



July 21, 1997

U.S. Department of Energy - Headquarters
U.S. Department of Energy - Richland Operations Office
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington Department of Ecology
USDOE Contractors

Subject: Hanford Advisory Board's Concerns on Funding for Hanford Cleanup

Dear Participants in the Salt Lake City Workout Meeting:

On July 9-11, 1997, the Hanford Advisory Board had an extensive discussion on the adequacy of funding for cleanup of the Hanford site in FY98 and FY99. The HAB is very deeply concerned that funding levels for Hanford cleanup in the next two years are inadequate for compliance with the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA). The TPA has been in place since 1989 and provides the blueprint for stabilization and cleanup of Hanford in a safe and cost-effective manner.

Executive Order 12088 and the TPA require DOE to use its best efforts to request the funding required for full compliance. DOE-Richland estimates that full compliance with the TPA will require \$1.084 billion in FY98 and \$1.144 billion in FY99 for Environmental Management. However, budget targets for Hanford are below these levels by \$96 million in FY98 and \$150-220 million in FY99. DOE-Richland has also been directed to identify the potential impacts of an \$836 million budget in FY99 (i.e., \$300 million short of that needed for TPA compliance).

The HAB's deep concerns with funding inadequacies are summarized in Enclosure 1. These reflect a sense of outrage that proposed funding levels violate expectations raised during the past year's discussions of a Ten Year Plan (Focus on 2006) to accelerate cleanup with stable funding adequate to meet compliance levels. Also included is a discussion of the HAB's recommendations on DOE efforts to privatize treatment and stabilization of tank wastes, a top priority for Hanford cleanup. The HAB shares the views on funding for this privatization effort that were expressed in the enclosed letter from Governor Locke and Attorney General Gregoire (Enclosure 2). We look forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues further during the workout meeting July 28-30.

Very truly yours,

Merilyn B. Reeves, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

Enclosures

HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD

STATEMENT FOR SALT LAKE CITY WORKOUT MEETING¹

The Hanford Advisory Board is deeply disturbed by the inadequate funding levels proposed for Hanford cleanup. Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) compliance is the safest, cheapest, quickest way to stabilize Cold War wastes.

Northwest stakeholders want full funding for TPA compliance. DOE states that TPA compliance requires \$1.084 billion in FY98 and \$1.144 billion in FY99, excluding the tank waste privatization set-aside and other Environmental Management national programs. A lower level of funding jeopardizes DOE's ability to meet legally binding TPA commitments.

TPA compliance has proven since its inception in 1989 that it:

1. reduces risks to workers, the public, and the environment,
2. protects the Columbia River,
3. saves money through mortgage reduction and accelerated cleanup.

Reduce risks. The immediate risk of explosion in a high level waste tank at Hanford is one of the site's most pressing problems. Delays in tank stabilization are unacceptable because of the increased risk of a catastrophic accident. The recent explosion in the Plutonium Reclamation Facility at the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) demonstrated the continuing potential for a regional disaster. In addition to worker and public health impacts, an explosion of a high level waste tank could devastate the region's economy. For example, the agricultural output of the region is worth billions of dollars per year.

Protect the Columbia River. Dangerous chemicals and radionuclides leaking from Hanford disposal sites and tanks are migrating toward and into the Columbia River, increasing the risk of human and ecological exposure.

Save money. Savings realized from accelerated Plutonium Uranium Extraction (PUREX) facility deactivation, negotiated through the TPA, are \$283 million over the next 10 years (page 4-4, Focus 2006 Plan). PUREX represents a small portion of potential savings through aggressive TPA compliance. Completing underground tank waste treatment and canyon facility cleanup will save hundreds of millions of dollars every year. For example, funding for maintaining "Minimum Safe" status at PFP costs about \$75 million dollars per year; deactivation of the facility will reduce the cost for annual maintenance and monitoring to approximately \$3 million. Under funding scenarios being considered by DOE, these savings would not be realized.

In conclusion, the TPA, in concert with effective stakeholder involvement, has proven to be a successful blueprint for Hanford cleanup. The Northwest stakeholders maintain strong support for the integrity of the TPA. The mission is cleanup--get on with it!

A Word on TWRS Privatization

Hanford's tank wastes continue to pose serious health and safety risks to the Northwest's workers, citizens, and environment. The safe, efficient treatment and disposal of Hanford's tank waste remains a top priority for the Hanford Advisory Board.

DOE has embarked on an ambitious effort to privatize the design, construction, and operation of the vitrification facilities needed to stabilize Hanford's tank wastes. Through this competitive process, DOE expects to achieve greater accountability, efficiency, and economy. Currently, two competing teams are

under contract to DOE to develop tank waste privatization proposals. The Hanford Advisory Board has provided extensive advice over the past two years to strengthen the privatization approach and ensure expeditious removal of the wastes from the tanks and treatment of these.

If the tank waste privatization is to succeed, the DOE should:

1. fully fund two (2) Phase I vitrification facilities,
2. ensure that an adequate set-aside fund be available for success of each stage of the treatment and disposal process,
3. give the Hanford Advisory Board opportunities to review and comment on all submitted proposals prior to initiation of each phase of privatization efforts,
4. ensure a regulatory infrastructure that fully protects public and worker health and safety and the environment throughout the entire tank waste privatization effort.

Notes:

- ¹ A "workout" meeting is to be held July 28-30, 1997, in Salt Lake City and involve senior managers from DOE-Headquarters, DOE-Richland, EPA, Ecology, contractors, and the Hanford Advisory Board. This is the third workout meeting to improve management of Environmental Management programs and address environmental needs in the face of declining budgets.

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For questions or comments, please send [email](mailto:Hanford_Advisory_Board@rl.gov) to Hanford_Advisory_Board@rl.gov

URL: <http://www.hanford.gov/boards/hab/letters/97-017.htm>

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