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STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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July 3, 2007

Ms. Susan Leckband, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board
713 Jadwin, Suite 4
Richland, WA 99352

Re: HAB Consensus Advice #197 – Groundwater Values

Dear Ms. Leckband:

Thank you for the advice on groundwater values. It echoes many of the principles that Governor Gregoire and the Department of Ecology have expressed.

The U.S. Department of Energy's (USDOE) recent emphasis on groundwater activities is encouraging. We believe more must be done to turn it into the sustained effort needed to address Hanford Site groundwater remediation, restoration, and resource protection. We fully support setting "specific goals and schedules for the characterization, remediation, and cleanup of all groundwater contamination under the Hanford site." The Hanford Groundwater Strategy signed by the Tri-Party Agencies sets the goal of returning groundwater to beneficial use, as do state and federal regulations.

Ecology has urged USDOE to increase funding and integration of groundwater monitoring, characterization, and remediation efforts. Those efforts, along with development of new technology, are critical components of restoring Hanford Site groundwater to its highest beneficial use.

We will take your recommendation of a contaminated plume registry into discussions with USDOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The tracking of some plumes to their source is still in the initial stage. However, we agree on the importance of timely and adequate characterization of the source, as well as the resulting multi-media and multi-contaminant plumes. We also recognize that characterization of the vadose zone and past practice units is an integral part of groundwater protection and remediation.

We believe that your flowchart captures the key steps in the remediation decision-making processes. It will be a good tool for discussions of these processes with USDOE, EPA, tribes, and stakeholders. We appreciate your advice and will use it to focus the Tri-Parties on stakeholder values.

Sincerely,

Jane A. Hedges
Program Manager
Nuclear Waste Program

cc: Elin Miller, EPA
Nick Ceto, EPA

Shirley Olinger, USDOE-ORP
Mike Weis, USDOE-RL

