



July 16, 1999

Ms. Carolyn Huntoon, Assistant Secretary  
Office of Environmental Management  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, DC 20585

Subject: Off-Site Waste

Dear Ms. Huntoon:

## **INTRODUCTION**

The U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) is preparing to issue records-of-decision for low-level radioactive and mixed wastes later this year. These decisions are expected to use information contained in DOE's "Commercial Disposal Policy Analysis for Low-Level and Mixed Low-Level Wastes." The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) has a number of concerns about using information in this and related documents as a basis for these records of decision.

The HAB has offered a number of pieces of advice relating to the Waste Management Programmatic Impact Statement as well as advice urging DOE to charge generators the fully burdened cost of disposal (and treatment or storage) at Hanford of radioactive and mixed wastes (see Consensus Advice #79, 84, and 94). Charging generators the fully burdened and life-cycle treatment, storage and disposal cost would encourage volume reduction as well as eliminate current subsidies of offsite waste. Nearly half of all low-level waste received this year at Hanford, and projected for next year, is from offsite sources. DOE-RL provided materials to the Dollars and Sense Committee on May 12, 1999, that shows the cost of disposal of Category 1 Low-Level Waste in 1999 is \$1,046 per cubic meter; this cost does not include long-term monitoring, capping, closure, or the capital costs of additional disposal capacity. Offsite generators pay only the "marginal" cost, which is \$485 per cubic meter for disposal of that same waste in 1999.

## **ADVICE**

The HAB recommends DOE consider at least the following key factors in its decisions that would increase the amount of, and sources of offsite waste disposed at Hanford:

- the full life-cycle costs of storage and disposal at each site
- accurate estimates of those costs
- the benefits of independent regulation of low-level radioactive waste
- specific Hanford site and regulatory restrictions on wastes going to non-compliant or uninvestigated facilities

- compliance with Washington State Dangerous Waste Law and regulations
- the relationship between the records-of-decision for low-level and mixed wastes and the Waste Integration effort

The HAB offers the following advice to address these points:

1. The impact of off-site wastes on the inadequate budget of the site must be factored into the decision. The Hanford site faces funding compliance gaps over \$200 million annually. Increased disposal of offsite waste should not be considered without charging the fully-burdened costs and without investigation of the cumulative impacts on soil and groundwater from disposal. The diversion of funds or resources, and increased impact of increased disposal of offsite wastes are not acceptable to the HAB. This is particularly true for waste from a non-DOE facility. For example, DOE has recently decided - without discussion with the HAB or disclosure of impacts - to include the receipt and disposal of waste at Hanford from a non-DOE, commercial facility in Pennsylvania whose wastes had previously been disposed of at a regulated, non-DOE site.
2. The HAB opposes DOE issuing records of decision for low-level and mixed waste that rely upon the inaccurate cost figures in the Department's "Commercial Disposal Policy Analysis for Low-Level and Mixed Low-Level Wastes" (hereinafter referred to as the Policy Analysis).
3. The HAB has previously urged DOE to proceed to independent regulation of low-level radioactive waste, as have numerous states' regulators. DOE's analysis, including the Hanford site-specific Solid Waste Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), should consider independent regulation of low-level waste disposal as an alternative and consider its benefits.
4. DOE, in its EIS and related documents, should factor in restrictions on new wastes going to facilities that are non-compliant or have potential, uninvestigated releases. The impact of additional wastes on the inadequate budget of the site must also be factored into the decision.
5. Mixed waste decisions must be in compliance with Washington State Dangerous Waste law. The Policy Analysis and other documents do not refer to prohibitions against land disposal of certain hazardous wastes in Washington State. (RCW Chapter 70.105)
6. The HAB calls on DOE to define the relationship between (a) the process to finalize records of decision coming out of the Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and (b) the "Waste Integration" initiative, and how these two processes are integrated. The HAB also calls on DOE to develop a clear public involvement process for the waste integration efforts. We are very concerned that the analysis and decision making associated with the Waste Integration effort has had no formal, intersite public involvement process. Conclusions drawn from a process that has had no public involvement should not be incorporated into records of decision.

Attachment A provides additional background information and is numbered to track with the advice above.

We look forward to your timely response and progress updates on this matter.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Marilyn B. Reeves, Chair  
Hanford Advisory Board

cc: Keith Klein, Manager, U.S. Department of Energy-Richland Operations  
Tom Fitzsimmons, Director, Washington Department of Ecology  
Chuck Clarke, Regional Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Pete Knollmeyer, Acting Designated Federal Official  
The Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegations  
Michael Gearheard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Dan Silver, Washington Department of Ecology

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*This advice represents HAB consensus for this specific topic. It should not be taken out of context to extrapolate Board agreement on other subject matters.*

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