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May 21, 1999
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Attn: Tom Ferns
Revised Draft HRA EIS/MSIN HO-12
U.S. Department of Energy
P. O. Box 550
Richland, WA 99352-9959

RECEIVED

MAY 26 1999

DOE-RL / DIS

Dear Mr. Ferns:

I was present at the public hearing held at the Shilo in Richland last night and offer my appreciation for the availability of the forum. Thank you also for the opportunity to submit written comment. We support the DOE preferred alternative. We also support the Save the Reach Coalition suggested amendments.

We support designation of all public lands on the Wahluke Slope, the Hanford Reach, its islands, the McGee Ranch, the Riverlands area, and the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve as National Wildlife Refuge (176,000 acres).

Grazing on the Hanford Nuclear reservation is not appropriate. The ecology of the area is fragile; the activities of large non-native animals would damage the cryptobiotic soil crusts and allow the invasion of non-native weeds such as cheat grass and Russian thistle. These, and other weedy species, provide a far greater fuel base for range fire than the native bunch grasses. Fire was one of the natural forces in the evolution of the sagebrush steppe and grassland in the areas referred to above. The bunchgrass fueled fires that formerly swept the lands were of a different nature than the fires we see in recent times, which are richly fueled by exotic weeds and burn differently, with more heat and with more destructive force. Another point in opposition of grazing on these lands is that, for a very dubious potential return, there is a risk that consumers may avoid Washington produced cattle if it is publicized that some Washington beef is grazed on Hanford lands. (My heritage is in wheat farming and cattle ranching in Washington State.)

We support restricting all mining operations to only those essential to completing clean-up and remediation on the Hanford Reservation. It would be desirable if gravels could be mined at Horn Rapids or elsewhere in order to avoid inflicting ugly mining scars on now-pristine, and publicly visible, areas.

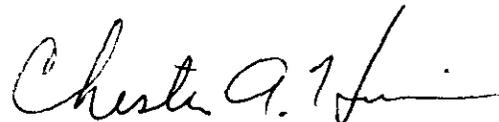
We support issuing a separate Record of Decision for all the areas mentioned above. Areas uncontaminated by Hanford operations should not have to wait for protection until the complex decisions involving clean-up in the central Hanford area are made.

I enclose a copy of an article from the May 21, 1999 *Tri-City Herald*. It is clear from this article that what Doc Hastings and others who favor "local control" really mean is (very) "local control" by special interest groups. Doc Hastings' actions have demonstrated he does not represent the local people who voiced their opinions at last night's public hearing.

Thank you for your consideration,



Karen Hinman
State Board Member,
Washington Native Plant Society



Also signed by **Dr. Chester A. Hinman**

Public tells DOE they want Hanford

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The crowd wanted as much of Hanford's native habitat preserved as possible.

That message was sounded at a Thursday public hearing in Richland on a draft Department of Energy study on what should be done with Hanford's lands after cleanup is complete.

"The natural and sensitive land of the Hanford nuclear reservation is a natural resource that must be preserved for all of us," said area resident Scott Woodward.

That sentiment was echoed by every one of the 27 people who

spoke at the hearing. About 100 people attended.

About half the speakers wanted the federal government to immediately declare the Wahluke Slope, the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, the Hanford Reach, the Reach's islands and Hanford's northwest corner all as a federal wildlife reserve.

Most voiced opposition to farming and grazing on Hanford lands. Most wanted no mining on the site or the bare minimum needed for cleanup work.

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, the Environmental Information Network, the Columbia River Conservation

League and the Washington Environmental Council backed those positions. These stances echoed those voiced at a similar hearing Tuesday in Portland.

The DOE draft outlines six scenarios for what might be done with portions of Hanford's 560 square miles after they are cleaned up.

The speakers supported DOE's recommendation, if it is made more restrictive; or a Nez Perce Tribe proposal to convert everything outside of the 200 Area and B Reactor into a preserve; or a Natural Resources Trustees Council's proposal that is somewhere between the other two.

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OPINION

Tri-City Herald

Friday, May 21, 1999

Hanford Reach

Preserve it

The Hanford Reach is again in the news with local or federal management the main discussion. Doc Hastings has become the front man for "local control."

I once attended a public hearing on the Reach. I couldn't help noticing that "local control" advocates were, without exception, agriculturally oriented, including agricultural co-op and farm implement dealers.

These people kept up a litany of, "Federal control means we won't be