



February 7, 1997

The Honorable Federico Peña
Secretary of Energy (designate)
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Peña:

Over the next several years, the Department of Energy will be faced with a number of difficult and challenging decisions regarding the ultimate disposition of surplus plutonium, spent fuel, and a variety of radioactive wastes. The ability to make timely and sustainable decisions on these matters is vital to our national interest, security, and well-being, as well as implementation of the Ten Year Plan. Yet, DOE's past efforts to deal with commercial spent fuel, transuranic waste, Navy spent fuel and foreign research reactor fuel have shown that these decisions can generate considerable controversy, costly litigation and extensive delays.

We believe that a broadly based and informed public discussion on the disposition of nuclear materials and wastes is essential to making implementable and sustainable decisions. In addition to their national and international implications, these decisions will have a significant, and potentially profound, impact on DOE facilities and the communities and states in which they are located. No decision will be successful unless the public believes it is fair and equitable. It is imperative for this reason that DOE's decisions meld local and regional principals and values with national and international considerations. An effective national discussion process can assist in achieving this goal. Additionally, a national discussion process can promote a broader understanding and appreciation of the issues and perspectives among the public and the decision makers. It can help to build a sense of shared responsibility in forging workable solutions.

Secretary O'Leary committed to work toward a national dialogue process on the disposition of nuclear materials. An initial planning group, with DOE-HQ support, has convened several times to lay the groundwork for the dialogue.

We urge that you endorse and support full implementation of the National Dialogue.

Sincerely,

Merilyn B. Reeves, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

cc: Thomas Grumbly, DOE Headquarters
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