

# Hanford Advisory Board Values

## DRAFT, April 11, 2012

### ❖ **Protect the Columbia River**

- **The Columbia River is a local, regional and national treasure. Cleanup actions must protect the river now and forever into the future.**
  - The Board continues to support the strategy to prioritize cleanup along the Columbia River corridor. DOE should complete this work as expeditiously as possible and achieve a standard of unrestricted use throughout the River Corridor.

### ❖ **Protect and restore the groundwater**

- **The groundwater beneath Hanford is a valuable resource that will likely be much-needed in the future. It should be cleaned up and restored to the highest beneficial use – as drinking water, for irrigating crops, and for all other uses.**
  - Restoration should be within a reasonable time frame.
  - Contamination sources within the vadose zone that will likely contribute to future groundwater contamination must be removed, treated as necessary, and disposed in an appropriate disposal facility.
  - Since contaminants in the groundwater eventually reach the river, groundwater cleanup is necessary to help protect the river.

### ❖ **Protect the broader environment – do no harm during cleanup or with new development**

- **Cleanup activities should protect the integrity of all biological resources, with specific attention to rare, threatened, and endangered species and their related habitat.**

- Historic and cultural resources have value and should not be degraded or destroyed. Appropriate access to those resources is a part of that value.
- The importance of ecological diversity should be recognized and these resources enhanced as a result of cleanup and waste management decisions.

### ❖ **Involve the public**

- **Hanford cleanup decisions that are being made can have impacts on people and the environment for hundreds of years to come. It is appropriate for the public to help make these decisions.**
  - DOE and the regulators must ensure meaningful opportunities for the public to be involved.
  - Decision-making processes must be open and transparent.

### ❖ **Provide sufficient funding**

- **The Hanford Cleanup is not discretionary. It is a federal obligation to address the Cold War environmental legacy and honor regulatory commitments to return the site to compliance with the nation's environmental laws.**
  - DOE must annually request and advocate for sufficient funds to meet regulatory requirements, reduce risk, and move the cleanup forward.
  - While the Board wants to see tax dollars spent wisely in the cleanup, our priority is to have a high quality cleanup regardless of the final cost.

### ❖ **Waste Treatment Plant is vital**

- **The Waste Treatment Plant is one of the most critical components of the Hanford cleanup.**

- DOE must ensure that the Waste Treatment Plant operates as intended, and that the tank waste is immobilized in a durable waste form.
- DOE must ensure that the designs are based on sound engineering principles and that needed tests or studies are performed well in advance of when the data is needed for construction.

## ❖ No off-site waste

- **Hanford already suffers a significant environmental burden from wastes previously disposed on site and waste that will be generated during the remainder of the Hanford cleanup.**
  - With the exception of several historical off-site waste streams allowed by the existing Consent Decree, DOE should not propose and Hanford should not accept waste from other DOE sites or elsewhere for disposal or long-term storage.
  - The Environmental Restoration Disposal Site and all other Hanford disposal sites (with the exception of the Navy trench) should remain limited to wastes generated from the Hanford cleanup.

## ❖ Protect worker health and safety

- **Much of the cleanup work is hazardous. Workers should receive appropriate training and programs should be in place to ensure a safety-conscious work environment.**
  - There should be visible management and worker accountability for accidents and for any retribution against employees for reporting accidents, injuries, safety concerns, or other safety issues. Incentives for improving safety performance should be structured to encourage open and straightforward identification of safety concerns within both the DOE and contractor organizations.
  - Cleanup planning should include workforce stability factors to ensure a trained, experienced workforce is secured.
  - Workers should not experience reprisals for bringing safety issues forward.

## ❖ **Maintain the integrity of the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA)**

- **The TPA and its structure of continuing, collaborative management between DOE, EPA and the State of Washington is the backbone of Hanford cleanup.**
  - Changes to the TPA should be open and transparent.
  - The framework of the TPA should reflect public values.

## ❖ **Technology development is necessary, but should not impede cleanup now**

- **DOE should move forward with cleanup using the most practicable, timely, available technology, while leaving room for future innovation. DOE should dedicate funds to explore needed new technologies, but not delay necessary cleanup in anticipation of the future development of a “magic bullet.”**
  - Before they are put to use at Hanford, DOE needs to demonstrate that new technologies are viable at Hanford and are as or more effective than existing technology.
  - When a better option becomes known through an open and credible systems design and R&D process, DOE should be willing to adopt it.
  - DOE should give up further research on unlikely options and on options that cannot achieve the required environmental goals.

## ❖ **Strong preference for RTD vs. barriers**

- **While the Board recognizes that waste will be left in place at Hanford, the Board’s strong preference is for remove-treat-dispose (RTD) rather than leave waste in place under a barrier. DOE needs to make a compelling case as to why and how a barrier is a better alternative than RTD. Barriers should be a *last resort* remedy.**
  - Hanford waste that remains on-site must be left in a facility or configuration that will be protective of human health and the environment.

- Natural attenuation as a remedy is not appropriate unless existing remedies are not technically practicable and relevant health and environment standards can be achieved in a reasonable time frame.
- Institutional Controls should not be a substitute for cleanup.

## ❖ **Remove high-risk materials from Hanford burial grounds**

- **High-risk materials should be removed from the burial grounds. Removal of long half-life radionuclides, mobile wastes and those that release dangerous gas should be prioritized.**
  - DOE must have sufficient information (through historical documents, or additional sampling and characterization) to understand where the high risk materials are located within the burial grounds.
  - Trenches or burial ground areas that are demonstrated to be low risk should only be considered for capping after confirmatory investigations confirm a low risk from waste in these areas.

## ❖ **Get plutonium off the Hanford Site**

- **Because it poses a hazard for such a long period of time, plutonium wastes at Hanford that are reasonably accessible, should be retrieved (regardless of when it was buried) and sent to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).**
  - WIPP is designed for the permanent isolation of plutonium and other long-lived radioactive materials. Plutonium wastes will be much safer disposed in WIPP rather than left in the near-surface at Hanford.

## ❖ **Long-Term Stewardship needs should be considered in current and future cleanup decisions**

- **Future environmental and budgetary impacts must be understood and factored in cleanup decisions.**