

OREGON HANFORD CLEANUP BOARD

Barbara A. Jarvis, Chair

February 11, 2004

Norm Dyer, Vice Chair

Larry Clucas

Norma Jean Germond

Maxine Hines

Paige Knight

Wayne Lei

Robert McFarlane, M.D.

Eric Nisley

Marc Rogelstad

*Paul R. Cleary
Water Resources
Department*

*Michael Grainey
Oregon Dept. of Energy*

*David Van't Hof
Governor's Office*

*Armand Minthorn
Confederated Tribes of
the Umatilla Indian
Reservation*

Sen. Joan Dukes

Sen. Ted Ferrioli

Sen. David Nelson

Rep. Linda Flores

Rep. Bob Jenson

Rep. Steve March

*Lynda M. Horst
Administrator*

Mr. Michael A. Wilson, Program Manager
Nuclear Waste Program
Washington Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504

Mr. Nick Ceto
Hanford Project Manager
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
712 Swift Boulevard, Suite Five
Richland, WA 99352

Mr. Roy Schepens, Manager
Office of River Protection
P.O. Box 450, MS H6-60
Richland, WA 99352

Re: Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board Tank Waste Cleanup Concerns

Dear Messrs. Wilson, Ceto and Schepens:

The Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board consists of Oregon legislators and citizens appointed by the Governor to advise him on Hanford cleanup issues. At the Board's January meeting in Portland we heard presentations from Greg Jones and John Eschenberg of the Office of River Protection, and Jeff Lyons of the Washington Department of Ecology on current tank waste issues. These presentations were very informative and we appreciate their participation in the meeting.

We are heartened by the progress being made in developing the capability to treat the tank wastes. We were especially pleased to learn of the successful waste retrieval from tank C-106.

However, we still have several concerns and recommendations with respect to the tank waste cleanup program.

- The Board is concerned that testing is proceeding on only one supplemental technology. This concern is prompted by the fact that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) now indicates that a majority of the tank waste is expected to be immobilized through supplemental technology and yet there appears to be no viable backup plan in the event this technology fails to perform satisfactorily.

phone 503.378.4040 800.221.8035 in Oregon fax 503.373.7806

625 Marion Street, N.E., Suite 1, Salem, Oregon 97301-3742

www.energy.state.or.us/nucsaf/HWB/hwboard.htm

While the Board would support plans to build a second vitrification plant as the backup, DOE has clearly indicated it will not ask Congress to fund additional vitrification facilities. We strongly recommend that DOE broaden its look at supplemental technologies beyond just one.

- The Board recommends that the Tri-Party Agencies develop a public involvement program for the tanks cleanup effort that goes beyond just the minimum required by regulations or orders. This program should have regularly scheduled, frequent points at which public input is sought. For example, the supplemental technology down-select decision process would have provided several excellent opportunities to seek public input. Allowing the public to express its concerns and values as the project progresses will build ownership and trust and help convince a skeptical Congress and others that this project is worth the effort and money needed to make it a success.
- The Board reiterates its position that for this project, cost must not be the driving factor. These wastes are so dangerous and will remain dangerous for such a long time that we must have the best technical solution to this problem.
- The Board recommends the Tri-Party Agencies move beyond the one-size fits all formula for dealing with tank closure. The decision for clean closure or landfill closure should be made on a tank-by-tank or tank farm-by-tank farm basis, as appropriate. The stabilization of residuals and empty tanks for those tanks that will be landfill closed should be decided on a tank-by-tank basis also.
- The Board also recommends that the tanks closure demonstration project be expanded to include clean closure tests, and soil and ancillary equipment remediation tests. This detailed testing is necessary to get a closure baseline that is firmly rooted in data rather than modeling and speculation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara A. Jarvis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "B".

Barbara A. Jarvis, Chair

BAJ:lmh

cc: Oregon Congressional Delegation
Russell Jim, Yakama Indian Nation
Patrick Sobotta, Nez Perce Tribe
Todd Martin, Chair, Hanford Advisory Board