

June 8, 2001

The Honorable Secretary Abraham
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Re: Environmental Management Top-to-Bottom Review

Dear Secretary Abraham:

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Management has expressed frustration at the pace of cleanup at DOE sites. The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) is also greatly frustrated by the pace of cleanup at Hanford. However, our frustration is primarily associated with DOE's failure – year after year – to provide sufficient funding to meet all of its legal obligations under the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA). This has forced DOE to repeatedly request extensions and delays, which have contributed materially to the escalating costs of cleanup at Hanford and have increased the risks to the Pacific Northwest Region.

The HAB does not believe that the problems of DOE's Environmental Management Program can be solved by reducing funds and conducting another review. Since 1989, when cleanup began at Hanford, DOE has conducted many reviews of its cleanup program. For the most part, the end result at Hanford from these various reviews has been repeated delays and a general slow-down in cleanup progress. An example of this is the "Contractor Report to the Department of Energy on Environmental Management Baseline Programs and Integration Opportunities", May 1997. The HAB is strongly opposed to any review or any other activity, which would result in further delays and derailment of cleanup progress on the Hanford Site.

Rather than restructuring the cleanup program, the HAB recommends DOE instead provide sufficient funding to Hanford – for at least each of the next four years – to meet TPA and other obligations, and then assess whether sufficient progress is being made. The HAB has supported the TPA as the principal blueprint for Hanford cleanup. The HAB has consistently held that compliance with the TPA is not discretionary. While it is very much a flexible, 'living' document, the TPA has remained an important driver for efficient, effective cleanup at Hanford. Frankly, it has not been given the chance to fully succeed. While some of Hanford's cleanup projects will take several decades to complete, we believe that even four years of concerted effort by DOE would result in significant progress and would also help indicate where efficiencies could be implemented.

We urge you to resist the temptation to reinvent cleanup and instead focus efforts and resources to meet the deadlines and schedules DOE is now obligated to meet.

To adequately represent our concerns mentioned above, we recommend the following:

- Ensure that the review recognize the fundamental importance of a strong, credible and comprehensive cleanup agreement. At Hanford, this is the TPA.
- Involve the stakeholders in a participating or consulting role. The HAB has been working for an effective, efficient cleanup of Hanford for more than six years. Our 31-seat membership represents the broad local and regional interests affected by Hanford. The HAB now holds a great deal of Hanford's institutional cleanup history in the face of significant turnover in DOE and contractor personnel. Our past experience and representation makes the HAB a valuable resource that can contribute to focusing a realistic review of Hanford's cleanup program. The HAB has offered 116 pieces of consensus advice, many of which focus on DOE's past initiatives to improve the speed and quality of cleanup.
- Provide the HAB and other advisory boards a draft report for review and comment prior to issuance.
- Do not allow the review process to slow or impede the cleanup work currently underway and planned at Hanford.

We look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Todd Martin, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

cc:

Carolyn Huntoon, Department of Energy Headquarters
Keith Klein, Manager, Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office
Harry Boston, Manager, Department of Energy, Office of River Protection
Washington and Oregon Congressional Delegations

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