

September 7, 2001

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Chuck Findley, Acting Regional Administrator
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Tom Fitzsimmons, Director
Washington Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Re: Community Relations Plan

Dear Messrs. Klein, Boston, Findley, and Fitzsimmons,

Citizen input and participation is vital to any government agency decision-making process. In practice, it is not easy for citizens to become involved in these processes or to influence the outcome of decisions. The Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) Community Relations Plan is more than a legal document that contains requirements for public involvement in Hanford cleanup decisions -- it is also a working document that explains to the public how to get involved in these decisions. The Plan, which is currently under revision, is a necessary and useful tool for both the public and the TPA agencies to: 1) explain how and where to get information about Hanford; 2) introduce people who are actively involved in cleanup (including government agencies, tribes, and Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) members); 3) plan and give notice for public involvement activities, and; 4) provide mechanisms to evaluate and improve the TPA public involvement process.

The HAB requests the incorporation of the following values into any revision of the Plan:

1. The HAB suggests the Plan be titled The Hanford Cleanup Public Involvement Plan.
2. The Plan should be updated and maintained to meet the requirements for public involvement under applicable laws such as CERCLA, RCRA, MTCA, and NEPA. The updated Plan should reflect new requirements of MTCA pertaining to public input for site specific risk assessments and ecological risk assessments, and notice and input of public values for future land and resource use.
3. The Plan should clearly state these requirements regarding public notice and planning of public meetings:
 - a) Proposed meeting locations and times should be identified to interested citizen groups, Tribes, governmental entities, including the States of Washington and Oregon, and the HAB forty-five (45) days prior to the proposed meeting whenever possible. Note that certain applicable laws require a forty-five (45) day notification.
 - b) Prior to finalizing meeting or hearing locations, dates and times or the contents of notices for meetings and hearings, the TPA agencies should consult with interested citizen groups, the States of Washington and Oregon, Tribes, and the Public Involvement and Communication Committee of the HAB regarding appropriate dates, times, and locations to avoid schedule conflicts. Also, whenever feasible, either a meeting or a conference call and email should be used to consult with the States of Washington and Oregon, Tribes, Hanford public interest groups and other interested citizen groups to seek agreement among interested parties on meeting formats and agendas. Meeting planners should seek to include non-TPA agency viewpoints or information to assist citizens in understanding how public values may be impacted by proposed actions of the TPA agencies.
 - c) The dates, locations, times, agendas and form of notices for public meetings, hearings and comment periods should be established thirty (30) days prior to any meeting or hearing or the start of a comment period. Exceptions should only be made for emergency actions. Thirty-day notice should be provided to interested citizen groups, the States of Washington and Oregon, Tribes, and the Public Involvement and Communication Committee of the HAB.
 - d) Citizens may request a meeting or hearing on cleanup issues. The TPA agencies should hold the meeting, if possible, at the location requested. In addition, following the model provided by MTCA, if ten or more people request a meeting or hearing, the TPA agencies should hold a public meeting in the requested area. If a meeting is not possible, the TPA agencies should work with the group to address their concerns.

4. The HAB believes that public involvement is a two-way process. When citizens provide input on significant Hanford clean-up decisions, they should be responded to in a timely manner by the TPA agencies. HAB advice #92 (March 1999) provides further guidance in this regard. A "Comments and Response" document should be prepared after all TPA comment periods or meetings, and mailed within 60 days to all commentors and others who request the comments and responses. Whenever possible, efforts should be made to allow commentors to clarify their comments or reply to TPA agency responses prior to the decision being finalized.
5. To maintain an effective public involvement program, the TPA agencies should assess at least annually the effectiveness of public involvement efforts to identify areas requiring improvement. The results of this assessment should be formally documented in a report for general distribution.
6. The Plan should say that: the charter of the HAB, as it exists or may be amended, including commitments to funding and the Open Public Meeting Act, is part of the Plan and should be attached as an appendix.

Very truly yours,

Todd Martin, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

Gordon Rogers, Public-at-Large, abstained from this advice

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.

cc: Jessie Roberson, Assistant Secretary of Energy, U.S. Department of Energy
Wade Ballard, U.S. Department of Energy
Doug Sherwod, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Wilson, Washington State Department of Ecology
The Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegations (listed below)

U.S. Senators (OR)
Gordon H Smith
Ron Wyden

U.S. Senators (WA)

Maria Cantwell

Patty Murray

U.S. Representatives (OR)

Earl Brumenauer

Peter DeFazio

Darlene Hooley

Greg Walden

U.S. Representatives (WA)

Norm Dicks

Jennifer Dunn

Richard Hastings

George Nethercutt

State Senators (WA)

Pat Hale

Mike Hewitt

State Representatives (WA)

Jerome Delvin

Shirley Hankins