



**Department of Energy**  
Richland Operations Office  
P.O. Box 550  
Richland, Washington 99352

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MAR 6 1998

Ms. Donna L. Powauke, Manager  
Environmental Restoration/  
Waste Management Program  
Nez Perce Tribe  
P.O. Box 365  
Lapwai, Idaho 83540

Dear Ms. Powauke:

**FUTURE NEZ PERCE TRIBE ERWM COLUMBIA RIVER COMPREHENSIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (CRCIA) INVOLVEMENT, AND THE MILESTONE M-15-80-B LETTER**

This is in response to your letter to Mr. John D. Wagoner, Manager, U. S. Department of Energy (DOE), Richland Operations Office (RL), of October 11, 1997, same subject.

I recognize that the Nez Perce Tribe and other Tribes and organizations have concerns about various aspects of our response letter for Tri-Party Agreement Milestone M-15-80-B. I also recognize the valuable contributions that the Nez Perce have made to the CRCIA, and am appreciative of the accomplishments of the CRCIA Team, on which the Nez Perce served.

As a result of the successful CRCIA Team effort, the final report of the "Screening Assessment and Requirements for a Comprehensive Assessment: Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment" is due to be published shortly. This document represents the culmination of more than two years of cooperative effort between Tri-Party Agreement Agencies, the Nez Perce, other Tribal representatives, and stakeholder members of the CRCIA Team. This is a precedent setting achievement which has demonstrated how Tribes and others can more actively participate in Hanford activities.

The primary issue raised in your letter, namely the future of the CRCIA Team, relates to this accomplishment, and is a very important issue. I understand this, and because of its importance, DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and State of Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), have initiated a series of facilitated discussions with Tribal representatives, members of the CRCIA Team, and others to discuss this and other issues associated with vadose zone and groundwater contamination, and protection of the Columbia River. The first meeting with the CRCIA Team was conducted on December 12, 1997. At this meeting, it was agreed that an additional facilitated meeting with the CRCIA Team would be conducted, and on February 26, 1998, such a meeting was held.

An additional factor relating to the future of the CRCIA Team and Tribal involvement in protection of Hanford's groundwater and the Columbia River has emerged since the start of planning for the facilitated meetings. Namely, on December 3, 1997, RL assigned responsibility to Bechtel Hanford, Inc. (BHI) for the responsibility of Sitewide Groundwater/Vadose Zone integration. Since that time, BHI and others have begun working on planning for this effort, including planning for consultation with

the Tribes. Mr. Richard Holten, Director of the Restoration Projects Division is taking a strong leadership role in this planning effort, supported by Mr. Mike Thompson, Senior Project Manager for the Groundwater Project. Finally, Mr. Bryan Foley has assumed the responsibility of coordinating with Tribes and stakeholders as we move forward in integrating this complex set of issues.

If you have questions or concerns about this letter, the facilitated discussions, or CRCIA follow-on, please contact Mr. Bryan Foley of my staff at (509) 376-7087.

Sincerely,



Linda K. Bauer, Assistant Manager  
for Environmental Restoration

GWP:RKS

cc: G. deBruler, HAB  
L. E. Gadbois, EPA  
S. Harris, CTUIR  
D. P. Holland, Ecology  
J. D. Owendoff, DOE-HQ  
T. Woods, YIN