern regarding potential tornado impacts to the NBAF. The NBAF would be designed and built to withstand the normal meteorological conditions that are present within the geographic area of the selected site (hurricanes, tornados, etc.). Given the nature of the facility, more stringent building codes are applied to the NBAF than are used for homes and most businesses, regardless of which NBAF site is chosen. The building would be built to withstand wind pressures up to 170% of the winds which are expected to occur locally within a period of 50 years. This means the building’s structural system could resist a wind speed that is expected to occur, on the average, only once in a 500 year period. In the unlikely event that a 500-year wind storm strikes the facility, the interior BSL-3Ag and BSL-4 spaces would be expected to withstand a 200 mph wind load (commonly determined to be an F3 tornado). If the NBAF took a direct hit from an F3 tornado, the exterior walls and roofing of the building would likely fail first. This breach in the exterior skin would cause a dramatic increase in internal pressures leading to further failure of the building’s interior and exterior walls. However, the loss of these architectural wall components should actually decrease the overall wind loading applied to the building, and diminish the possibility of damage to the building’s primary structural system. Since the walls of the BSL-3Ag and BSL-4 spaces would be reinforced cast-in-place concrete, those inner walls would be expected to withstand the tornado. DHS will take the precautionary approach and evaluate every potential storm to determine if experiments need to be terminated and animals destroyed. Based on 70% utilization of the design maximum, NBAF could house approximately 200-300 animals at any given time, including cattle, swine, and sheep. Because the method of carcass disposal has not yet been determined, the effects of alkaline hydrolysis, rendering, and incineration were included in the NBAF EIS (see Section 3.13 for a description of the methods). Incineration has the potential to affect air quality, so the evaluation in Section 3.4 (Air Quality) assumed only incineration would be used to assess the greatest adverse effect. Alkaline hydrolysis would have the greatest effect on sanitary sewage capacity, as discussed in Section 3.3, so the sanitary sewage effects were determined using this method.
for almost forty years, most of that was on Plum Island. Prior to coming to Plum Island, I worked in Holland at their Foot and Mouth Disease Laboratory in Amsterdam, and I got to know the virus well. It is one of the most elusive viruses known to man. At this moment, it exists in every country in South America, except Uruguay and Chili. They keep talking about eradicating IT but nothing happens.

The U.S. knows Foot and Mouth Disease very well, because we had it seven times in our country. The last time was 1927. The disease occurred in Mexico in 1946. They weren't doing very much about it, so the U.S.D.A. was asked to join them in eradicating it. It took seven years and 52 million U.S. dollars, 1950 dollars, and a like amount of Mexican pesos. The last time it has occurred in this continent was in Canada, in 1953. A very serious outbreak, which cost them not to be able to export any livestock products for twelve months. The same thing would happen in any country where this disease occurs.

I think Plum Island has served as a good site for this facility, and I simply cannot conceive of such a facility being moved to either
North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Kansas, or Texas to work on such elusive, infectious, and deadly viruses, and Foot and Mouth Disease virus.

Thank you.

(Applause)

THE MODERATOR: John Searing.

MR. SEARING: My name is John Searing, Deputy Commissioner of Suffolk County Fire Rescue and Emergency Services here on behalf of County Executive Steve Levy and Commissioner Williams.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding emergency preparedness. Suffolk County fire rescue and emergency services is charged, as part of our mission, with the emergency preparedness and to insure the health and safety of the public during any emergency. As such, we've developed a comprehensive emergency management plan based on an all-hazards approach. The all-hazards approach is chosen to insure that the spectrum of potential emergencies is selected and analyzed. As a matter of this policy, Suffolk County FRES works and plans together with each of the ten towns and the multitude of villages and other agencies to insure a successful end result, to the extent possible in any emergency.
Among the considerations and tools that are utilized in the evacuation of people, such as in a hurricane, which is the County’s determined worst case scenario, Suffolk’s emergency evacuation plan relies on coordination with the towns and local agencies, as well as the cooperation of the people. This plan includes self-evacuation by citizens and includes other elements such as bus transportation, both public and private, and the use of the Long Island Railroad. Again, these are some of the tools, and Suffolk County FRES supports and coordinates with Southold town to effect any evacuation.

Evacuation from and on Long Island is difficult. This is especially true on the North Fork due to limited access, only two east-west roads and ferry. We will continue to work with the town and other agencies for all-hazards planning regardless of the outcome of this process. County Executive Levy and Commissioner Williams remain committed and stand ready to continue planning with Southold and the community to insure health and safety of the citizens of the community.

THE MODERATOR: At this point I’d like to check and see if Julia Erlic has showed up. And
the other person we need to check with is Scott Russell, if he's here.

THE FLOOR: Mr. Russell is at the city town hall meeting.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Where we are in the process is we have a accommodated everybody who has signed up to speak thus far. What we would like to do is open up the floor, in the event that there's anyone here who did not get a chance to speak, who would like to at this point in time. I'm sorry, Sir, did you want to speak?

Absolutely. Come to the microphone.

MR. WILLIS: Good evening, Frank Willis. I live in Mattituck. I have several questions on the operation of the facility as it is now, which presumable will affect, if indeed it goes to Level 4. The incinerator, I understand, operates at 1800 Fahrenheit, presumably, unless I've been told differently, discharges directly into the air through two stacks that were visible on the photographs during the exhibition shown at Southold Township. I was wondering is there any venturer scrubbers or back houses in between to prevent the emission of solids?

In fact, the next question is, What
The commentor’s questions regarding the disposition of liquids and solids resulting from NBAF operations are addressed in Section 3.13.2.2 of the NBAF. As shown on Table 3.13.2.2-2, liquid effluents from carcass disposal would become part of the sanitary sewer discharge. As shown on Table 3.13.2.2-4, the technologies being considered for carcass disposal that create a liquid waste stream (alkaline hydrolysis and rendering) create a sterile (in the case of alkaline hydrolysis) or non-infectious (in the case of rendering) liquid residual. As shown on Table 3.13.2.2-3, the solid residuals resulting from carcass disposal would be characterized (using sampling and analysis) and sent to a solid or hazardous waste management facility, as appropriate, depending on analytical test results. If incineration is used as a carcass disposal method, emissions would be monitored in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements and permits. NBAF wastewater discharges would be pretreated as appropriate and monitored in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations and permits.

DHS notes the commentor’s concern for security. Security would be provided by a series of fencing, security cameras, and protocols. In addition, a dedicated security force would be present on-site. Additional security could be provided via cooperation with local law enforcement agencies. A separate Threat and Risk Assessment (TRA) (designated as For Official Use Only) was developed outside of the EIS process in accordance with the requirements stipulated in federal regulations. The purpose of the TRA was to identify potential vulnerabilities and weaknesses associated with the NBAF and are used to recommend the most prudent measures to establish a reasonable level of risk for the security of operations of the NBAF and public safety. The TRA and security actions that would be implemented, based on TRA recommendations, are designated as For Official Use Only and not available to the public for security reasons.

DHS notes the commentor’s concerns. Currently, the PIADC facility publishes research in publicly available research journals; NBAF would publish its research in publicly available research journals as well.
that exist under the present situation, it will get worse on number four. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Sir. Is there anyone else here who would like to speak who has not had a chance to do so, so far? We're going to take a fifteen-minute break, and in the event that folks who are getting off work or have other commitments show up late, we want to make sure we accommodate them. So we'll reconvene in fifteen minutes. Thank you.

(Recess taken at 8:52 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)

THE MODERATOR: All right, Folks, it's nine o'clock. We're going to check in with everybody to see if at this point in time in the evening there's anyone else that has shown up that would like to speak. We didn't have anyone sign up at the front of the room, so if there is somebody here who would like to speak, please come forward to the microphone.

(No response.)

THE MODERATOR: Okay. What I'd like to do is turn the meeting over to Jamie.

MR. JOHNSON: We are going to close the meeting, and remind you that we do want your comments, my team. Do you have a comment?
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Comment No: 1    Issue Code: 3.0
DHS notes the commentor's statement.

Comment No: 2    Issue Code: 4.1
DHS held a competitive process to select potential sites for the proposed NBAF as described in Section 2.3.1 of the NBAF EIS. A team of federal employees representing multi-department component offices and multi-governmental agencies (i.e., DHS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Department of Health and Human Services) reviewed the submissions based primarily on environmental suitability and proximity to research capabilities, proximity to workforce, acquisition/construction/operations, and community acceptance. Ultimately, DHS identified five site alternatives that surpassed others in meeting the evaluation criteria and DHS preferences, and determined that they, in addition to the Plum Island Site, would be evaluated in the EIS as alternatives for the proposed NBAF. The Plum Island Site was included because DHS determined that since it already owned Plum Island and satisfied the selection criteria, it represented a reasonable alternative that must be evaluated in the NBAF EIS.

MS. NORDEN: Excuse me, I have additional comments.

MR. JOHNSON: Do you have a comment?

MS. NORDEN: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MS. NORDEN: There may also be other speakers that have additional comments.

In 2006, Congress appropriated money for site selection and other activities of the NBAF, as we've discussed. DHS developed the site selection because Congress did not designate a specific site upon which to construct the NBAF.

DHS implemented a vigorous process for first, second, and third round evaluation, with committees comprised of federal employees who evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies, possible sites against the original four criteria, insufficient community support being one of them.

Federal teams then conducted site visits. Although no part of the competitive site selection process, Plum Island, quote, meets the NEPA definition of reasonable alternatives, unquote, from the EIS. My question is whom? Plum Island was never part of the site selection process but was tacked on later, meaning that the site
selection committee never discussed Plum Island as a potential BSL-4 site. Did congressional pressure or other political pressures play a role in Plum Island being added to the list? If not, why was it?

The National Environmental Policy Act has many requirements and does indicate that reasonable alternatives need to be investigated, but there are somewhere around 277 other BSL-3 Labs and twelve or more BSL-4 Labs that might have been considered as potential add-on sites. Why was Plum Island the only one added to the list?

As residents of the North Fork, we strongly request that the original site election committee be reconvened and a thorough analysis done by that committee, not just by the DHS, of the suitability of Plum Island for an upgrade to Biosafety Level 4. We would like such a committee to undertake the same due diligence it exercised in examining the final proposed five sites, otherwise we as residents of New York State have not been treated fairly and equally by the federal government with respect to the process. In short, we request that Plum Island be vetted in exactly the same way, by the same people that the others...
sites were. That's one point. I have other
comments to make.

THE MODERATOR: You have fifty-six
seconds.

MS. NORDEN: Why don't I sit down, and
then let somebody else come, and then I'll come
back again.

THE MODERATOR: Is there anyone else
who would like to speak? All right. Go ahead and
finish.

MS. NORDEN: Some of us on the North
Fork are also concerned about decontamination and
remediation regarding past incidences at Plum
Island, and are afraid that going forward the same
lack of attention to critical issues may occur.

According to the Island's operation manager, though
Lab 257 was closed nearly eight years ago. To
date, it has only received surface contamination.

Why, that only 9000 of the of 30,000 gallons of oil
spilled several years ago have been remediated;
that there are drainage pipes knocked double wall
on the Island that are fifty-four years old and
that monitoring and preventative maintenance of the
pipe work is inadequate.

The 2007 incident at Pirbright in

DHS notes the commentors concern. The NBAF would be designed, constructed and operated to
ensure the maximum level of public safety and to fulfill all necessary requirements to protect the
environment.

Product recovery from an underground pipe leak from a No.2 fuel oil UST in 1995 is continuing. As
discussed in Section 3.12.6.1 of the NBAF EIS, 9,228 gallons of fuel oil were recovered as of June
2008. The Environmental Site Assessment performed for the Plum Island Site concluded that this
spill did not pose a threat to the environmental integrity of the site.
England, for example, demonstrated that beyond initial design and construction, ongoing maintenance plays a critical role in insure that high containment labs operate safely and securely. Since cracked and leaky pipes at Pirbright were indicative of poor maintenance practice. It is believed that this in turn resulted in FMD virus contamination when soil water or other material were contaminated by affluent from the treatment tank and then deposited on the adjacent road. Could an incident like that which happened at Pirbright happen on Plum Island, with any virus or pathogen, including FMD? Are measures currently taken to disinfect visiting vehicles? Some of us are also concerned about the historic landfills dating back to the 1950, which exist on Plum Island, where, according to the EIS, medical, industrial, laboratory, and hazardous wastes, pesticides, among who knows what else, are buried. These landfills are decades old. When, if ever, will these new landfills be remediated or will new construction simply be built on top of them? Since some construction is taking place at Plum Island at present, and significant construction would take place if Plum Island were

Comment No: 5 Issue Code: 17.1
DHS notes the commenter's concerns regarding the handling and transport of packages containing pathogens. The general regulations governing the required NBAF handling and transport of packages containing pathogens, and a discussion of the low risk associated with the shipment of infectious materials is provided in Section 3.11.9 of the NBAF EIS. Section 2.2.2.3 provides detailed information on the safe handling and transport of packages containing pathogens. Additionally, an analysis of accidental releases during transportation is provided in the NBAF EIS under Section 3.14, Health and Safety. Information regarding the existing road conditions and potential effects to traffic and transportation from the Plum Island Site is provided in Section 3.11.6 of the NBAF EIS. An emergency response plan that would include area evacuation plans would be developed if one of the action alternatives is selected and prior to commencement of NBAF operations.

DHS also notes the commenter's concern that site specific safety and security plans are not included in the NBAF EIS. DHS prepared the NBAF EIS in accordance with the provisions of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and CEQ's regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.). The analysis conducted in the NBAF EIS was based on conceptual design plans posted on the DHS website. More detailed design plans would be developed as the project moves into the final design phase. Should the NBAF Record of Decision call for the design, construction, and operations of the NBAF then site specific safety and security protocols and plans would be developed that would address the procedures for decontamination of vehicles operating within the NBAF. DHS would have site-specific standard operating procedures and response plans in place prior to the initiation of research activities at the proposed NBAF.
to be chosen as the NBAF site, has DHS done a formalized assessment of construction worker risks?

We also query how the emissions and byproducts generated from carcass sterilization and incineration are managed today, and would be in the future with respect to the waste stream. Moreover, what agency monitors whether the treated sanitary waste discharged today on Plum Island, to say nothing of future from an NBAF, meets all discharge requirements, since most, if not all of the discharge is currently from a single outflow into Plum Gut.

Were Plum Island chosen as the final site, operation of the NBAF would result in the generation of wastewater, waste solids, medical hazardous and industrial solid waste. All of which would be dumped into Long Island Sound. One of the criteria explored by the site election committee and documented in the EIS, which again, Plum Island was not a site, which the committee evaluated, was the ability of affected communities to evacuate in case of an emergency. In a recent article in the local newspaper, the Suffolk Times, Mr. Vecchio of the DHS indicated that the likelihood of having to evacuate is practically nonexistent. Though the
DHS states the risk of accidental release of a pathogen is extremely low, the economic effect on this area, which relies on the agricultural and tourism industry, to say nothing of the densely populated northeast Boston-New York corridor, would be devastated — I'm going to continue because no one else wants to speak.

THE MODERATOR: Excuse me.

MS. NORDEN: I think that's appropriate because it was not publicized that there was a three-minute limitation on remarks.

THE MODERATOR: Let me just check, because there were two people that we want to make sure if they're here, they can have a chance to speak. And that was Scott Russell and the other person was Julie Erlic. Okay. Is there anyone who would like to speak, who did not have an opportunity this evening, who would like that opportunity now. Okay. Just as a reminder, we are moving forward, but please remember we ask everybody at each site to work with our guidelines to be fair to everybody. So go ahead and go ahead and finish, if you're almost done.

MS. NORDEN: Okay. Siting the NBAF on Plum Island would mean the study of specimen
storage of zoonotic agents and viruses that can
affect humans, as well as animals, and for which
there are no known treatments or vaccines. It is
also planned that the NBAF would have an insectary
and a release of a pathogen at a loss of
biocontainment of a vector is an credible scenario,
Mr. Rodriguez, despite the fact that you in many
ways poo-pooed that question earlier on. Many
experts are very concerned about the insectary, and
also, about the necessary and aerial applications
of insecticides in any community that might be
repeatedly required. For some reason you did not
mention the insectary in your remarks. So why did
Mr. Vecchio of the DHS not apply the same
evaluation criteria that the site election
committee did with respect to areas of evacuation
possibilities? And why did he have the arrogance
and high handedness to suggest that any evacuation
plan for an area is whatever evacuation plans are
already in place? We don’t modify, said
Mr. Vecchio, in areas of evacuation plan, we don’t
know the details. In other words, we make the mess
but you clean it up, and better yet, you pay for
it.

We have on the North Fork, by the way,
no integrated emergency management plan
particularly with respect to pathogen or virus
release, despite what you might have heard earlier
this evening. And even our account executive,
Steve Levy, has on more than one occasion, despite
the fact he may not have said that tonight, in the
press, indicated the impossibility of evacuating
our area. So many of us would like to know, since
evacuation was considered by the original site
selection committee as one of the criteria, why
Mr. Vecchio has indicated that it has nothing to do
with DHS and evacuation is on our own backs
locally.

We also question whether, in fact, the
insurance industry, and this is a very germane
question as a result of Katrina, would cover our
property if there were damage to our wells, to our
houses, to our homes, to our pets, to our welfare,
to our gardens, to our land. And then there are
the everyday questions. The Department of Homeland
Security indicates that construction workers can
park at the Orient Park Ferry terminal.

The Orient Point Ferry Terminal spills
over all summer long with cars parked all the way
along Route 48, right in front of the Plum Island
facility. There is absolutely no way that the ferry terminal can in any way subsume any additional parking. So that is just poor management and really lack of awareness of what some of the problems are around here.

In any case, many of us believe that Plum Island is an obsolete facility that needs DHS attention immediately and continuously to make sure that it's even meeting today's biolevel safety standards. We would be horrified to find that an upgrade were to occur without the oversight that we think our government owes us as local residents. So we doubt whether at present our local community would benefit from the construction of the NBAF.

Residents of Connecticut, New Jersey, and elsewhere might get construction jobs, but we question whether it should be built anytime at present. We'd like to call on our elected officials to ask for a moratorium on the building of the NBAF anywhere in the United States, until more information is known and examined. Thank you.

[Applause]

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I want to point out that my team will be here till ten
1 o'clock, some team members, in case people do come
2 in, and they want to leave comments, and we will be
3 here until ten. So thank everyone, again, for
4 coming. Thank you for your comments. Again, if
5 you think of a comment later, you can submit it by
6 August 25th, so it can to be addressed and
7 responded to in the final EIS. Again, here are
8 various mechanisms that you can submit comments,
9 try to make it a easy as possible for folks. I
10 want to thank everybody for their participation.
11 Thank you for coming, for your continued interest
12 in the NBAF program, and with that I will
13 officially adjourn the meeting. Thank you.
14 (Applause).
15 (Hearing concluded at 9:12 p.m.)
August 14, 2008, Athens, GA, Athens Afternoon

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

NATIONAL BIO AND AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(NBAF DRAFT EIS)

PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: AUGUST 14, 2008
1:30 p.m.
1197 SOUTH LUMPKIN STREET
ATHENS, GEORGIA 30602-3603

**Please see the last three pages of this file for the speaker list.**

Catherine Coghill, Moderator

PANEL MEMBERS:
Mr. James Johnson, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Dr. Steve Kappes, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Mr. Chuck Pergler, Tetra Tech, Inc.

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* *******************************
make sure that question is focused on the presentation so the other folks can make questions, and then we'll open up the floor to formal public comments.

MATT DEGENNARO: Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Go ahead.

MATT DEGENNARO: Yeah. I have an actual question about the DEIS.

In the executive summary table for health and safety for potential adverse effects, all the sites are listed as health and safety negligible, South Milledge Avenue site, negligible. Then on pages later in the body of the executive summary under health and safety it says for all sites except Plum Island the overall risk rank was moderate due to the potential easy spread of disease through livestock or wildlife (unintelligible) was low or none due to low likelihood of disease getting off an island. Which is correct, the negligible or the moderate?

MR. PERGLER: Under normal operations there is no adverse effect on human health and safety through livestock or wildlife.

DHS notes the commentors identification of an incorrect characterization of the overall Health and Safety risk as "negligible" for the South Milledge Avenue Site as listed in the Executive Summary; Table ES-3 of the NBAF EIS. The corrected characterization of the overall Health and Safety risk for the five identified sites as "moderate" will be included in the NBAF Final EIS.

DHS notes the commentors statement. The "negligible" effect for Health and Safety is for normal operations (incident-free conditions and those abnormal conditions that frequency estimation techniques indicate occur with a frequency greater than 0.1 events per year) and is correct. The moderate risk factor was applied to sites in the risk assessment included in section 3.14 of the NBAF EIS. The application of the risk rank is applied to the potential for an accident to occur and the magnitude of the consequences of an accident.
This facility is a high-consequence, low-probability operational scenario. The table that you referred to, we've had several comments on it. And we're going to go back and review the presentation, because it's created some confusion.

MATT DEGENNARO: Right. Well, my problem is, you know, you said you had 50 scientists, engineers and support staff. And it's correct that in the final EIS the game is over then. Then the decision is made 30 days afterwards. So a lot of people just read this executive summary, they see minor, moderate, negligible and they're like oh, that's really cool. But they are -- and you do agree that they are inconsistent from negligible being health and safety and then on Page ES 910 moderate?

I'm just trying to figure out, as a community person, you know, is it moderate, is it negligible. You just said the best place -- the safest place is on Plum Island, but we've all learned it's not really about safety.
MR. PERGLER: Yeah. And your point is well taken.

Again, we're going to go back and look at the table. I do understand that many people read the executive summary and don't necessarily delve into the other --

MATT DEGENNARO: Right.

Why was it moderate on the health and safety. Why did you pick negligible is if it says moderate two pages later?

MR. PERGLER: Yeah. I do understand the conflict.

Again, it's negligible, because we don't expect a pathogen to be released from the facility. The facility will be designed again, rigorous -- to rigorous standards. The operational conditions which it -- business will be conducted, again, is highly disciplined. So --

MATT DEGENNARO: So it is negligible?

It's not -- the risk rate is not moderate?

MR. PERGLER: I don't care for subjective terms. And that's why I'm agreeing that the table -- we need to review and perhaps give you the data as opposed to subjective
MATT DEGENNARO: Okay. I just have one more thing. When you, I guess, agree and maybe fix the executive table in the final EIS, will the decision period be extended so the community can review the -- a different executive table or we just -- that's the decision is made in the final EIS?

MR. JOHNSON: When we issue the final EIS we will put it out for public to review, and we have to wait a minimum of 30 days to render a decision. So if people want to give us comments in that 30-day period they can. But we are not required to respond to those comments. So you will have a chance to see the final EIS when it comes out.

MATT DEGENNARO: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. And so if you want to give us questions and comments, but we are -- at this point have no plan to respond to them. So certainly we want to make sure that people have a chance. That's why the NEPA law requires that 30-day period.
MATT DEGENNARO: Thank you.

MR. PERGLER: I'd like to emphasize one other thing, too.

The data within the body of the EIS is accurate. It presents the data so that DHS and USDA and the public, when they read that --

MATT DEGENNARO: Oh, okay.

MR. PERGLER: -- will get a very precise picture.

MATT DEGENNARO: Oh, okay.

MR. PERGLER: -- will get a very precise picture.

MATT DEGENNARO: So the body is correct, the executive summary table is incorrect?

MR. PERGLER: The table has problems with presentation.

Again, it is easy -- it is difficult to digest a document that thick (indicating), to put it in an executive summary that way.

MATT DEGENNARO: Right. That's why I was asking, you know, if you put moderate one place and then negligible another place --

MR. PERGLER: Yeah.

MATT DEGENNARO: -- I would figure you would put moderate there.

MR. PERGLER: Yeah. I hope you do understand.
MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

Next question.

KATHY PRESCOTT: My name is Kathy Prescott. I'm going to follow up with what Matt said.

Hello.

See, the problem we're having is that the DEIS is a thousand-something pages. Of course, most people are going to read the executive summary. Just like our newspaper the day after it was released has an above-the-fold headline that says Risk From Bio Lab Nil Feds Claim.

I don't believe that's an accurate description of what's in the text of the DEIS. And that's the problem that we're talking about with the executive summary. Not only health and safety are inconsistent with what's in the text, you even had a poster up there with infrastructure as moderate.

Water in the table says the effects in Athens are minor; waste treatment, minor. Visual in the table, you have moderate. In the text you have high. Air quality, you...
I have minor in the text. You don't even address the specific concerns of Athens' air quality problems.

I guess really my question is -- and you said up there that this is under normal operations. And if you look closely at the subtitle of the executive summary table, it says potential adverse effects for normal operations.

Well, my question is: What are normal operations? Does that imply that abnormal operations are when there's a breach of pathogen or infected vector; or could abnormal operations be a high influx of tissue samples with one of those emerging diseases that we know nothing about like it's killing a lot of people in, say, Africa, for example, in a lot of animals and you don't know what it is? Are those abnormal circumstances?

You use the word normal operations through the entire DEIS. And I'd like for everybody to have a definition of what normal operations means. Maybe that would explain some of the inconsistencies in the executive

Comment No: 5  Issue Code: 23.0
Normal operations are normal (incident-free) conditions and those abnormal conditions that frequency estimation techniques indicate occur with a frequency greater than 0.1 events per year. Accident refer to an unplanned event or sequence of events that results in undesirable consequences.
MR. PERGLER: Yeah. Normal operations basically means the facility remains intact, operates the way it should, as do the workers in their following all procedures. If that occurs there is no risk, minimal risk.

KATHY PRESCOTT: Yeah. So if nothing happens, nothing happens. So why is that a valid --

MR. PERGLER: It gives you a --

KATHY PRESCOTT: -- questioning of a table that most people, I would say even most of our decision makers, have read? You know, what kind of evaluation is that, well, if nothing happens nothing happens?

MR. PERGLER: No. It can be looked at as the base line condition, if you will, so that you can judge -- so that when something does go wrong you can judge what -- what happens.

We do -- in this document we give you a good comparison between normal operations and then as we would define a off-normal event, what is the consequence of that.

Accidents will happen in this facility.

But by history, by facility of design and by
procedure that accident will not release a pathogen outside the facility. But then we take it a step further using conservative analysis of playing the what-if game. Again, I stated we've looked at a small aircraft crash into the facility, what's the consequence of that. So we're trying to give you the full range here so that not only does DHS read that and determine is the risk worth the benefit. We also give that to you, the audience, so that you can provide those same comments back to DHS for their consideration.

KATHY PRESCOTT: But you didn't give it to us in the executive summary, is my point. And that is what most people have gone by. That's why they wrote this story in the paper and headlined it like they did. People look at the headline in the paper and say no problem, I no longer need to pay attention. And I'm just saying that this is horribly misleading. And I --  (Applause.)
DHS notes the commentor's views. DHS's alternative site selection process is described in Section 2.3.1 of the NBAF EIS. Decisions on whether to construct and operate the NBAF and, if so, where will be based on the analyses presented in the NBAF EIS and other factors such as cost, engineering and technical feasibility, strategic considerations, policy considerations, and public input. DHS notes the commentor's concern about the risk to health and safety from the NBAF operation. DHS believes that experience shows that facilities utilizing modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF, would enable NBAF to be safely operated on the U.S. mainland. The NBAF would provide state-of-the-art biocontainment features and operating procedures to minimize the potential for laboratory-acquired infections and accidental releases. The risk of an accidental release of a pathogen is extremely low. DHS notes the commentor's questions regarding the site selection process. DHS held a competitive process to select potential sites for the proposed NBAF as described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 of the NBAF EIS. A team of Federal employees representing multi-department component offices and multi-governmental agencies (DHS, U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], and Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]) reviewed the submissions based primarily on environmental suitability and proximity to research capabilities, proximity to workforce, acquisition/ construction/ operations, and community acceptance. Ultimately, DHS identified five site alternatives that surpassed others in meeting the evaluation criteria and DHS preferences, and determined that they, in addition to the Plum Island Site, would be evaluated in the EIS as alternatives for the proposed NBAF. DHS prepared the NBAF EIS in accordance with the provisions of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and CEQ's regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.). The primary objective of the EIS is to evaluate the environmental impacts of a range of reasonable alternatives for locating, constructing, and operating the NBAF and the No Action Alternative. As summarized in Section 3.1 of the NBAF EIS, DHS analyzed each environmental resource area in a consistent manner across all the alternatives to allow for a fair comparison among the alternatives.

DHS notes the commentor's questions regarding the criteria for final site selection. Several factors will affect the decision on whether or not the NBAF is built, and, if so, where. The EIS itself will not be the sole deciding factor. The decision will be made based on the following factors: 1) analyses from the EIS and support documents; 2) the four evaluation criteria discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1; 3) applicable Federal, state, and local laws and regulatory requirements; 4) consultation requirements among the Federal, state, and local agencies, as well as federally recognized American Indian Nations; 5) policy considerations; and 6) public comment. A separate Threat and Risk Assessment (designated as For Official Use Only) was conducted to determine the level and type of threat for each site, and Section 3.14 and Appendix E of the NBAF EIS evaluated the potential consequences from terrorist actions and other accident scenarios.
has come up, it's always been oh, trust us, trust technology. Now, the respected government accountability office has said technology cannot cure all problems, particularly human-caused problems. So my question is: Now that you've narrowed it down to five locations, none of which were qualified on the basis of safety, how can safety become a validly applied criteria when there's no way to know that these are the five safest locations in the United States?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. A really good question. When the -- we got questioned before the EIS how would we make an informed decision with respect to risk assessment. Well, it's come out; the draft EIS has come out. The people can see the results, as Chuck presented.

So what we're seeing here now is -- really it's low risk, high consequence is the variable that we're focused on. And you're right, there are discriminators in the five mainland sites.
If you look at economic impacts for Foot and Mouth Disease, you see a 2.8 to 4.2 billion range. The 2.8 is Plum Island; 4.2 is Kansas.

So Plum Island, obviously, has the lower consequence, because they do -- there is a buffer of water there at that site. We take credit for it as an extra layer of protection.

But you're looking at 2.8, 4.2 billion. But that's still a significant impact, the range in and of itself.

So that factor, to answer your question, it is one of the -- has to be one of the leading considerations in making the decision. So we would take that information and, you know, present that to the decision maker, along with these other factors I've presented. So it clearly has to be, you know, considered and will be considered as we go forward.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just a quick follow-up.

What other factors would preempt safety?

MR. JOHNSON: What?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What other factors would preempt safety?

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, what other factors we would consider.

We would carry the four additional criteria forward, the proximity to research, the work force and the apprehensive construction and community acceptance. Those will carry forward.

In addition to the EIS and risk assessment that I just talked about you addressed, we also look at factors such as the cost to construct and operate. So the decision maker, when they make the decision, has to be aware of all of the factors, too.

We're not making a blind decision. Site characterization and security and -- and community acceptance.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

This will be our last question for this period. Then we'll open up the floor for formal comments.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hello. My question is concerning the -- the -- my
mind’s gone blank.

My question is about the Foot and Mouth Disease study, which is, obviously, the centerpiece of what you’ll be doing here. And according to a 1947 law passed by Congress, the study of Foot and Mouth Disease on the mainland is illegal, which is why it has been conducted at Plum Island. And so in order for Foot and Mouth to be studied anywhere at these sites, these mainland sites, Congress will have to overturn the law.

A GAO report that was issued recently said they saw no justification for bringing the study of Foot and Mouth to the mainland. I know that it’s being held up in Congress at the moment. I have heard no decision. And I wondered if you could tell me what the status of that request is.

MR. JOHNSON: Sure.

The Congress actually passed the Farm Bill -- I believe it’s in the mid May time frame -- where they put in the Farm Bill as law that a sector of agriculture shall designate -- you know, the Department of...
Homeland Security Foot and Mouth could announce that work be done at any successor facility to Plum Island independent of site. So that law that you mentioned has been repealed, and this law is now in place and going forward. So it was addressed in the Congress.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, in other words, there are no further obstacles to studying Foot and Mouth on the mainland?

MR. JOHNSON: From a legislative standpoint, that issue has been taken care of, correct.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

All right, folks, we're going to open up the meeting to the formal public comment period. Just like to remind everybody we have a very full list here. We want to make sure everybody gets a chance to speak. And I just want to run down the parameters real quick so we're all working together and making sure everyone is being heard.

Each speaker will have three minutes.
the event that you have gone over your time, please do quietly sit down, go back to your seat and submit the rest of your comments that you did not get to address to us in writing. They will all be treated the same and treated equally.

Also, I want to clarify that under the National Environmental Policy Act for this portion of the meeting if you do pose a question to the panel, the panel, at this point in time, will not be responding verbally because what we have to do, under the National Environmental Policy Act, is take each one of your questions and go back and address them with the scientific process to make sure we get the right response.

So please don't think that we're being disrespectful if you pose a question in your comments. We legally have to make sure all of them are addressed in what's called the Comment Response Document.

Also, in the event of time -- we're making sure we don't miss anyone -- I'll call a few folks' names off the list. So if you are at the back of the room, if you'd quietly
move forward so when the person in front of you is finished then you can step up to the microphone, that would be great. We'd appreciate it.

All right. Our first speaker this afternoon is Andy Herod.

ANDY HEROD: Good afternoon. I thank you for coming to Athens.

My name is Andy Herod. I am an elected member of the Athens-Clarke County government; and I would just like, first of all, to welcome you here to Athens. I think we have a wonderful city here, and I hope you're enjoying your two or three days here.

When I first heard about this project I was perhaps fairly suspicious. This is, after all -- has been associated with the Bush Administration. And I'm certainly no fan of the Bush Administration.

But I took it upon myself to read more about this project, to talk to some of the scientists that have been involved at Plum Island. I have been interested -- or it has been interesting to me to see that the scientists say that the security of Plum Island
Island has actually improved since DHS took over the facility.

And I've also taught the -- a BSL-3 ag lab here in Athens and seen the procedures and how they handle research firsthand. And I would just like to say that certainly on behalf of myself that I am quite comfortable with NBAF coming here to Athens, and I hope you will choose us.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.).

MS. COGHILL: The next speaker is Richard Theurer, followed by J. Scott Angle and then Pat Wilson.

Mr. Theurer, you're next.

(No response.)

MS. COGHILL: In the event that I'm not pronouncing the name -- oh, sorry.

J. SCOTT ANGLE: No. That's not me.

MS. COGHILL: Okay. The last name is spelled T-h-e-u-e-r.

Okay. We'll go back and make sure that we accommodate Richard when he shows up.

The next person is J. Scott Angle,
A-n-g-l-e.

J. SCOTT ANGLE: Good afternoon, and welcome to Athens.

My name is Scott Angle, and I'm the dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences here at the University of Georgia. I'm not here to represent my colleagues nor the university, but rather I speak only for myself.

My academic career's partially focused on risk assessment. So I have a relatively unique perspective on these issues.

All activity of our daily lives involve risk. All activities also have potential reward, as you well know. Risk assessment weighs the risk of an activity against reward we hope to gain.

In my opinion, the potential benefits of NBAF to agriculture far outweigh any potential risk. Having worked with hazardous materials and organisms for decades, I'm confident that modern containment technologies provide the level of safety needed for the work to be conducted at this facility.
I also have an advisory council made up of many of the most prominent supporters of agriculture in food industry in Georgia. Earlier this year they drafted a letter and voted to have this letter sent directly to David Lee in support of the facility coming to Athens. I'd like to read this letter to you.

On behalf of the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Advisory Council, I wish to convey the council members' support for locating NBAF at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. Thirty members of the advisory council well represent many communities, occupations and interest groups in Georgia. They work closely with the college and the university staff in reviewing ongoing programs and identifying and planning high-priority future programs.

The chief mission of volunteer members is to ensure that the college programs are responsive to the needs of Georgia residents and that the college performs its role most effectively in dispersing knowledge in new...
technologies about agriculture, food and the
environment. Our members have great respect
for the college of -- for the University of
Georgia and encourage its continued pursuit
of NBAF, the facility that will certainly
enhance Georgia's leadership role in areas
crucial to the U.S. food chain and human
welfare.

The diversity of Georgia citizens listed
in the text directory applaud the efforts of
the university to bring this facility to our
state, and they are most willing to help in
any way possible.

Sincerely, Louie Blake, executive
secretary.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

Our next speaker's Pat Wilson. Janildo
Reis and Dorinda Dullmeyer, if you'd please
make your way to the front of the room,
please.

PAT WILSON: Good afternoon, everybody.

I'm Pat Wilson. I'm the director of
government affairs for Governor Sonny Purdue.

I wanted to welcome you guys here to
Athens. As a UGA grad and a resident of nearby Athens, I really appreciate you guys coming in.

I also wanted to thank you for this process. I think the selection process -- both sides of the aisle I think would say it has been very open and transparent, and we appreciate you coming and listening to the concerns of the community.

The reason the Governor asked me to come today is to give his full support of the -- of this process of the selection and of, hopefully, bringing NBAF to Athens. We have been lucky that we've seen, over the last three years, a great coordination between federal, state and local officials in Georgia. And this includes the Georgia Congressional delegation, the Governor's office, the private sector, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, all of our research institutions, which include Georgia, of course. But we also have Georgia Tech and Emory, Clark Atlanta University and the Georgia Research Alliance.

And the reason that we think that we have...
such a good synergy here is that we recognize
that this is a unique opportunity for not
only the state but for the federal
government.
In Athens, in this site in Georgia, you
have these facilities that are already here,
the USDA labs. You have proximity to CDC,
which has operated for years without
incident. You have Hartsfield International
Airport very close, which gives us
connections to pretty much anywhere around
the world. You have all of our research
institutions willing to work together, which
is a fantastic work force draw for Athens.
It gives us the ability to support and
staff a facility. And I think that what this
has done is given us the opportunity to
really help the federal government in
something that is of national security
interest.
To that extent the Governor wanted me to
let you know that we are willing to address
and look forward to addressing any -- any
interest -- or any issues that are in the EIS
report. You have our full willingness to
address those in the future.
So thank you very much for coming. We appreciate it. And I look forward to working with you in the selection process.
MS. COGHILL: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. Our next speaker is Janildo Reis.
(Appause.)
JANILDO REIS: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Janildo Reis. I'm a graduate student and doing my Ph.D. in veterinary pathology here at the University of Georgia. And I came to U.S. in 2006 thanks for excellent program between Brazil and USA through a full grad scholarship. And I'm doing my Ph.D. research with VSV, which is Vesicular Stomatitis Virus. And this disease cause -- affect livestock animals involved in the clinical studies of Foot and Mouth Disease. And I'm doing my research at the Plum Island, and I'm going back and forth like two times a year there. And I think I'm here, I can give you my thoughts here and share my thoughts with you guys here. So I think if NBAF were here at Athens,
which is a college town, the University of Georgia would benefit greatly with this opportunity to -- because it would create academic and research opportunities to collaborate -- of collaboration between these two institutions. And in Plum Island only one or maybe between few graduate students there.

So I think if the NBAF were in Athens UGA would benefit of that and also graduate students like me would be working there. So instead of just one or two graduate students being at NBAF, if NBAF were here in Athens maybe hundreds of graduate students could be working there.

So if NBAF were here so we could have more academic and research opportunities. So it would be great for Athens and for UGA.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Our next speaker will be Dorinda Dallmeyer. And Maria Kuhn, Sue Wilde, Kathy Prescott and Egbert Mundt, if you could slowly make your way to the front of the room.

Go ahead.
DORINDA DALLMEYER: I own a farm which supports livestock as well as a wide array of wildlife. And I want to bring to your attention a failure of the draft Environmental Impact Statement to address impacts on wildlife, specifically whitetail deer, anything other than the most cursory fashion. While my focus this afternoon is on the south Milledge site, the same is true for the other mainland candidate sites.

In Section 3103113 the draft EIS relies on 2001 U.S. Census data indicating that expenditures related to recreational hunting activities in the state of Georgia total 504 million dollars. However, there's more recent data available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which shows that nearly 350 Georgia residents hunt deer and Georgia ranks number one in the country for out-of-state hunters who come here, 136,000 annually. Hunting currently provides 15,000 jobs for Georgians, nearly 15,000, which is 45 times the number of jobs that the proposed NBAF accounts for 430 million dollars in annual wages. Hunting also provides yearly...
revenues of a hundred million dollars in federal taxes and 93 million in state and local taxes with the broader ripple effect on Georgia's economy estimated to be 1.4 billion dollars. These figures dwarf the 32 million dollar annual total for income and taxes the draft EIS projects for the Athens site.

Data for Kansas, Texas, North Carolina and Mississippi also reflect that the value of the hunting economy of each state far outstrips the putative economic benefits that will come from the proposed facility. These economic data are relevant in evaluating the potential impact of an accidental or deliberate release of pathogens from the proposed South Milledge Avenue site.

The draft EIS correctly notes that the proposed site is located adjacent to bottomland hardwood forests along the Middle Oconee River which serve not only as their habitat but also as a corridor for dispersal. According to UGA professor Carl Miller, a noted authority on whitetail deer, large home ranges are reported for deer and bottomland hardwood habitats such as those found along
the middle Oconee. Thus we have the potential for a great deal of movement of whitetail deer all along the Middle Oconee Corridor and into other forage areas such as livestock pastures. Indeed, Dr. Miller notes that yearly males disperse as much as two to six miles from their maternal home range. Although the draft EIS maps the density of livestock found in the vicinity of each candidate site, it fails to include any data on population density and dispersal characteristics for deer, which are susceptible to Foot and Mouth Disease and Rift Valley Fever as domestic livestock. Of course, the facility will have a perimeter fence designed to keep deer out. But no fence can keep viruses in, especially FMD virus, which is easily spread by aerosol transmission. Nor can a fence contain insect vectors such as mosquitoes infected with other pathogens transmissible to deer such as Rift Valley Fever. If this facility is built, it has no business being placed on the mainland. Thank you.
MS. COGHILL: Maria Kuhn is our next speaker.

Maria Kuhn: Good afternoon. My name is Maria Kuhn. I am a citizen of Oconee County. I'm the director of biosafety here at the University of Georgia.

And as President Bush has often brought up in these meetings, I would like to go ahead and declare that I am a liberal. And I do also support NBAF. I support NBAF wherever it is built, and I personally hope to see it in Athens.

I support NBAF because I do support the quality of life that we all have here in the United States. NBAF and our safe food supply are directly connected. And NBAF will also provide technologies and knowledge that will improve the quality of life for those less fortunate than us on a global level.

In my work I am able to support safe and secure research that involves humans, animal and plant pathogens. I am blessed to be in a unique position where every day I work with brilliant and inquisitive individuals who...
nobly dedicate their professions to supporting and providing research that involves the topics that I've mentioned. These intelligent individuals that I call the biosafety team are not just the scientists but they are also the technicians, the maintenance personnel, the police, veterinarians, animal care, custodians and engineers. Regardless of scientific disciplines, the general focus of science should be well understood that it is not unique. Whether you're a behavioral, biomedical or agricultural scientist, your focus is simply for the advancement, improvement and understanding of what is true and so. Therefore, I would like this community to understand and know that the researchers and veterinarians at NBAF have the same focus. Theirs is one of advancement in foreign animal diseases that are continuing and knocking on our doors every day. Rift Valley Fever has left Africa and migrated to the Middle East. And I would like for you all to know there's concerns...
would be the next stop would be Europe or possibly here in the western hemisphere, and we have to be prepared. Einstein said a perfect means -- a perfection of means and a confusion at the aims seems to be our main problem. And the negative expressions that I see currently out there for NBAF, the terms bioterror lab, I believe are currently of confusion and they are a definitive confusion of aims for the research to be done at NBAF. Are there risks? Yes. Are people perfect? No. But in my work I know that we strive for the highest level of controls that reduce those risks and address the concerns for human error. So for people that may be on the fence, please do not let the terms being used scare you or concern you, because the aims of NBAF are the same as those of all scientific research: to understand, to advance and to improve. Thank you.
MS. COGHILL: Thank you. (Applause.)
MS. COGHILL: Sue Wilde.

SUE WILDE: I would like to express my opposition to the construction in Athens of the NBAF on the proposed site at South Milledge and Whitehall Road.

As your Draft Environmental Impact Statement acknowledges, the site lies between the Whitehall Forest and the botanical garden squarely in the middle of an Audubon Society-designated important bird area, or IBA.

The EIS claims that construction of the facility on that site would have no direct effect on the State botanical garden Whitehall Forest IBA because, quote, the forest of repairing corridor which connects Whitehall with the botanical garden would be preserved, end quote. However, this assessment fails to take into account the degradation of grassland bird habitat.

Grassland birds rely on open fields for nesting and other habitat functions. In Georgia these birds include indigo bunting, common yellow-throat, eastern meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, song sparrow, eastern...
bluebird and northern bobwhite, to name a few. Studies show that grassland bird species in the eastern U.S. are declining faster than any other group of North American breeding birds due to habitat destruction. According to the EIS, construction activities for NBAF would disturb approximately 30 acres plus additional acreage for temporary construction areas, end quote. The EIS also states that there will be, quote, site grading, stripping of grass, removal of trees and other vegetation, end quote, and that the construction period will last four years. This kind of long-term construction and degradation of the pasture land that currently exists between Whitehall Forest and the state botanical garden is not appropriate in an important bird area. In addition, the EIS states that, quote, the main facility, all support buildings and the parking lot will be well lit and that lighting is also proposed at regular intervals along the security fence, end quote. DHS notes the commentors concern regarding nighttime lighting impacts on birds. As described in Chapter 3, Section 3.8.3.3.4 of the FEIS nighttime lighting has the potential to impact wildlife through astronomical and ecological light pollution. The NBAF would employ the minimum intensity of lighting that is necessary to provide adequate security.
At the last scoping meeting I spoke about migrating birds' tendency to make their migratory flights at night frequently navigating by the stars. It has long been known that lighted buildings cause trouble for night-flying birds. They become confused by the light, which they are reluctant to fly out of, and will fly in circles until they drop from exhaustion or collide with the building. The EIS did not address the nightlight hazard to birds.

To me it is obvious that construction of the NBAF on the open land acreage in the middle of a designated important bird area would be highly detrimental to the bird life there, and I urge you to reject the Athens site for the construction of the NBAF.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Kathy Prescott is our next speaker.

If I have could have Egbert Mundt, Mike Giles, Mike Lacy and Mike Wanner please come to the front of the room.

Go ahead.
KATHY PRESCOTT: Since you value redundancy so much, I will repeat my comments from the Washington, D.C., meeting. I'd like to tell you about a really big seller in Athens right now: rain barrels. We are in a one-hundred-year drought and people are collecting rainwater off their roofs to water their plants. Unfortunately, in my case that doesn't help our pond that continues to drop 6 inches a day. Our neighbor's well has run dry. Yet the DEIS executive summary tells me no problem, effects on water in Athens will be minor.

Another popular item in town is the mosquito pellet. They are for the rain barrels to kill the mosquito larvae. We have so many mosquitoes in Athens that the fire stations give these pellets away for free. We have PSAs describing how best to avoid breeding mosquitoes around our homes; yet now we discover in the DEIS that NBAF will have an insectary to breed mosquitoes by the thousands to serve as vectors for diseases, some of which are fatal to humans. But the DEIS says no problem.
Well, it is more of a problem in areas that have mosquitos since a breach could cause a disease, particularly Rift Valley Fever, to become established in the environment. But we're told the health and safety effects of NBAF on Athens are negligible or moderate, depending where you look.

We also learn in the DEIS that incineration is a possible means of carcass disposal. It would be, quote, a major title five air emission source, unquote, yet no mention of specific Athens air quality problems, only references to, quote, State compliance continues to be a challenge, unquote. But in the DEIS air quality effects in Athens are minor.

At the DHS town hall meeting in February, Plum Island's Dr. Barry Beck (phonetic spelling) happily volunteered that only FMD was transported through aerosol. He forgot to mention the three zoonotic diseases listed in the DEIS that can be spread through aerosol and can be deadly to humans.

He also reminded us that, quote, we...
weren't running big animals, we weren't fattening them up for livestock, implying to me that the animals at NBAF will be small.

Sorry. DEIS lists -- the DEIS lists 1430-pound cattle, 1400-pound bison, also elk, horses and deer.

What else is out of whack with the DEIS?

A lot. But I only have three minutes. The citizens of Athens have been misled all along. The use of your very -- to use your very over used term we will leverage all the ill will created caused by DHS's, quote, highly competitive acquisition strategy, unquote, that has already disrupted our community and we will use all legal means to keep NBAF away from Athens.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: All right. Egbert Mundt is our next speaker.

EGBERT MUNDT: My name is Egbert Mundt. I am originally from Germany.

I came over in 2006 here to take a shift for (unintelligible) a scholarship for (unintelligible) medicine. And before I came over was working 17 years in NBAF Germany.
And I have a little bit experience with that. And besides the last 12 years I worked in Germany I was a biosafety officer in NBAF Germany. And I can tell you you can do it in a safe way.

And one point I'd like to raise it's mentioned several times here that this island that is -- putting NBAF institution on island. I mean, the original concept is -- island concept is based on the known existing technology in 1910 because the first biological institute was built in Germany on an island in the Riems because the technology was not available to that time. And I think we are some steps ahead.

That means you should not rely on last century technology because we have now better technology to keep the germs inside and do not pollute the air. I mean, that's ridiculous what I hear, your air pollution, et cetera.

And what I also like to point out is that the Riems since 1973 is not an island anymore because they made -- built a dam to the mainland. And it didn't change anything.
because they were -- even by building this
dam there was no incidents in Germany.
And in addition I was, from 2005 to 2006,
to the same building in new NBAF Germany. I
was on the planning team and there learned a
new definition of the term rebalancing of
safety. Because when you build such a
building you have to be safe, you have to
be -- this building has to be operated like
an island.
That means you have -- even if all power
sources are cut off, this building has to be
operated. And I learned it is possible. And
as I learned in this discussion before this
meeting is over possible for NBAF is in the
planning phase for NBAF. And I like to say I
support NBAF for two main -- mainly two
reasons.
First, I like to cooperate with those
guys from NBAF because I'm very interested in
biological or viral diseases in animals
(unintelligible), including hybrid animal
influenza virus. And, second, I like to have
the knowledge and the diagnostic tools to
diagnose Foot and Mouth, African Swine Fever,
Classical Swine Fever, et cetera. And this is only possible, only possible, when you know the disease, when you develop your own, your own, diagnostic techniques and when you have trained people.

Please let the NBAF in Athens. Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you, sir.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Mike Giles.

MIKE GILES: Good afternoon. My name is Mike Giles. I'm with the Georgia Poultry Federation, a trade association that represents poultry growers, companies and allied industries in Georgia, the nation's leading poultry-producing state.

The Georgia Poultry Federation supports locating an NBAF facility in Athens. We believe that the many resources present in Athens and Georgia as a whole, University of Georgia, ongoing USDA and ARS research programs, the Centers for Disease Control, a supportive agricultural community and others would create a thriving environment for the NBAF facility and its program.

The Georgia Poultry Federation is...
involved in the formation of a group of agricultural associations which also supports Athens as the best site for NBAF. This organization, named Georgia Ag Associations for NBAF, includes the Georgia Agro-Business Council, the Georgia Association of County Agents, the Georgia Cattlemen's Association, the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation, Georgia Food Industry Association, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Georgia Milk Producers, Georgia Pulp Producers Association, Georgia Poultry Federation, Georgia Retail Association, Georgia Veterinary Medical Association and the UGA College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Alumni Association.

These organizations represent the broad scope of Georgia agriculture, the state's leading industry, which contributes nearly 60 billion dollars to the state's economy. Food processing alone, which depends on the farm level production, is the largest segment of manufacturing in the state accounting for 34 billion dollars in economic impact, approximately 200,000 jobs and earnings of
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1. 7.6 billion for those in the Georgia food industry.
2. Georgia agriculture is committed to producing a safe and secure food supply. Our producers have been on the leading edge of innovative programs to protect our food supply infrastructure and to raise the awareness of how important it is to be constantly vigilant about this vital task.
3. Georgia Poultry Industry has invested tremendous resources and preparation for its response to animal diseases such as avian influenza, which fortunately we have never had to employ. There is a tremendous opportunity for NBAF to leverage this outstanding track record of commitment to securing of safe food supply in our state through partnerships with Georgia agricultural associations and producers.
4. We believe that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement demonstrates that the NBAF facility could be built and operated safely in Athens. The real risk to American agriculture and the consumers of agricultural products would be for the federal government...
to not proceed with this vitally important NBAF project.

We believe that Athens is the best location in the nation for NBAF. And the Georgia Poultry Federation and others in Georgia agriculture will do all that we can to ensure that the NBAF facility and programs in Georgia will be highly successful.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Mike Lacy is our next speaker.

If Mike Wanner, Kevin Hitchcock and Flora Tydings would come to the front of the room.

Go ahead, sir.

MIKE LACY: Thank you. I'm Mike Lacy, a resident of Clarke County. I've lived in Athens 23 years, longer than I've lived anywhere else. Athens is my home.

As a resident of Athens-Clarke County, I am excited about the positive economic benefit that NBAF would bring to our community, economic development our community needs. I appreciate our community leaders,
their work in attempting to bring this entity to our area.

I'm also a faculty member here at the University of Georgia with the Department of Poultry Science. As a scientist I'm convinced that this facility is safe.

The important work that this lab will do will contribute to the ongoing efforts at UGA to protect livestock and people. The synergy that NBAF and UGA, CDC, other universities and organizations would have can't be overestimated. I think that the discoveries that would come from that synergy would be hard to duplicate anywhere else.

NBAF will contribute to the economic development in the Athens area. I think NBAF will make a contribution to humans and animals worldwide to the health and welfare of both. And it would be a great honor, in my opinion, if Athens had a part in that noble cause.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Mike Wanner.
MIKE WANNER: Good afternoon. I'm Mike Wanner. I'm CEO of two biotech companies here in Athens, Georgia, Abeome and Oncose. And I'd like to make sure for the committees and the evaluation of NBAF being located here in Athens and also for the Athens community that, first of all, there has been a tremendous amount of review of the document that was prepared. In working with a number of scientists here in the community, we were very pleased with the fairness of the EIS and appreciate the fact that you went to the extent that you did and the transparency of the information that was provided. I also want to make sure that you're aware and the community is aware that our local leaders have been concerned and active in understanding that document and have come to us and have received and asked for support and understanding of the document and concerns they have. So they are interested and very concerned and continue to support the location of NBAF here in Athens-Clarke County. So thank you for doing that. We also want to make sure you're aware of...
1 our steadfast support of the concept of NBAF
2 and for the need to be proactive in studying
3 diseases that are not common here in the U.S.
4 and to make sure that we're pro-active in
5 having vaccines and diagnostics developed to
6 be on the cutting edge of that so that we can
7 prevent large mishaps in the future. So we
8 welcome the opportunity for NBAF to be here
9 in Athens and to collaborate with you in the
10 work that you can do here for the U.S. in the
11 future.
12 As you well know, the University of
13 Georgia has a very substantial scientific and
14 biotech group, as well as training going on
15 here in Athens with Athens Technology. You
16 may not be aware there's also a very
17 substantial biotech community, private
18 companies here located in Athens. There are
19 16 of them that are incubated at the
20 University of Georgia, a number of those that
21 are independent outside and in the community
22 that are active in studying vaccine
23 development and other areas of biotechnology.
24 It's also home to the world's largest
25 animal health company, Merial, for which I
I worked for 12 years and which can actively collaborate with the NBAF facility, as well. We have the talent here in Athens to work with you and collaborate. We have the talent to help supply the staff that can help you to be successful in your mission.

In addition, we have very high quality of life here in Athens. And if the people aren't already located here in Athens, it's not too hard to get people to move to Athens, Georgia. It's a great place to be.

Finally, you may not know that there also is direct -- has been direct collaboration with Plum Island and with this activity in the past in my experience with (unintelligible) based here in Athens. We supply the bulk rabies vaccine for the Plum Island facility. We were trained to be at the ready in case of an outbreak of rabies in the United States, and we were very proud of our ability and impact that we could have in that situation.

We also were the developers and launchers of a wildlife rabies vaccine that has been deployed in the states and has eradicated...
rabies in those regions where it was used.
2 And we have the ability and the activity that
3 we can support your presence here, and we
4 hope that you'll select Athens as your site.
5 So thank you for coming.
6 MS. COGHILL: Thank you.
7 (Applause.)
8 MS. COGHILL: Flora Tydings is our next
9 speaker.
10 If Richard Hargrove, Carol Goerig, Grady
11 Thrasher and Zhen Fu could come to the front
12 of the room, please.
13 FLORA TYDINGS: Good afternoon. I'm
14 Flora Tydings, and I'm president of Athens
15 Technical College and currently serving as
16 the chair of the Athens-Clarke County
17 Economic Development Foundation. So I'm
18 actually speaking to you today wearing two
19 hats.
20 I'd like to address the positive aspects
21 of bringing NBAF to Athens, Georgia. As your
22 research has already shown, Athens is an
23 outstanding small city with the
24 university-based population and a highly
25 educated and skilled work force. Your
1 location in Athens would be extremely
2 successful as it joins our vast array of
3 university research facilities and existing
4 international life science companies.
5 Athens Technical College has been
6 providing skilled research lab professionals
7 in this community for over 50 years, and we
8 are eager to support any other training needs
9 that this facility would have. And while I
10 am not a scientist, I have to ask the very
11 pertinent questions of those existing life
12 science professionals within our community
13 and outside our community.
14 They've been very candid with me. And I
15 believe that the risk here in locating this
16 facility would be very negligible regarding
17 the positive impact of the other issues and
18 acceptable. The environmental impacts would
19 be minimal.
20 The benefits of NBAF to agricultural,
21 wildlife, public health and safety are
22 globally significant. The development of the
23 new vaccines, diagnostic procedures and the
24 rapid response to foreign animal disease will
25 protect animal health in our hemisphere. And
whether or not that research is done here, that research must be done.

In conclusion, I strongly believe NBAF as an integral part of our research community will be very successful in the Athens-Clarke County area and will complement our existing scientific community. NBAF will not stress our infrastructure, nor will it block the attraction of other successful companies. The potential benefits are enormous. The construction cost, the permanent jobs, the annual and state sales tax combine to make this facility a significant economic driver for our area. Yet the greatest value to this community is the addition of a major facility to our existing health science cluster of companies which will assist us in attracting other biotechnology industry to Athens.

Your continued positive consideration is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Kevin Hitchcock.

KEVIN HITCHCOCK: I've worked with the University of Georgia in their biosafety...
department on their engineering controls for a safe environment inside their labs. And I believe that their stringent guidelines have helped us become a better company because of what they do to keep everyone safe in their laboratory.

I do also believe that this facility should be located in Athens because of its close proximity with the CDC. If we look at their safety record, I think it would only help this facility make sure that it maintains a safe environment.

I also believe if we look at the risk factors that it would suggest that if we wanted no occurrence of safety accidents it would suggest that we shouldn’t allow a majority of the research that already happens at the University of Georgia.

There is risk in every industry in the environment that we work in. And I believe this facility would be operated in a safe manner. Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Richard Hargrove.
Chapter 2 - Comment Documents

NBAF Final Environmental Impact Statement

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RICHARD HARGROVE: Good afternoon. My name is Richard Hargrove. I live in Watkinsville, and I am retired. A year ago my wife and I left the coastal part of Texas for the wonders of Athens, considered to be one of the -- one of the very top places for retirement. We were particularly interested in escaping hurricanes. Just lucky, I guess.

One of the main obstacles between us -- that is, DHS and the homeowners, my special interest -- is that we have a lack of trust. Safety seems to get short shrift among the criteria.

Observations of government operations such as FEMA, CDC, Fort Detrick and DHS have not favored our trust. Your possible desire to locate here despite your own acknowledged possible harm to animals and humans doesn't raise our level of trust.

While meetings here attended by the DHS are commendable, you have depended too long on uninformed mayors and commissioners as to this community's support of your proposal. They don't know what citizens think here.

DHS notes the commentor's lack of confidence in the DHS and concerns regarding safe facility operations. The NBAF would be designed, constructed, and operated to ensure the maximum level of public safety and to fulfill all necessary requirements to protect the environment. DHS believes that experience shows that facilities utilizing modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF, would enable NBAF to be safely operated with a minimal degree of risk, regardless of the site chosen. The risks and associated potential effects to human health and safety were evaluated in Section 3.14 and Appendix E of the NBAF EIS. The risks were determined to be low for all site alternatives. Should the NBAF Record of Decision call for the design, construction, and operations of the NBAF, then site-specific protocols and emergency response plans would be developed, in coordination with local emergency response agencies that would consider the diversity and density of human, livestock, and wildlife populations residing within the area.

DHS notes the commentor’s concerns regarding the impact of a pathogen release on the local population, livestock industry, businesses and infrastructure. The NBAF would be designed, constructed, and operated to ensure the maximum level of public safety and to fulfill all necessary requirements to protect the environment. Section 3.14 and Appendix E of the NBAF EIS, investigates the chances of a variety of accidents that could occur with the proposed NBAF and consequences of potential accidents. The chances of an accidental release are low. Although some accidents are more likely to occur than others (e.g., safety protocol not being followed), the chances of an accidental release based on human error are low in large part due to the design and implementation of biocontainment safeguards in conjunction with rigorous personnel training. For example, as described in Section 2.2.2.1 of the NBAF EIS, all laboratory staff would receive thorough pre-operational training, as well as ongoing training, in the handling of hazardous infectious agents, understanding biocontainment functions of standard and special practices for each biosafety level, and understanding biocontainment equipment and laboratory characteristics. Appendix B to the EIS describes biocontainment lapses and laboratory acquired infections. Laboratory-acquired infections have not been shown to be a threat to the community at large. As set out in Section 3.14.3.4 of the NBAF EIS, employees and contractors will be screened prior to employment or engagement and monitored while working, among other security measures. In addition, oversight of NBAF operations, as described in Section 2.2.2.6 of the NBAF EIS, will be conducted in part by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), which includes community representative participation, and the APHIS Animal Research Policy and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Should the NBAF Record of Decision call for the design, construction, and operations of the NBAF, site specific protocols would then be developed in coordination with local emergency response agencies and would consider the diversity and density of populations, including institutionalized populations, residing within the local area. The need for an evacuation under an accident conditions is considered to be a very low probability event. DHS would have site-specific standard operating procedures and emergency...
response plans in place prior to the initiation of research activities at the proposed NBAF.

Comment No: 3 Issue Code: 2.0
DHS notes the commentor’s concern. Chapter 1, Section 1.1 of the NBAF EIS identifies DHS’s mission as the study of foreign animal and zoonotic (transmitted from animals to humans) diseases that threaten our agricultural livestock and agricultural economy. The goal or benefit of NBAF is to prevent these animal diseases from spreading in the United States through research into the transmission of these animal diseases and the development of diagnostic tests, vaccines, and antiviral therapies. DHS believes that experience shows that facilities utilizing modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF, would enable NBAF to be safely operated with a minimal degree of risk, regardless of the site chosen.
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1 because they haven't sought our opinions and
2 they have refused the plea for referendum.
3 Do you trust promised support from officials
4 for your infrastructure needs when Athens
5 commissioners are not sure they can pay the
6 light bill?
7 As a retired academic I'm saddened to see
8 our great University of Georgia place
9 institutional interest above those of the
10 safety of the community. Potential
11 pestilence and unprecedented cost should not
12 be risks imposed upon those who have
13 supported the university with their hearts
14 and tax money.
15 Exaggerations and false information have
16 come at every turn. Why would you trust a
17 university that wants to give you 67 good
18 acres and the finest land in Athens, over 20
19 million dollars in its money and then
20 announce cutbacks in jobs and slim, if any,
21 pay raises? Why haven't you dealt with
22 nearby Oconee County about roads and
23 incinerator risks, which, by the way, is 83
24 million dollars in debt without your help.
25 We think that your boss has it right.

Comment No: 4  Issue Code: 8.2
DHS notes the commentor's concern about the traffic congestion in the area of the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative and the future impact of the NBAF operation on the area's transportation infrastructure. A discussion of the planned improvements to the area's primary transportation corridors of South Milledge Avenue and Whitehall Road to alleviate current and future traffic congestion resulting from the NBAF operation at the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative is located in Section 3.11.3.3.1 of the NBAF EIS. All planned improvements are per the recommendations of the Department of Transportation and the Public Works Department.

DHS notes the commentor's concerns regarding air pollution due to incineration. The potential effects of NBAF construction and operations on air quality are discussed in Section 3.4 of the NBAF EIS. Section 3.4.1 describes the methodology used in assessing potential air quality consequences at each site. Site specific effects at the South Milledge Avenue Site are discussed in Section 3.4.3. Section 3.4.3.1.2 summarizes the 2006 Ambient Air Surveillance Report produced by the Ambient Monitoring Program of Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. Air emissions were estimated using SCREEN3, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dispersion modeling program. Should a decision be made to build the NBAF and following site selection and final design, a more refined air emissions model would be used during the permitting process. The final design would ensure that the NBAF does not significantly affect the region's ability to meet air quality standards.
1 We'll be glad to see you in Mississippi.
2     (Applause.)
3     MS. COGHILL: Thank you, sir.
4     Carol Goerig.
5     CAROL GOERIG: I'm Carol Goerig. And I
6     have a lot of concerns about BSL
7     proliferation. It seems to be continuing
8     apace almost without us knowing where the
9     next one will be.
10     My current concern -- and I've been
11     reading about a sister facility called NBACC,
12     which is N-B-A-C-C. This is the National
13     Bio-Defense Analysis and Countermeasures
14     Center. This is a DHS lab currently being
15     built at Fort Detrick, Maryland.
16     In spite of substantial local protests,
17     ground for this 160,000-square-foot facility
18     was broken nearly two years ago. But there's
19     little information to be found on progress
20     since then even on the NBACC website.
21     A document describing a December 2004
22     site visit states that, quote, our goal is to
23     have a completed, fully functional project by
25     The NBACC mission found on its website,
quote, is to protect human health and
growth against biological terrorism by
improving understanding of potential
bioterrorism threats, end quote. The
facility will have BSL-2, -3 and -4 lab space
and will be the nation's premiere research
facility, in their words, for biological
threat, characterization and bio-forensic
research.

My questions are -- and I know that I
don't -- I won't get answers today, but I'm
going to continue looking, including on the
NBACC website and anywhere else I can. I
will continue to try to find answers to these
concerns, which I think are relevant to us in
Athens as we contemplate the future and the
building of NBAF.

Is the NBACC project completed and fully
functional as their mission said as of this
date? If not, how far behind schedule is it?
Has the full 128 million dollars
requested by DHS and actually appropriated by
Congress been received as of this date? If
not, how much has been received?
Has the project stayed within its
DHS notes the commentor’s question regarding the National Bio-Defense Analysis and Countermeasures Center (NBACC) at Fort Detrick, MD. The purpose and need for the proposed action is discussed in Chapter 1 of the NBAF EIS. DHS’s Proposed Action to site, construct, and operate the NBAF would allow researchers to study foreign animal and zoonotic diseases (transmitted from animals to humans) in the U.S. The NBAF would enable DHS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fulfill their respective missions of detecting, preventing, protecting against, and responding to an accidental or intentional release of a foreign animal disease within the United States. The mission of NBACC is to provide an integrated and responsive biosecurity enterprise for homeland security, law enforcement, medical, and veterinary communities. Specifically, NBACC’s goals are to (a) understand classical, engineered, and emerging biological terrorism threats; (b) develop deployable technologies and systems in partnership with operational end-users that protect the people, agriculture, and economy of the United States against biological terrorism; and (c) provide the scientific basis and operational capability to prevent technology surprise, rapidly detect events, respond effectively, and attribute use.

To put it simply, NBAF would conduct research to develop vaccines and diagnostic tools to identify and prevent the spread of foreign animal diseases, and the NBACC would develop technologies and operations to implement protective measures.

DHS notes the commentor’s opposition to the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative. DHS notes the commentor’s concern regarding the proximity of the South Milledge Avenue Site to the State Botanical Garden. As indicated in Sections 3.8.3.2 and 3.8.3.3 of the NBAF EIS, construction and normal operations of the NBAF would have no direct impact on the State Botanical Garden. The NBAF would affect primarily pasture areas that have low wildlife habitat value due to their disturbed condition, lack of native vegetation, and lack of wildlife food and cover. The forested portion of the NBAF site along the Oconee River is a high-value riparian wildlife corridor that connects the State Botanical Garden with Whitehall Forest. However, impacts to the forested riparian area would be minor (0.2 acre), and these impacts would occur within the existing pasture fence-line in areas that have been disturbed by grazing. Construction would occur primarily on disturbed pasture areas, and the high value forested riparian corridor would be retained. Therefore, the NBAF have minimal effects on wildlife and ecology of the State Botanical Garden.
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1 violated its trust to the community. We're a company town, but what's good for the university is not always good for the community. So I'm going to give my comments based on what we could be bringing to that site next to our botanical garden.

As has been asked before by disinterested news reporters from cities around our country whose governing bodies are not engaged in the current frenzied efforts by five states to induce the Department of Homeland security to place the would-be world's largest and potentially deadliest bioterror pathogen research facility in the middle of one of their communities, why would they is the question.

Why would any responsible state or city official welcome such an environmentally degrading, invasive and catastrophically risky facility as NBAF into any community?

More on point, why would our mayor and some, if not all, of our Athens-Clarke County commissioners roll out the welcome mat for ensured environmental destruction adjacent to a state botanical garden? And this was done...
before any credible information was even available about NBAF.

More astounding, why would our mayor and many commissioners remain proudly steadfast in their folly even after being exposed to real and astonishing information regarding the risk to our community's public health, safety and economy information first provided from the respected Government Accountability Office in May and now in DHS's own draft Environmental Impact Statement?

Why would any responsible University of Georgia administrator offer 67 unique and distinctive acres of irreplaceable land next to our botanical garden and give other incentives to DHS to entice it to propose its proposed NBAF there with full knowledge of the certainty of the environmental degradation and ecological disaster that irreversibly will befall and forever sully the unique and distinctive character of that swath of landscape on South Milledge Avenue that has been a public visual and recreational asset of our community for generations?
DHS notes the commentor’s statement. As described in Section 3.2.3, a change in land use and loss of open space would occur; however, current zoning regulations allow for this type of development. The South Milledge Avenue Site is currently zoned as “Governmental”, and construction and operation of the NBAF is consistent with this designation. However, the Clarke County Comprehensive Plan designates the South Milledge Avenue Site as “rural”, so an amendment to the comprehensive plan may be required. This information has been added to the NBAF EIS in Section 3.2.3. DHS and USDA ensure that the NBAF operation at the South Milledge Avenue Site will comply with all applicable local, state, and Federal regulations and policies. The visual effects of the NBAF at the South Milledge Avenue Site are also described in Section 3.2.3 of the NBAF EIS. DHS recognizes that the NBAF would be a distinctive visible feature and would alter the viewshed of the area.

Comment No: 5                     Issue Code: 15.2
DHS notes the commentor’s statement regarding site selection. DHS held a competitive process to select potential sites for the proposed NBAF as described in Section 2.3.1 of the NBAF EIS. A team of Federal employees representing multi-department component offices and multi-governmental agencies (DHS, U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], and Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]) reviewed the submissions based primarily on environmental suitability and proximity to research capabilities, proximity to workforce, acquisition/construction/operations, and community acceptance. Ultimately, DHS identified five site alternatives that surpassed others in meeting the evaluation criteria and DHS preferences, and determined that they, in addition to the Plum Island Site, would be evaluated in the EIS as alternatives for the proposed NBAF.
Why would any responsible government agency, one dedicated to protecting communities, promote this sort of thing on this particular site?

My question to them is: Do you have no shame.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Zhen Fu.

Richard Cooke, Rebecca Cooke, Steve Valeika and Steve Stice, if you could come forward to the front of the room.

Go ahead.

ZHEN FU: My name is Zhen Fu. I'm a resident of Oconee County. I also work at the University of Georgia.

My interest in research is rabies, one of the really horrific disease for humans. I have been working for more than 20 years and have been very safely carried out all experiment.

My another interest is really for exotic disease research. During the past 21 or so years I have visited almost all the high containment facilities around the world, Plum...
Island, (unintelligible), Winnipeg and, of course, Fort Detrick CDC. I have witnessed how they conduct research in those facilities. Is it to my knowledge that science can be done safely in this environment. And the possibly is not incidental, accounting I am the chair of the biosafety committee in this university. We do review protocols, recent protocols, very meticulously. We do attend to very details how the containment, how the safety for the person who performs the studies and else the safety for the people around. So, therefore, I fully support the location of NBAF to Athens. I think that the impact to environment will be minimal. If other procedures with -- you know, with the modern technology and with the protocols in place, it should be very safe. And so, therefore, the impact of the environment is minimum. But, however, the impact to the science, to the life for the health of humans and animals will be tremendous.
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So, therefore, again I am fully support
the location of NBAF to Athens. Thank you.
MS. COGHILL: Thank you.
(Appplause.)
MS. COGHILL: Richard Cooke.
RICHARD COOKE: My name is Dr. Richard
Cooke. I'm a resident of Watkinsville.
I moved here because of the quality of
life. I also am a recipient of some very bad
things that were allowed to happen or were
causd to happen at Plum Island. But that is
neither here nor there. I'm concerned about
the human error potential.
A wise man once told me that if you
wanted to find out reasons for things, follow
the green. Almost 50 percent of the people
that have spoken here have talked about money
and prestige. Neither of those are good
enough examples or good enough reasons to
locate a facility that will impact our entire
community detrimentally.
You say how do I know it will be
detrimental. Well, I know some people that
live just less than half a mile away that
already their property values are starting to

Comment No: 1 Issue Code: 15.2
DHS notes the commentor's concern. Adverse effects to quality of life resources would not be expected with any of the site alternatives and are discussed in Section 3.10.

The effects of the proposed NBAF on housing is discussed in Section 3.10. It is possible that with the relocation of highly skilled workers to the immediate area, property values would increase in demand, and there is no empirical evidence that a facility such as the NBAF would reduce property values in the study area. Therefore, the overall effect of the NBAF on housing market conditions would be negligible.

Comment No: 2 Issue Code: 21.2
DHS notes the commentor's concern regarding the potential consequences from a NBAF accident or pathogen release as the result of human error. As described in Section 2.2.2.1 of the NBAF EIS, all laboratory staff would receive thorough pre-operational training, as well as ongoing training, in the handling of hazardous infectious agents, understanding biocontainment functions of standard and special practices for each biosafety level, and understanding biocontainment equipment and laboratory characteristics. Training and inherent biocontainment safeguards reduce the likelihood of a release. Section 3.14 and Appendix E of the NBAF EIS, investigates the chances of a variety of accidents that could occur with the proposed NBAF and consequences of potential accidents, including external events such as a terrorist attack. Accidents could occur in the form of procedural violations (operational accidents), natural phenomena accidents, external events, and intentional acts. Although some accidents are more likely to occur than others (e.g., safety protocol not being followed), the chances of an accidental release are low. The specific objective of the hazard identification, accident analysis, and risk assessment is to identify the likelihood and consequences from accidents or intentional subversive acts. In addition to identifying the potential for or likelihood of the scenarios leading to adverse consequences, this analysis provides support for the identification of specific engineering and administrative controls to either prevent a pathogen release or mitigate the consequences of such a release. The risk of an accidental release of a pathogen is extremely low. As set out in Section 3.14.3.4 of the NBAF EIS, employees and contractors will be screened prior to employment or engagement and monitored while working, among other security measures. In addition, oversight of NBAF operations, as described in Section 2.2.2.6 of the NBAF EIS, will be conducted in part by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), which includes community representative participation, and the APHIS Animal Research Policy and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

Comment No: 3 Issue Code: 5.2
DHS notes the commentor's opposition to the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative.
be impacted. I know that if this comes to this area I probably will move because I do not want to be near something that has the potential risk.

So what I'm saying is very simply this:

I want to thank Dr. Lopner (phonetic spelling) for spending some time with me. She's a very congenial and very persuasive young lady.

Although I must admit all of these people to whom I have talked or with whom I have talked have been on the bias sides of the government. And, frankly, I don't trust the government.

I don't trust the government in what they allowed to happen at Plum Island. I don't trust the statements of all of you people, although you're biased and have to make those statements. You can't help it. You're getting paid to make those statements. I'm not getting paid to make this statement.

But I will tell you this: I support the good goals of all that you're purporting to do. I don't support them here.

Once again, I will tell you this:

DHS notes the commentor's lack of trust in the federal government. It has been shown that modern biosafety laboratories can be safely operated in populated areas. State-of-the-art biocontainment facilities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, employ modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF.

DHS notes the commentor's statement.

DHS notes the commentor's opposition to the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative.
Accidents will happen. And we know that.

But I am not willing to take the life of
myself, my children and my grandchildren on
the role of dice whether they're not loaded
or loaded in the bias for the government and
the people who are concerned with prestige.

I work for a university that has a big
bio lab. Who cares. I'm going to make more
money because they're bringing more money to
this area. A long time ago my father, who
was a well-known and respected banker, told
me son, greed is never a good reason.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Rebecca Cooke.

REBECCA COOKE: I'm the other half. I'm
Dr. Rebecca Cooke. And I'm not going to give
you dissertation, nor am I going to be
objective. I'm going to be subjective,
because that's where most of us live. Even
college professors become subjective when it
comes to their homes and their health and
their finances.

We moved here because our doctor said you
need to get out of this area, you need to go
to higher elevation, clean air and be sure
you're near family who can help you.
I've been declared terminal twice. From a disease that we claimed was a result of Plum Island human error. And it -- that's debatable. But just pretend I have Rift Valley Fever. That goes for humans. And this is what it does to your life: Because it's a disease that has no known cure, your Medicare will not pay for it. And the insurance companies go along with Medicare. So you pay for it out-of-pocket.

2006 we paid over $21,000 out-of-pocket for experimental treatment, because there's no known cure. Oh, I did try the known cure. After four months I was told I was terminal. They made me worse instead of better. So I had to find alternatives. And so did my husband. Now our whole family has Lyme, because it's contagious. And who knows about Rift Valley Fever. Maybe that's contagious too in a family.

You're talking about economic boom for the community. When a good portion of the community gets these diseases because of
human error, then you're not going to have an economic boom. They're going to be out money for all these experimental treatments. And I urge you if you have any subjective views in life, there's more to this laboratory than economy.

And then experimentation. There are people, human people, involved in here. And when you can find me a lab technician or a laboratory that hasn't had one human error, I'd like to know what it is. Because I've spoken to lab technicians, I've spoken to scientists. And they've told me no matter how hard they work there is human error. And I've read about a few of them, but now I'm hearing about them. And you are going to have human error here.

And what if one mosquito gets out? I don't want to be around to be bitten again. I won't make it another round. In fact, I think bringing the lab here is like writing my funeral notice.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Steve Valeika.
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1     (No response.)
2     MS. COGHILL:  Okay.  We'll go back.
3     Steve Stice is our next speaker.
4     If Chris King, Walt Cook and Brian
5     Brodick could come to the front of the room,
6     please.
7     STEVE STICE:  I'm Steve Stice.  I'm a
8     university professor here in the animal and
9     science department.
10     I'm a full supporter of NBAF.  I also was
11     recorded -- recruited here from Massachusetts
12     ten years ago because I think that the
13     University of Georgia and I know today is
14     forward thinking and they're here to make a
15     difference.  And they've been able to recruit
16     top-notch individuals from around the world
17     that can add to this facility in the way of
18     collaborations in the future.
19     So in my belief as -- I believe also
20     there's economic development as far as every
21     dollar that's spent here there's numerous
22     dollars that go back to the community.  But
23     foremost I think we have the faculty and the
24     resources here that will improve and make a
25     one plus one equal three to the government.
Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

Chris King.

(Applause.)

CHRIS KING: My name is Chris King. I'm a veterinarian and a board certified specialist in laboratory animal medicine.

I work for the vice-president for research, and I've been involved with our NBAF bid since its inception. In my work I've visited in benchmark containment facilities in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

I've been involved in the design/construction of containment research facilities.

I am currently involved in biosafety training, occupational health and emergency response preparation for high-level containment. And I work hand-in-hand with the scientists and staff doing this important research.

There are nearly 1500 diseases recognized in humans, and about 60 percent are due to pathogens that can move across species lines.

In the last 30 years 75 percent of new emerging human infectious diseases have been...
1 zoonotic. This list includes Lyme Disease, West Nile Virus, Nipah Virus, Hendra Virus, SARS and avian influenza, to name a few. None of these diseases has emerged because of acts of bioterrorism. This is not about bioterrorism. This is about a changing world of global travel, global trade and environmental change. This is about public health, biomedical research and the global food system.

NBAF is about understanding how to deal with some of the worst things mother nature can throw at us. NBAF is about collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working nationally, locally and globally to obtain optimal health for people and animals in our environment.

Our community has well-founded concerns about having this type of research and these diseases in our back yards. Most, however, understand the reality that our back yards now stretch to every corner of the globe. In fact, many of these diseases are knocking on our front door every time an international flight arrives at Hartsfield or a container.
ship docks in Savannah.

NBAF is about being prepared for this eventuality. Many of our community believe in the NBAF mission, but some prefer that it remains at Plum Island or some other remote location.

Fifty years ago when Plum Island was established, locating remote location made sense. However, contemporary technology and containment practices allow high-level containment facilities to safely coexist in urban and rural locations throughout the world. Locating NBAF in a remote location only will impede science.

Successful science is a human endeavor that still requires face to face and hands-on interactions. Most importantly, successful science requires broad collaborations.

Attracting top-notch scientists and collaborators to NBAF is critical to its mission. And being part of a vibrant community with a great quality of life is as important to these people as it is to any of us here.

I have lived in Athens for 15 years.

DHS notes the commentor's statement. As described in Section 2.3.1, DHS's site selection process incorporated site selection criteria that included, but were not limited to, such factors as proximity to research capabilities and workforce. As such, some but not all of the sites selected for analysis as reasonable alternatives in the NBAF EIS are located in suburban or semi-urban areas. It has been shown that modern biosafety laboratories can be safely operated in populated areas. An example is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, where such facilities employ modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF.
This is my home. My house is located within the six-kilometer (unintelligible) plume drawn around the NBAF site.

Like everyone in this room, I love this city and the quality of life it affords, the culture, the arts and music scenes, the restaurants and bars, our downtown and the university. Like many in this room, I've been alarmed at the big box development and sprawl that's characterized our recent growth.

We must have a strong economy, but we have got to grow smartly. There is nothing smarter than taking advantage of our intellectual capital.

NBAF is right for Athens. Athens is right for NBAF.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

Walt Cook.

WALT COOK: My name is Walt Cook.

I'm not opposed to this lab. But I am opposed to the use of water, the tremendous use of water, that they propose to use.

I asked about that. I asked why certain...
sites of the five or six sites they've got had use more water than others. They said because it's hotter there and they have to cool the lab. That makes sense. But then why can't they recycle the water? I asked why can't they just condense the water and recycle it, put it back in again. Well, it will cost too much. Or -- or the -- either cost too much or the -- the technology wasn't there to do that. Well, for technology all they've got to do is ask somebody in North Georgia who has ever run a still and they can tell you how to condense the water. And far as costing too much, I think that should be -- we're in our third drought in the last twenty years here in this town, and we had another one before that. A hundred-year drought -- we've had three hundred-year droughts in twenty years. It's serious. I think that the people that are designing this lab should try everything they can do to get that water usage down and recycle that water. Thank you.
MS. COGHILL: Thank you, sir.

Brian Brodrick.

(Applause.)

BRIAN BRODRICK: My name is Brian Brodrick. I'm a city councilman in Watkinsville, Georgia. I also work, manage a small business in town with seven employees.

In the spirit of full disclosure, my company has worked a little bit for some state agencies and the university. We've not worked on NBAF. I don't expect our company to benefit financially directly from this at all.

Many people here are afraid of NBAF. I'm not afraid of NBAF. I'm more afraid of our community putting its own self interest in front of those who need jobs and those who can't come here and speak either tonight or today, those who are working two jobs to make $40,000 a year instead of having one job at NBAF or somewhere else with --

MATT DEGENNARO: Sixty-nine jobs will be -- I'm sorry.

MS. COGHILL: Excuse me, sir.

BRIAN BRODRICK: That says it all. The
-- but --

MATT DEGENNARO: Sixty-nine local jobs.


Sixty jobs can change somebody's life.

Sixty jobs at $43,000 a year can change a family. Sixty jobs at $60,000 is a lot more than we're getting any other way --

MATT DEGENNARO: That 60,000 --

MS. COGHILL: Excuse me. The gentleman is trying to speak. Respect has to be shown.

He showed respect to you.

MATT DEGENNARO: I apologize.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

BRIAN BRODRICK: Anyway, the jobs that people make so little of I think mean so much to this community. That's the kind of green that counts. That's the kind of green that we should respect.

We should also respect the green of the botanical gardens and other places. I've spent a lot of time there. I'm passionate about the botanical gardens. I live right down the road. Most of the time I'd rather be wearing shorts and working out in my yard.
Prevention in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, employ modern biocontainment technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF. Furthermore, the purpose of NBAF is to combat diseases that could have significant effects on wildlife. Research at the NBAF would include the development of vaccines for wildlife that could prevent adverse impacts from a foreign introduction.
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But I think the benefits of this facility far outweigh the threats. I speak for myself. I don't speak for the city. I don't pretend to. But I think that it's important. And I would say bring NBAF to Athens. The resources here are tremendous. The university's invested a tremendous amount in this project, in this kind of research. It can be done safely. Bring it to Athens.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.)

MS. COGHILL: Daniel Mead. Mr. Mead.

Following Mr. Mead will be Trisha Chastain, Daniel King and Beverly King. If y'all could come to the front of the room, that would be great.

Thank you.

DANIEL MEAD: Good afternoon. My name's Daniel Mead. I'm a scientist at UGA, a resident of Georgia and a member of this community. And I fully support NBAF.

And I don't have a prepared statement. Dr. Chris King stole the one I was working on.

It was a good speech, Chris.
For those people out there that are kind of sitting on the fence waiting to see which side they're going to fall on, I share your concerns. You have the right to be concerned.

But as somebody who's worked in these environments for fifteen years -- and I've been at Plum Island, I've been doing collaborative research there for eight years. I took Mr. Deneldo (phonetic spelling), who was up there earlier, I escorted him through the lab when he went up there last year. It's a safe place to be. Can't say enough about it. The modern technology makes these labs safe on the island, on the mainland, it doesn't matter.

If I didn't know what I do today, I would share those concerns. But I really think they can do a great job with this. And I've heard talk about insects and insectaries and oh, my god, if one gets out we're all dead. In the feasibility study I believe they mention that the insectary that is proposed for NBAF will not be in the high containment areas. So that --
MATT DEGENNARO: It will.

DANIEL MEAD: I'm sorry?

MATT DEGENNARO: It will.

DANIEL MEAD: It will?

MATT DEGENNARO: Yes.

MS. COGHILL: Sir --

MATT DEGENNARO: I apologize.

MS. COGHILL: -- if you -- thank you, ma'am.

Sir, go ahead and finish what you were saying.

DANIEL MEAD: No. I worked with insects at Plum island.

MATT DEGENNARO: It will, though.

DANIEL MEAD: Regardless, I worked with insects at Plum Island. I've been doing it for eight years and do it safely.

My guess is that if NBAF were to be built anywhere that the people there will realize that it's cheaper to import insects from people at universities or anywhere who have the colonies instead of trying to raise them themselves. I don't know that for a fact, but I fully suspect they'll find that.

But, in short, I fully support this facility. And I hate to say this, but I
really -- doesn't matter to me if it comes to Athens or not. I have nothing to gain as a scientist at Georgia. I have nothing to gain. The same benefits to this community all share the same negative effects. If there are any, I will share.

But as a scientist I have nothing to gain. I'm already collaborating with scientists on Plum Island. I assume that that collaboration -- if there is still a common interest when NBAF is built in six, seven years, I assume that that collaboration will carry to wherever NBAF is built. So I have nothing to gain.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Trisha -- excuse me.

Trisha Chastain is our next speaker.

TRISHA CHASTAIN: Good afternoon. My name is Trisha Chastain. I'm with the office of U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson. I'm also a UGA graduate.

And thank y'all for being here today at this -- in this great city and great
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1 university. I have a statement I'm going to
2 read on behalf of Senator Isakson, as well as
3 Senator Chambliss.
4 We commend the Department of Homeland
5 Security for continuing its public outreach
6 to the NBAF finalists. These forums provide
7 an opportunity for the community to publicly
8 participate in the process and ensure that
9 our views and opinions are heard.
10 Senators Isakson and Chambliss believe
11 this project is critical to our national
12 security efforts and our ability as a nation
13 to detect and deter incidents of
14 agro-terrorism.
15 The state of Georgia already plays a
16 critical role in the infectious research
17 arena at the Centers for Disease Control in
18 Atlanta and the field of animal disease
19 research right here in Athens. Given our
20 experience in these areas of critical
21 importance, Georgia is honored to be a
22 finalist for the NBAF site; and we are
23 confident that DHS will find the city of
24 Athens to be a gracious host and an effective
25 partner.
In addition, Athens is an attractive location that will secure the necessary private industry support and scientific expertise to fulfill the mission of NBAF. The State of Georgia and the City of Athens stand ready to serve side by side with our partners at the Department of Homeland Security.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Daniel King.

DANIEL KING: I am Daniel King, and I'm here in support of the establishment of the NBAF animal disease research facility at the proposed Athens, Georgia, location.

My own experience with facilities like NBAF and the basis for my support of NBAF was (unintelligible) of veterinarian and research scientist with almost 30 years experience with foreign animal disease research at the USDA's Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory here in Athens. My responsibilities at Southeast Poultry prior to my recent retirement included providing biosecurity.
assessments and recommendations on the conduct of Exotic Newcastle Disease and highly pathogenic avian influenza research.

The acceptability for me of a mainland location of NBAF is based on the success of containment of exotic disease agents in similar facilities that utilize the currently recognized standards for special laboratory and animal handling practices, safety equipment and facility design and construction.

Several countries, including Canada, have adopted these current standards in constructing and operating facilities on their mainland and have successfully and safely conducted research with the same foreign animal disease agents to be studied in the NBAF facility. These new methods as utilized in Canada have replaced the old method of isolation provided by physical location that was, I believe, the primary basis for siting the Plum Island Animal Disease Center on an island over 50 years ago.

At Southeast Poultry Research Lab during August 14, 2008, Athens, GA, Athens Afternoon

Comment No: 2 Issue Code: 5.2
DHS notes the commentor's support for the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative. As described in Section 2.3.1, DHS's site selection process incorporated site selection criteria that included, but were not limited to, such factors as proximity to research capabilities and workforce. As such, some but not all of the sites selected for analysis as reasonable alternatives in the NBAF EIS are located in suburban or semi-urban areas. It has been shown that modern biosafety laboratories can be safely operated in populated areas. An example is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, where such facilities employ modern biosafety technologies and safety protocols, such as would be employed in the design, construction, and operation of NBAF.

Comment No: 3 Issue Code: 23.0
DHS notes the commentor's statement.
the past 30 years we have conducted Exotic Newcastle Disease and highly pathogenic avian influenza disease research in buildings located as close as one hundred yards to the buildings in which we -- where are disease-free chickens without any occurrence of animal disease transmission to the susceptible flocks. The history of outbreaks of foreign animal disease provides evidence that the risk of introduction of foreign animal disease agents into our domestic and wild species is more likely from sources other than research laboratories like NBAF. A recent example is the cause of the exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak in California during 2002/2003. There is evidence that the cause of that outbreak was virus-infected fighting chickens smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico and the transmission of that virus infection to back yard and commercial poultry. Therefore, my conclusion from this background, my assessment of the proposal is to provide full support for NBAF.
Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Beverly King.

BEVERLY KING: I support building NBAF in Athens.

Over the years this lab will have a strong, positive influence for science in Athens-Clarke County and Georgia. I support the lab because the poultry producers in Georgia and the cattle producers in Georgia plus all the other agricultural associations support the lab. These groups are not afraid of viruses escaping from the lab, and they want the protection from outbreaks which this lab can help.

We have had a long history in our country of safe, affordable food supplies. Animals are vital to our nation's economy both in the U.S. and for exports. Animals are worth not millions but billions and billions of dollars.

I support it because the scientists are supporting it. These scientists work with pathogens in these labs every single day, and...
they feel safe. In these public meetings we have learned much about the lab safety procedures with which scientists comply from both speakers and the presentations. I support this lab because no animals have died in the United States from any virus escaping from these labs. No animals have died. No chickens have died in Georgia. Labs do not cause animal diseases. People traveling all over the world and goods and shipments of goods coming into the U.S. from all over the world are the causes of the outbreaks that we have. I support bringing a lab to Athens because there is a community of other labs, vaccine companies, scientists, the animal health research center, grad students at UGA here, CDC in Atlanta and other scientific endeavors in Georgia. One of our goals in Athens is to develop Athens Technical College. NBAF will hire technicians. Thus Athens can admit more students to their program. Our students in public schools are scoring very low in science. We need to
1 change our students' and our adults' lack of
2 scientific knowledge in order to meet the
3 challenges we are meeting today, not only of
4 animal health but with human health and
5 technology.
6 Last, I support building NBAF here
7 because it is far less expensive than
8 building a new facility on Plum Island. NBAF
9 will be built. I see no reasons to add
10 millions of dollars more in building costs to
11 me and other taxpayers when we are already
12 facing huge deficits from the Iraq war and
13 are attempting to solve our health, Medicare
14 and Social Security problems.
15 Thank you.
16 MS. COGHILL: Thank you.
17 (Applause.)
18 MS. COGHILL: Our next speaker is Red
19 Petrovs, followed by Carol Henderson, Tom
20 McNeely, Jean Smith and David Wenner.
21 RED PETROVS: Good afternoon. My name is
22 Red Petrovs. And I was the vice-chair for
23 Partners for a Prosperous Athens and
24 Anti-Poverty Poverty Reduction Industries
25 here in Athens. We started over two and a
Half years ago.

I am currently the implementation chair for the One Athens which is the follow-up successor organization of PPA of the implementation team to get those initiatives accomplished.

And I'm here basically to reiterate the point that we made some time ago that partners for prosperous Athens leadership certainly is in favor of NBAF. We would like to see it here in Athens. And we'd like to reinforce why we feel that way.

First of all, it's a good economic development project for Athens. And someone talked about dollars and greenbacks and those kinds of things. And I'm here to tell you that the green I'm talking about has nothing to do with greed. This has to do with the fact that we have a 31 percent poverty rate in Athens.

There are jobs. Yes, there may be 69 jobs at first that accrue to having NBAF here. But that's 69 more jobs than we have right now.

And oh, by the way, these jobs pay...
very well. A quick analysis on the jobs that are on Page 80 and 81 on the site cost analysis section of the EIS, the average wage of all the jobs was $82,000, total payroll 26.9 million dollars.

Of course, some of that will be coming from Plum Island and other locations. But the range of the most common jobs was from $43,000 -- this is wages and benefits combined -- up to $91,000. There was one job only at 43,000, seven at 53,000, one at 64,000, 26 at $77,000 and 36 at $91,000.

Those are the kind of jobs that if our Athenians are not trained to do today, they certainly can be trained to do in short order by the things we're doing in the education side between the Clarke County School District and Athens Tech and/or further education through the University of Georgia.

So those jobs plus the other jobs that we might be able to train Athenians for in the future certainly will accrue as a benefit to us as a result of NBAF locating here.

There are also another 157 projected local indirect jobs that will result.
Remember, people that come to Athens, they build houses, they get haircuts, they get cars, they get cars fixed, they use our facilities. Everyone of those financial transactions results in another opportunity when accumulated together for other jobs to accrue to this location. A lot of people said well, these aren't jobs Athenians can hold. I disagree. I think if they are not now qualified they can certainly be trained over a period of time.

Number two, NBAF has a potential of becoming a magnet for other high-tech life science development and would also send a message to life science companies elsewhere that we are serious and our state government is serious about economic development and our local government is serious about economic development.

Are there risks? Of course there are. People have talked about them before. The issue is not are there risks; can risks be mitigated. And, unlike some other folks in this...
room, I do trust prominent scientists and the
government, quite frankly, to do a good job
of doing a risk assessment and keeping us all
safe. And I think that the benefits far
outweigh the risks.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Carol Henderson.

CAROL HENDERSON: Good afternoon. My
name is Carol Henderson, and I'm here from
the Georgia Department of Economic
Development.

We are the sales and marketing arm for
the State. And our goal is to
increase/create jobs, increase investment for
all Georgians in order to improve the quality
of life in Georgia.

Having said that, I'd like to welcome the
DHS team here to Georgia. And we are more
than delighted to have NBAF as a final
candidate for Georgia.

On behalf of Governor Sonny Purdue and
Commissioner Ken Stewart with the Georgia
Department of Economic Development, we are...
here to publicly express the State's support and commitment to locate the NBAF facility in Athens, Georgia. We are delighted that Athens is a final candidate and pledge the necessary funding and support that we need in order to bring the facility here.

Governor Purdue recently identified bioscience as a strategic industry for Georgia. He understands that bioscience is a growing industry that provides high-quality jobs that are vitally important to Georgia's future economy.

Georgia's future economy is based on highly -- high-quality, educated jobs. Healthcare and bio sciences are the jobs of the future. The NBAF perfectly fits into the State's bioscience strategy and assets we currently have in place.

NBAF will bring, over time, a total of 250 to 350 quality jobs to Athens, many of which are doctoral level. These jobs are going to be brought to a community and region where jobs are very much needed.

NBAF is the type of economic development project we strive for here in Georgia, a
high-paying sustainable facility that makes important contributions to society.

Again, the State pledges its full support and hope you will locate NBAF in Athens.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.)

MS. COGHILL: Tom McNeely.

TOM MCNEELY: My name is Tom McNeely. I am retired, and I have lived in Athens for about six years.

I have no complaints with the lab. For approximately 36 years my wife and children lived within 10 miles of CDC. My wife and children attended classes at Emory. The CDC is located within a mile of Emory and Emory Hospital and also Emory's retirement village Wesley Woods.

I have never heard of any danger from CDC. And whatever problems they've had have been some administrative problems.

Therefore, I have no objection to the lab being sited here.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.
MS. COGHILL: Jean Smith is our next speaker.

JEAN SMITH: I retired in 2002 as a research microbiologist with more than 30 years experience at the Centers for Disease Control. During my career I worked in two different high containment laboratories. The second and newer building was better designed than the first. But both were flawed, sometimes dangerously so.

This is not meant to be a criticism of the building's designers nor of those who maintained the facilities but is simply a comment on the reality of biocontainment. There will never be a completely safe biocontainment building.

The design blueprints for a lab building are completed years, sometimes a decade or more before the building is actually opened. In the interim research methods in the laboratory required for their safe performance can change dramatically. For evidence of this think of the difficulties both University of Georgia and CDC have had
in opening their new laboratories.

Infectious disease research is a dangerous, serious business. The construction of yet another biocontainment lab should be undertaken only if there is a clear need for more lab space and there are sufficient funds to build the best possible facility and to maintain the new facility.

It should also be possible to clearly lay out the needs and benefits of the research to be funded by this new facility to the community at large so that the community at large, while perhaps not welcoming it with open arms, at least will accept the presence of the lab in the neighborhood as a necessary evil. Construction of yet another biocontainment lab should not be touted as economic fuel for a community.

I find this approach offensive and fault both of the Department of Homeland Security and their advisory committees and our community leaders that this has become an important selling point for NBAF in Athens. That some communities, North Carolina in particular, New York most tellingly,
opposed to NBAF construction tells me that this committee has been unable to accumulate sufficient evidence to effectively argue the scientific merits of a new biocontainment lab.

Is it possible that this new lab is unnecessary and is being built simply because there is funds to do so? I'd like to quote an (unintelligible) piece from the New York Times written by Alyssa (phonetic spelling) Harris, a senior research scholar at the Center for International Security Studies.

Since 2001 research on bio-weapons agents at the NIH has increased from 53 million to more than 1.6 billion and the Department of Defense has more than doubled its investment in bio-defense to more than one billion. We will soon have more than ten times as much lab space as we had in 2001 and 13 new regional labs for working on modern and high risk agents. Thousands of scientists are being trained to work on bio-weapons, many for the first time. More than 14,000 scientists have been approved to work with the so-called select agents like anthrax that...
DHS prepared the NBAF EIS in accordance with the provisions of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and CEQ’s regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.). The primary objective of the EIS is to evaluate the environmental impacts of the no action and site alternatives for locating, constructing and operating the NBAF. As summarized in Section 3.1 of the NBAF EIS, DHS analyzed each environmental resource area in a consistent manner across all the alternatives to allow for a fair comparison among the alternatives. The decision on whether to build the NBAF will be made based on the following factors: 1) analyses from the EIS and support documents; 2) the four evaluation criteria discussed in section 2.3.1; 3) applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulatory requirements; 4) consultation requirements among the federal, state, and local agencies, as well as federally recognized American Indian Nations; 5) policy considerations; and 6) public comment.

DHS notes the commentor’s geologic construction concerns. Section 3.6.3 of the NBAF EIS discusses the geologic and soil conditions at the South Milledge Avenue Site Alternative. Sections 3.6.3.2 and 3.6.3.3 discuss the potential construction and operational consequences. Once a site is selected a detailed geotechnical report would be prepared and results included in construction technique development.

DHS notes the commentor’s statement. As stated in Chapter 1 of the NBAF EIS, there are no existing BSL-4 facilities in the U.S. capable of conducting large animal research as is proposed for the NBAF. The PIADC does not have BSL-4 laboratory or animal space, and the existing PIADC facilities are inadequate to support a BSL-4 laboratory. Upgrading the existing facilities to allow PIADC to meet the current mission would be more costly than building the NBAF on Plum Island or at any other site alternative, as discussed in Section 2.4.1 of the NBAF EIS.

DHS notes the commentor’s opposition to the South Milledge Avenue Site.
1 gardens in geology, is that bedrock is just
2 below the surface in many areas. You've got
3 a very shallow -- you've got a lot of bedrock
4 below, very closely below.
5 Now, I don't know if this structure is
6 going to be below ground or if so how much
7 below ground; but whatever construction you
8 do, it seems to me there's going to be a lot
9 of impact. There's going to have to be a lot
10 of blasting the bedrock to put an excavation
11 in, especially if you're going underground.
12 And that's going to be a very disruptive
13 thing on the environment.
14 And, frankly, none of that was really
15 addressed in the EIS report. And, in my
16 opinion, that should be addressed. So I'll
17 provide written comments about some
18 information I have related to that site
19 nearby in a written form. So I just want to
20 make that comment.
21 Thank you.
22 MS. COGHILL: Thank you, sir.
23 (Applause.)
24 MS. COGHILL: Corrie Brown is our next
25 speaker, who will be followed by Lisa
CORRIE BROWN: Thank you. I just have a few comments here. Corey Brown. I am a veterinarian. I'm a professor in the College of Veterinarian Medicine. I also serve as a consultant both nationally and internationally on issues involving transboundary diseases, trade regulations -- I've worked in over 50 countries -- outbreak control, economic considerations involved with these outbreaks and also economic growth in developing countries through enhancing agriculture and decreasing animal disease.

Global traffic of agricultural goods currently stands at about 4 trillion dollars per year and continues to grow at 10 percent per year. One of these diseases will come here. It's not a question of if but when. I applaud the Department of Homeland Security's plan to move Plum Island off the mainland and to join the rest of the world in having a laboratory of this type that is not surrounded by a moat and where you can work according to a schedule that is not rigidly...
dictated by a marine crew.

Is Athens the right place? I trust that you will gather all of the information and make the right decisions.

Although I'm involved in this area, like Danny Mead before me, wherever Plum Island goes I will probably continue to collaborate there.

And I have no vested interest in having it in Athens. I hope that it will go to the best possible place.

Now, given my background, I was particularly interested in 3.14. We all know that risk is never absolutely zero. So I know you did the worst case scenario about a potential outbreak at one of the sites.

Now, I think there's something a little bit misleading in this 3.14 because you talk about a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, the economic impact ranging from 2.8 to 4.2 billion dollars with the Athens site being at 3.5 billion, which is a little bit high in that scale.

Now, you talked earlier about how all the big impacts are due to trade. When you have
a disease the trade impacts are always ten times higher than the actual cleanup and containment costs.

So, in fact, no matter where the outbreak happens, whether it's in Kansas or Mississippi or North Carolina, the impact to the Georgia producers is going to be the same. Similarly, an outbreak around a Georgia facility would affect the Kansas farmers. It's a national issue rather than being so related to the specific site.

The other issue that I thought could be addressed in that has to do with if we have an outbreak the Secretary of Agriculture will declare an emergency, and that will free up funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation. And this will take care of a lot of the initial costs of containing the outbreak.

So, once again, it's not so much a local cost as it is a national cost that will be borne by taxpayers all over the country no matter if they live in the community where the NBAF is or not.

Thank you very much.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.
(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Lisa Majersky. HERE.

LISA MAJERSKY: Yes. As far as the local benefit, so many people have been going on about, well, wherever the lab is if they make discoveries it's going to be a benefit for everyone. So having it here in Georgia is not going to necessarily benefit Georgia.

So the other thing is just the proliferation of all these high-level labs is making it sort of like there's a chain of convenience stores all over the country. The more labs there are, the more access there is to these pathogens.

And as they said, there used to be, you know, much fewer of them. And since 2001 when they started giving all this money out to build more labs now there is more and more labs with pathogens around them.

This latest Al Qaeda Mata Hari they were talking about, Asia Siddique, they said she was -- actually had plans to go to Plum Island and try and attack them, allegedly get in there. Now, she probably could not have...
gone in there, but she was going to try to 
get in Plum Island to get some pathogens. So 
now there would be another place here.
So -- and as far as there being any 
benefit to Georgia if there was some kind of 
an outbreak and we had the lab right here to 
find out what it was, science is too slow to 
just find out, you know, like oh, there's a 
new disease and just because we have the lab 
right here they can find out right away what 
it was because we're right close to the lab.
There would not be any benefit. Science is 
too slow to find out, you know, oh, there's a 
new disease and it's a good thing we have the 
lab right here.
And the other thing is as far as being 
concerned with having a safe food supply,
well, yes, we all want a safe food supply.
But we have really slacked off on all kinds 
of food inspections all over the country.
We used to have much more often, you 
know, frequent food inspections. We used to 
have more food inspectors for all kinds of 
food, not just livestock.
We're so concerned with livestock
diseases, but they don't even have inspectors
in the meat plants the way they used to. You
know, they used to have them much more
frequently. And so like we're spending all
this money on disease detection and we don't
even have inspectors on the other end.
So I just think this whole thing is just
overblown, just trying to, you know, make all
these labs. And I'm against the whole thing.
And I don't want it here, and I want to live
here. And once they get it here it's going
to be forever. So I just don't want it here.
That's all.
(Appause.)
MS. COGHILL: Thank you. Sheila Allen.
SHEILA ALLEN: Good afternoon. I'm
Sheila Allen. I'm the dean of the College of
Veterinarian Medicine here at the University
of Georgia.
And I've been a resident of Clarke County
for 27 years. Athens is my home.
I am a supporter of NBAF for many of the
reasons that have already been articulated by
my colleagues. I am a veterinarian. I am
deeply committed to the health and welfare of
animals and the people who depend on them. The research that will be conducted by NBAF is vitally important to our country and to the world. The facilities of Plum Island, some of which are very good but most of which are outdated, must be replaced.

I agree with the previous speaker that we need not more labs but better labs. And I think that is the whole point here. Today's technology, I think, allows the facility to be placed anywhere on the mainland safely. So why here? I think Athens is a great location because of the excellent transportation that's available, the expertise that's already in place in this community and the proximity to other experts at the CDC, which is also nearby.

As a veterinarian I have a deep ethical and moral commitment to protect animal resources and the health of our people. I want to see NBAF done and done well.

I don't have grave concerns about risk. We have multiple BSL-3 labs in our college, one of which is literally 30 feet from my office door. I walk by it easily twenty times a day.
times a day without any concerns. And that's mainly for two reasons: I have faith in the technology available to keep it contained, and I have faith in the people who work in the lab.

My greatest concern is that if NBAF is not built or if it's done in a place that will limit its potential. We, in this country, have the luxury of inexpensive, high-quality animal products. That luxury is not sustainable without constant vigilance for infectious diseases, a rapid response to infectious diseases if they're detected.

Of the locations proposed I think Athens has the best opportunity to fulfill the missions for all the reasons that Dr. King, my colleague, explained earlier.

Athens is my home. I am confident that if NBAF is built here it will be run well and effectively for the wealth -- for the health of our nation and for the animals that live in it.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.)
MS. COGHILL: Tas Smith.

TAS SMITH: Good afternoon. My name is Tas Smith. I'm with the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation in Macon, Georgia.

Georgia Farm Bureau is the largest volunteer farm organization in this state with over 400,000 farmer family members. Our organization is proud to support the location of the NBAF facility in Athens, Georgia.

We feel that if NBAF is located in Athens with its close proximity to the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, the University of Georgia College of Veterinarian Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta that it will allow the NBAF facility to have access to premiere researchers and scientists in this state. If NBAF is located in Athens it will also allow the NBAF facility to be able to attract large sciences and researchers and the best in the world because of this proximity to the university.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Georgia. Poultry is the number one --
Georgia is the largest poultry state in the United States with a 2007 farm gate value of over 4.7 billion dollars. For Georgia poultry growers avian influenza is a major concern. Facilities such as NBAF prevent this type of spread of this type of disease. And if avian influenza was to spread in Georgia and the United States, it would be dramatic for Georgia poultry industry. Equine and cattle is also a viable step toward agricultural level with over 850 million dollars in farm gate value. Georgia Farm Bureau is proud to support the location of this facility in Athens, and we're -- thank you so much for allowing us to be here today, and we're pleased to comment on this issue.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you, Mr. Smith.
(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Laura Fleury.

LAURA FLEURY: Hello. My name is Laura Fleury, and I am an undergrad student at the University of Georgia.

I speak today on behalf of over 200 students.
students and residents of Athens from the Facebook group No Bioterror Lab in Athens. We have many questions and concerns about NBAF, but most importantly we want NBAF and the DHS to know that we do not want it here.

The University of Georgia has tried to keep us in the dark about the issues. Look around. There's not many students here. It's because they have no clue. But those that do know are opposed.

My question is this: What will happen to us, the students, all 35,000 and more, in the event of a bioterrorist attack or outbreak. What happens if a scientist like Bruce Ivans is hired there.

We all know that Athens is the wrong place for NBAF. Please keep it away from our waters, schools, children, land and homes. Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Regina Smith.

REGINA SMITH: Good afternoon. My name is Regina Smith. I'm an Athens citizen, and I've been a citizen of this community since August 14, 2008, Athens, GA, Athens Afternoon
2001. I'm going to tell you about my personal decision making regarding this matter. I am a UGA employee. I am the associate vice-president for research here at the university. And yes, David Lee is my boss. But no, David Lee does not tell me how to think, what to think or what to say. Like Dr. Cooke, I am not being paid to make any of these statements. And I have friends and colleagues and neighbors on both sides of this issue. What I tried to do initially was to keep an open mind. So I would say that I was very noncommittal at the beginning. But I listened to the rhetoric and the hyperbole and the facts and the fiction, and I did what any reasonable individual would do or should do in such a case as a citizen of Athens. I decided to educate and inform myself about this issue. So I read and I listened, and I learned about Winnipeg. I understood what was going on there. I looked at what was happening at the CDC in Athens, and I read the EIS.
I weighed both the good and the bad, the pros and the cons. And I realized that there are always risks. Life does not come without risks. Nothing is risk-free. And it is folly to even try to eliminate all risks. If we do that we freeze, we do nothing, we cease to exist.

I'm comfortable with NBAF. I've made a decision, after doing all of my homework. I live a few miles from the site. I'm comfortable with it. I think there are low risks associated with it because the public health benefits outweigh those risks.

The whole issue -- and I'm not concerned about economics, jobs, individuals who may have psychological problems and do something bad. But the public health risks outweigh -- I mean the public health benefits outweigh the risks and will contribute to making this world for all of us a better place in which to live.

Thank you.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.)

MS. COGHILL: Our next speaker is April
APRIL INGLE: Good afternoon. I'm April Ingle, and I'm the executive director of the Georgia River Network. We're a statewide organization that looks to protect and restore rivers all across the state of Georgia. We're based here in Athens, and I live here in Athens. Georgia River Network represents over 600 Georgia citizens and over 30 river protection organizations throughout the state of Georgia, including the Upper Oconee Watershed Network, which is our local watershed group here in Athens.

But I'm not speaking on behalf of them today. I am speaking on behalf of Georgia River Network. And as a voice for issues that transcend Georgia's watersheds I want to comment on several issues that the draft EIS does not adequately address or is insufficient with regards to impacts to the Oconee River and other aquatic resources.

First, due to the size of the facility, it is likely that it will result in a large amount of impervious area and, therefore, a
large amount of stormwater. At this time there are no specific plans that guarantee that stormwater impacts will be mitigated or prevented with the installation and maintenance of stormwater control practices with the EIS stating only that they would be considered or could be used but not that they shall be used. The EIS cannot conclude that there will be no direct impact without these assurances.

During construction of the facility there is great potential for erosion and sedimentation of the river impacting habitat and downstream communities, especially due to the widespread erosion and sedimentation problems that exist in Georgia based on topography, lack of proper installation of Best Management Practices and a lack of funding to properly enforce erosion and sedimentation laws.

At this time there are no specific guarantees that erosion and sediment impacts will be mitigated or prevented at the site; and, therefore, the EIS cannot conclude that there will be no direct impact without these
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assurances. The EIS concludes that there are headwater streams located on the property and at least some of them will be impacted. Specifically, it states that the road and fence construction would affect approximately 50 linear feet of stream on the site, as well as a buffer zone and would require Section 404 permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, Section 41 certification from the State and a buffer variance from Clarke County. I do believe that those -- that would qualify it as a direct impact and the EIS is in error to conclude that operations at the NBAF would have no direct impact on wetlands or aquatic communities. Further, it should be noted in the EIS that a buffer variance will also have to be obtained from the State for the 25-foot buffer. Erosion and sedimentation are also impacts on the Altamaha shiner, which is a state-listed species. And we're also concerned about the potential discharge of pollutants from wastewater and believe that the EIS should adequately address those.
impacts on the river.

I want to finally say that there is going to -- there is a potential for a high level of consumption of natural resources at this site and consumptive use of water from the site and that should be reflected in the EIS, as well.

That concludes my comments, and I thank you for the opportunity to make them.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

(Appause.)

MS. COGHILL: There are two folks that signed in earlier and they were not here when their name was called. So I'd like to give them an opportunity if they're still here to come forward if they would like.

Richard Theurer. And the other gentleman was Steve Valeika.

(No response.)

MS. COGHILL: It doesn't appear that those two folks are still here.

What we'd like to do is the meeting is advertised to go till 4:30. It is about ten after 4:00 now. And I'd like to ask and open up the floor in the event that there is
someone here who did not sign in to speak or who would like to speak now that did not speak already. If you'd like to, please come forward to a microphone. The same parameters will follow.

EDWARD LEVINE: Good afternoon. My name is Edward Levine. And thank you for the opportunity to speak. I would like to read from the May 22nd, 2008, report from the Government Accountability Office. The title of that report is DHS Lacks Evidence to Conclude that Foot and Mouth Disease Research Can be Done Safely on the U.S. Mainland. I am against the NBAF here in Athens. I'm against it being built on the mainland. DHS found that the Department of Homeland Security has neither conducted nor commissioned any study to determine whether work on Foot and Mouth Disease, FMD, can be done safely on the U.S. mainland. Instead of deciding what work with FMD can be done safely on the mainland, DHS relied on the 2002 U.S. Department of Agriculture study.
that addressed a different question. The study did not assess the past history of releases of FMD virus or other dangerous pathogens in the United States or elsewhere. It did not address in detail the issues of containment related to large animal work in BSL-3 and facilities. It was inaccurate in comparing other countries' FMD work and experience with that of the United States. Therefore the GAO believes DHS does not have evidence to conclude that FMD work can be done safely on the U.S. mainland.

So my questions for the record -- and I know I will not get an answer now -- is DHS offering the EIS as evidence that FMD can be done safely on the U.S. mainland? Does the EIS address the history of accidents in or releases from biocontainment facilities generally, i.e. not in these kind of labs that we're talking specifically in Athens? Finally, I would also like to support the comments earlier about the letter from Alyssa D. Harris that was in New York Times. I am also very concerned about the increasing number of labs, the access of researchers to...
that information and the fact that Dr. Bruce Ivans, who was responsible now, according to our understanding from the U.S. Justice Department -- I'm concerned about the increasing number of individuals who have access to these dangerous pathogens. And I would argue that we may, in fact, be the cause of this problem.

Thank you for your time.

MS. COGHILL: Thank you, sir.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Yes, ma'am.

LAURA HALL: My name is Laura Hall, and I live in Athens. I'm a registered landscape architect, and I've worked in environmental planning and small community design for the last 18 years. And so I wanted to comment on a couple of things.

The first is just how inappropriate siting something this large of a building in our rural agricultural green space part of the county is. It's ridiculous.

I'm sure that we would never allow any sort of store or development of this to go in that location. It's right next to the river,
1 and it's in our land use plan as low-density development. So that seems pretty crazy.

But mostly to locate something with so many obvious potential issues seems really sad and irresponsible to chance locating something like this right next to our river which is where our drinking water comes from for this town and also next to a bunch of neighborhoods. There's two elementary schools down the road and around the corner. There's farm animals out there. And there's tons of kids in that area.

And, you know, Athens is the smallest in area for the state of Georgia. So pretty much the whole county's very densely populated compared to a lot of places. And I think a lot of people, even if they're not here today to speak, will fight this with money and lawsuits if you guys decide to move forward with this project in this town.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COGHILL: Thank you.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak who has not had an opportunity to do so?
this afternoon?

(No response.)

MS. COGHILL: Okay. What we'll do is we'll take a five-minute break in the event that somebody comes in before 4:30 and would like to speak. And we'll reconvene in five minutes.

Thank you.

(A brief recess was taken.)

MS. COGHILL: We're just going to see if anyone has come in that would like to speak.

(No response.)

MS. COGHILL: I'd like to turn the meeting over to Jamie.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Catherine.

I want to make sure that everyone has had the chance to make their comments. Some of you may be coming back tonight. We have another meeting. We open up at 6:00, and the meeting starts at 7:00.

So I really do want to thank people for their comments. I think it's fair to say that at all the sites.

I think we've heard a lot of very specific comments this afternoon on the draft.
EIS in the executive summary. And I really appreciate that. I mean, these are the things I am going to commit to fix and get right in the final EIS.

So we do appreciate the very specific comments and all comments, as well. So if you do think of a comment later, you can submit it to us by August 25th to be addressed to responded in the final EIS. As we said before, the comment period ends the 25th, and you have a number of ways to make your comments.

So with that we're going to go ahead and adjourn the afternoon session. And we look forward to seeing some of you back tonight.

So thank you again for coming.

(Meeting concluded at 4:26 p.m.)
STATE OF GEORGIA:
COUNTY OF JASPER:
I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript was reported, as stated in the caption, and reduced to typewriting under my direction; that the foregoing Pages 1 through 152, inclusive, represent a true, complete and correct transcript of the said proceedings; and I further certify that I am not of kin or counsel to the parties in the case, am not in the employ of said parties, nor am I in anywise interested in the result of said case.
This, the 25th day of August 2008.

Susan W. Tarpley
Certified Court Reporter
Certificate No. CCR B-1489
August 14, 2008, Athens, GA, Athens Afternoon

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
NATIONAL BIO AND AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
(NBAF DRAFT EIS)

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**WELCOME**

- James Johnson: Page 5, Line 1
- Catherine Coghill (Moderator): Page 7, Line 1

**PRESENTATION**

- James Johnson: Page 10, Line 21
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- Kathy Prescott: Page 42, Line 3
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- J. Scott Angle: Page 55
- Pat Wilson: Page 56, Line 22
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August 14, 2008, Athens, GA, Athens Afternoon

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