



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor



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ENERGY

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June 29, 2010

Matthew S. McCormick,  
Assistant Manager for the Central Plateau  
Richland Operations Office  
U.S. Department of Energy  
P.O. Box 550, MS A6-38  
Richland WA 99352

Dear Mr. McCormick:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Proposed Changes to the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) for Central Plateau Cleanup Work (TPA Change Packages). We appreciate efforts over the past several months by the Tri-Parties to engage Oregon in preliminary discussions on this topic.

In general, we agree with many elements of this change package. We support the geographic approach to Central Plateau cleanup and are pleased that plans for cleanup of soils, facilities and groundwater will be better integrated. We are pleased that the 2024 milestone to complete remedial actions for all non-tank operable units within the Central Plateau is not delayed. While we appreciate that the Tri-Parties have agreed to milestones for the demolition of U Canyon and the construction of an associated barrier, this is not a high priority for Oregon. If there are funding challenges during the time in which this work would be conducted, there may well be other work which we would consider to be of higher priority.

We do not intend to comment at length on the number of administrative and regulatory process changes that are proposed.

There are two elements to this proposed change package which can be especially important to the Hanford cleanup - the new focus on deep vadose zone contamination, and the Agreement in Principle (AIP) to address waste leaked from Hanford's single-shell tanks. Both, however, need additional specifics and milestones to ensure that contaminants which pose the highest risk are sufficiently addressed.

The recent draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (TC&WM EIS) clearly illuminated the fact that contaminants which now reside within the deep vadose zone pose a high future risk and therefore must be remediated. The creation of a new operable unit to focus on Hanford's deep vadose zone is a good first step.

However, merely creating a new operable unit and spending the next two years developing a work plan is not sufficient unless the work results in a comprehensive characterization of the deep vadose zone contamination and supports an aggressive and creative approach to remediation. We strongly encourage the Tri-Parties not to be limited by technologies or ideas that were developed only at Hanford or within the DOE complex. We encourage efforts to reach out to the broader technical

community worldwide to find innovative technologies to effectively deal with Hanford's subsurface contamination.

We have some of the same concerns with the AIP to address Hanford's leaked tank waste. The AIP only generically addresses the need to investigate soil contamination beneath and surrounding Hanford's single-shell tanks. Like with the deep vadose zone elsewhere on the site, the extent of contamination in the soil from past single-shell tank leaks, overflows and discharges is largely unknown. In comments that the State of Oregon provided on the draft TC&WM EIS, we indicated that high concentrations of contaminants that exist in the soil within and beneath Hanford's tank farms should be remediated, as the analysis already demonstrates that these past releases and leaks contribute significantly to the long-term impacts to the groundwater. Without sufficient characterization however, it is not possible to know what areas need remediation.

We do support the condition in the AIP that the investigation and remediation of soil contamination caused by leaks/releases from the single-shell tanks is coordinated with actions taken elsewhere at Hanford to investigate and remediate deep vadose zone contamination. We believe this coordination is absolutely essential.

We look forward to continuing to work with DOE to clean up the Central Plateau in ways that are protective, effective and economical. If you have any questions or comments about our recommendations, please contact Dale Engstrom of my staff at 503-378-5584.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Niles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" being more prominent than the last name "Niles".

Ken Niles  
Nuclear Safety Division Administrator

Cc: Dennis Faulk, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Jane Hedges, Washington Department of Ecology  
Stuart Harris, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation  
Gabriel Bohnee, Nez Perce Tribe  
Russell Jim, Yakama Nation  
Susan Leckband, Hanford Advisory Board  
Max Power, Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board