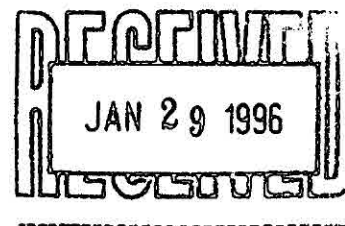




## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

January 24, 1996



Ms. Marilyn B. Reeves  
Chair  
Hanford Advisory Board  
800 NW Sixth Avenue,  
Suite 342  
Portland, Oregon 97209-3715

Dear Ms. Reeves:

Thank you for your letter of December 8, 1995, transmitting the Hanford Advisory Board's advice regarding the *Draft Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (WM PEIS). We appreciate the Board's responsiveness to our requests for public input to decision criteria.

I believe you are aware that we have extended the public comment period from the initial 90 days for an additional 60 days, to a closing date of February 19, 1996. We are concurrently beginning to consider selection criteria for preferred alternatives as public comments are received.

We note similarities between the principles in your letter to those submitted to the Department by the States involved in the June 1995, Federal Facility Compliance Act (FFCA) process. As in our discussions with the States on their principles for mixed waste treatment under the FFCA, we intend to carefully consider the concepts and advice provided in your letter. We will consider the Board's advice from a site-specific perspective as well as from the Department-wide perspective necessary for the national, programmatic decisions supported by the WM PEIS. Some of the principles stated in your letter would, by virtue of their specificity to the Hanford site, be appropriately applied to site- or project-specific proposals, once the programmatic determinations are made. Site-specific environmental reviews, tiered from the WM PEIS, are required prior to any final determination to locate a waste treatment, storage or disposal facility on any of the Department's sites, including Hanford. On either the national or site-specific scale, we recognize the importance of dialogue with the Board as the decision process for waste management programs evolves.


Regarding your statement about the Board's "concern that the WM PEIS has used the Baseline Environmental Management Report (BEMR) as its source for estimated waste volumes," we would like to offer clarification. The estimates of waste volumes used in the BEMR were actually taken from baseline reports originally generated by each site to support the WM PEIS and program planning efforts. These waste inventory reports are continuously being improved, and we will evaluate whether any corresponding changes in the final WM PEIS are warranted. In fact, we recently

consulted the WM PEIS subcommittee of the Environmental Management Advisory Board on this question. The subcommittee suggested a sensitivity analysis of the potential effect that the latest inventory data and projections may have on the results of the WM PEIS analyses, in order to help us determine any needs for using different baseline inventory data.

We agree with your statement concerning the need for effective decision-making processes for waste management that has strong support from the affected stakeholders. We hope that the dialogue initiated in our November 29, 1995, meeting in Denver with you and other Advisory Board chairs will be an important step in achieving our joint goal.

Please convey our appreciation to the Board for the thoughtful recommendations contained in your letter and be assured that they will be given careful attention over the coming months as we begin to prepare the final WM PEIS.

Sincerely,

*for*   
Thomas P. Grumbly  
Assistant Secretary for  
Environmental Management