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WASHINGTON

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COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BUDGET
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR
AND PENSIONS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

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June 7, 1999

Thomas W. Ferns
Hanford Remedial Action EIS Document Manager
US Department of Energy
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Richland, WA 99352-0550



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Dear Mr. Ferns:

I am writing to endorse the Department's preferred alternative for the Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement and Comprehensive Land Use Plan. I applaud the Department's decision to follow the record of decision on the Hanford Reach issued in 1996. I also appreciate the balanced approach the alternative takes with regard to preservation, recreation, and industrialization, as well as the alternative's commitment to the Tri-Party Agreement.

There are several areas of the preferred alternative I would like to highlight. First, I support the decision to expand the Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge to include all of the Wahluke Slope. While I believe there may be some small areas adjacent to the highway or in other previously-developed areas that might be acceptable for light industrial or other uses, our first objective should be to protect the wildlife and fisheries resources.

Similarly, the quarter mile along the Columbia River's Hanford Reach must continue to be designated as a preservation area. Such a designation is compatible with my continuing efforts to make the Hanford Reach a federally-protected recreational Wild and Scenic River managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. It is vital we protect the cultural and ecological resources associated with this very special area.

I strongly support the ideas outlined in the preferred alternative to facilitate recreation on these lands. The B Reactor will make a fabulous museum, documenting the area's vital contribution to fighting and winning the Cold War. The Vernita Bridge is already a popular camping and fishing area; developing a boat ramp and other facilities will dramatically improve access and the quality of recreation in the area. The White Bluffs boat launch will also be well-used.

There is little dispute about the Central Plateau continuing as the major site for cleanup activities. The TPA will guide that process and as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to fight hard for full funding of site cleanup.

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I also endorse the preferred alternative's plan for economic development in the 200 Area and the site north of Richard. I believe there are probably other areas, too, which should be considered for industrial use and economic development. I urge the Department to work with local governments to locate other areas to facilitate economic development.

The tribes have contributed much to this process. I appreciate the preferred alternative's commitment to preserving important cultural sites, such as Gable Mountain, Gable Butte, the area from Umtanum Ridge to ALE, and the active sand dunes. I continue to believe there is a way to consolidate BLM lands along the south side of the river to facilitate multiple use management by the Bureau, further protect cultural sites, encourage industrial development, and preserve important ecological areas.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Department, stakeholders, tribes, and local governments to find solutions to all of the land use issues facing the Wahluke Slope and Hanford Reach. This HRA EIS moves us closer to a solution that I believe best serves the interests of the citizens of Washington and best protects our important cultural, fish and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,


Patty Murray
United States Senator