OREGON HANFORD CLEANUP BOARD

January 28, 2005

Keith Klein, Manager
Richland Operations Office
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 550, MS A7-50
Richland, WA 99352

Nick Ceto
Hanford Project Office
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
712 Swift Blvd, Suite 5
Richland, WA 99352

Mike Wilson
Washington State Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Subject: Protection and Restoration of Groundwater

Gentlemen,

The Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board appreciates the U.S. Department of Energy's response to our letter of May 27, 2004, concerning groundwater issues on the Hanford site.

As you know, protection and cleanup of the Hanford groundwater has long been a priority for the Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board. To protect the Columbia River we believe it is necessary to reduce and, whenever possible, eliminate the flow of hazardous and radioactive contaminants from groundwater into the river.

It is encouraging to know that you are actively developing strategies to deal with the strontium-90 plume in the 100-N Area. We are also pleased that many of the recommendations described in the Board's "*River Without Waste*" report are addressed in the Hanford Site Groundwater Protection Strategy.

phone 503.378.4040 800.221.8035 in Oregon fax 503.373.7806

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

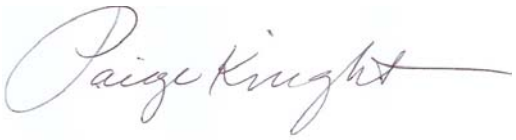
www.energy.state.or.us/nucsafe/HWB/hwboard.htm

The Board has a philosophical objection towards allowing contaminants to flow unimpeded into the Columbia River, even if no harm can currently be demonstrated. Although the contaminated plumes are diluted by the river flow, that doesn't mean there are no impacts on the environment. We don't fully understand the impacts as the various chemical and radioactive materials intermingle and concentrate in biota and the environment. Our bias, therefore, is for proactive steps being taken to stop contaminants from reaching the river, and cleaning up contaminants in the groundwater.

One recommendation in the "*River Without Waste*" report for which we have not seen much, if any progress, relates to the development of new technologies to successfully deal with the tritium plumes at Hanford. We understand the arguments for doing nothing – that tritium has a short half-life, that it's not generally considered to pose a significant health hazard, and that the current technology makes it extremely difficult and expensive to remediate groundwater contaminated with tritium. However, as stated above with our support of proactive measures, simply waiting for the tritium to decay away is not a strategy we can endorse.

Similarly, we have concerns as well with the iodine plumes at Hanford, and the presumption that there's nothing that can be done about those plumes. Obviously, if there is not an active effort to seek solutions, then no solutions will be found. We encourage the U.S. Department of Energy – in partnership with its regulators – to re-commit itself to funding, finding and developing solutions to these very difficult issues.

Sincerely,



Paige Knight, Chair