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HANFORD WATCH
2285 S.E. Cypress
Portland, Or. 97214
January 12, 1998

Linda Bauer, Assistant Manager, ER
Richland Operations Office
Federal Building
Richland, Washington 99352

RECEIVED

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DOE-RL / DIS

Dear Linda:

I am writing on behalf of the members of HANFORD WATCH to express our support for the full funding of a strong vadose zone program in the cleanup of the Hanford site. The recent verification that waste from the tank farms at Hanford has reached ground water is an siren sounding on the quickly increasing risk of contamination of the Columbia River. With ninety (90) percent of the radionuclides from Hanford waste have yet to contaminate the Columbia, we have a disaster brewing beyond our wildest computer models.

In a 1970 report by the National Academy of Science an extreme case was presented of Hanford wastes: if all of the tank waste from the 177 tanks was dumped into the Columbia River in one shot, the Columbia River would be unusable for 1200 years. Although this is an extreme case it points to the importance of fully funding the vadose zone project at the very least at the level of \$12 million and ideally, if the government and Congress truly cares about the health and safety of its taxpaying citizens-- it would fund the project at it's full \$18 million level.

We encourage Bechtel and the DOE to define the integration and management of vadose zone activities across the site and to carry out a comprehensive cleanup if protection of the ground water and the Columbia River is to mean anything. Needless to say, we are interested in minimizing the potential impacts of contamination.

We need to base our decisions on the "risk" involved in remediating the vadose zone on protection of the vadose and ground water and based on what will happen to the receptors--humans and animals. We need to take the risk to the edge of the pathway rather than calculating exposures to not exceed 10 to the -6. We have no control over any of this after 100 years. We cannot leave this for future generations to solve. By then the plumes of strontium 90 (a bone seeker), uranium, tritium and chromium will have formed an uncontrollable plume.

Sincerely,


Paige Knight, *Chair*