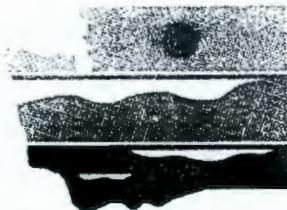




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October 12, 2006

EDMC

Mr. Keith A. Klein, Manager
Richland Operations Office
U.S. Department of Energy
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Richland, WA 99352

Mr. Roy J. Schepens, Manager
Office of River Protection
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 450; MSIN H6-60
Richland, WA 99352

Re: Risk Assessment and Cleanup Decision Integration

Dear Keith and Roy:

This letter is to express our concern about recent developments in the effort to integrate risk assessment and cleanup decision information at Hanford. The need to bring together four components of risk assessment findings (surface, vadose zone, groundwater, and Columbia River) has been a topic of discussion for years at Hanford. You have heard from Oregon and Washington, as well as from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), stakeholders, Tribes, and even Congress. The House of Representatives Conference Report 109-275, November 7, 2005, notes "the various program groups managing the groundwater and vadose zone cleanup program are fragmented, and not well coordinated."

In the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) response to Congress (Report to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on Groundwater Vadose Zone Organization and Operations at the Hanford Site, March 29, 2006) DOE agreed to:

- Consolidate modeling and risk assessment work for the Hanford site.
- Consolidate all groundwater and vadose zone activities under the Groundwater Remediation Project.
- Integrate groundwater, vadose zone, and source area cleanup decisions.

In the six months since DOE's report to Congress, we have observed little progress toward implementing these promises.

Accelerated closure cannot be achieved without an agreed upon framework and approach, especially at a site as complex as Hanford. While we continue to talk about this issue, DOE and its contractors move rapidly forward to cleanup decisions, actions, and records of decision without an integration or closure strategy, at least not one that DOE has shared with us. Opportunities to make comprehensive decisions based on comprehensive information are being lost.

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Hanford cleanup cannot succeed, no matter the size of the budget, unless we have:

1. A comprehensive strategy for the complete Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act process, including Natural Resource Damage Assessment
2. A complete picture of the risks and injury in surface, vadose zone, groundwater, and the Columbia River. At this time, those do not appear to exist.

There have been attempts at integration of risk assessments over the years. In the late 1990s the Hanford Site Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project made some attempts to "coordinate," but, in truth, focused more on other activities. Those activities were important and useful, but did not further integration of data.

The *Status of Hanford Site Risk Assessment Integration, FY 2005* (DOE/RL-2005-37) established the Configuration Management Groups Integration Work Group. They worked for nearly two years, and then quietly faded away without notice or explanation. At that time, DOE said integration would be addressed in the Washington Closure Hanford (WCH) contracts and in the Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (TC&WM EIS).

We then waited for WCH's *Integrated Strategy for Achieving Final Cleanup Decisions*, which was a contract deliverable. The plan release was delayed repeatedly. At the Senior Trustee meeting on August 30, 2006, DOE assured the Senior Trustees this WCH integration plan would be released soon. DOE praised the plan as one that would clarify integration, calm our concerns, and add credibility to integration efforts. Yet only two weeks later, we learned that this document will not be used by the Tri-Parties to provide a framework and approach for integrating the various risk assessment components. It is no longer considered a decision document. Instead, it is now considered an internal working document and we are unsure if it will be released to the Trustees or the public.

Because DOE incentivizes WCH to minimize remediation and accelerate closure, we fear more of the same – moving quickly toward an uncertain level of cleanup without complete and integrated information. This is true for Fluor Hanford's work in the Central Plateau as well. The concept of integrating information from and about the surface, vadose zone, and groundwater may be even more critical in the Central Plateau, given its complexity and inevitability of waste left behind.

We are concerned that the TC&WM EIS may not fully address integration, because it focuses on tank waste and waste disposal and does not comprehensively assess impacts to groundwater. The groundwater model in the TC&WM EIS is expected to be the basis for future comprehensive groundwater modeling as our knowledge of the site's present and future contamination grows. Washington is involved via its regulatory and cooperating agency role. Oregon staff was invited several months ago to participate in the conceptual model development for the EIS but has not yet been contacted. The model design will need to be carefully evaluated to ensure that the model meets expectations.

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The TC&WM EIS cannot be a substitute for the focused effort necessary for true integration of risk information. If DOE intends to use the EIS in this way, then trustees, states, and stakeholders must be actively included in its development.

We all agree that true integration is an enormous challenge. But this work must be done before informed cleanup decisions can be made. We cannot keep pushing these critical decisions off to future contracts or planning documents.

So what is the solution to making integration happen?

The answer, we believe, is a process you have already endorsed in the July 6, 2005, Hanford Site Risk Assessment Integration charter for the Consolidated Management Group's Integration Working Group. It was signed by all the Tri-Parties. Language from the charter says:

"The Tri-Parties have determined that integration of the risk assessments will be necessary to achieve cleanup objectives. To assure successful completion of cleanup, using the risk assessments as a basis, all interested parties need to be partners in reviewing the ongoing efforts to integrate the risk assessments in terms of approach, methodologies, and outcomes. The process will support and enhance DOE's site ownership function and accountability to Congress, the public, tribes, trustees, and other stakeholders for Hanford cleanup work.

The purpose of this effort is to establish a process for integrating risk assessments that includes input from all interested parties. The integrated risk assessment process must be comprehensive, cumulative, efficient, provide adequate geographic coverage, be both enduring and flexible, and able to be implemented. This effort is not intended to address resolution of NRDA liability; however, the parties are interested in integrating natural resource recovery into remedial actions. The process will promote open communication and needs to have a schedule and clearly define objectives.

(The goal is) Collaborating to develop a process for integrating Hanford Site risk assessments to support risk management, integrated site cleanup, and closure decisions."

We request that future work require an inclusive, participatory process to determine how to utilize existing data and identify what additional information is required. Bring together DOE, EPA, Ecology, Oregon, and natural resource trustees. If sitewide integration of all the information at one time is too big a task, start with one National Priorities List site. Regardless of where we start and the scale we choose, we must have a complete picture of the risks in the surface, vadose zone, groundwater, and the Columbia River.

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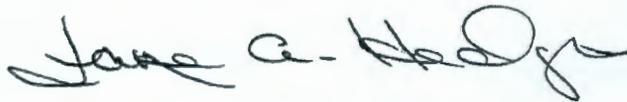
Again, we encourage an open dialogue among all the interested parties to define and implement risk assessment integration. We stand ready to work closely with DOE, regulators, Tribes, and other interested parties to tackle this challenge together. Let us all be partners in a process to achieve our common goal – protection of human health and the unique natural resources at the Hanford Site.

Sincerely,



Ken Niles, Assistant Director
Oregon Department of Energy

Sincerely,



Jane A. Hedges, Manager
Nuclear Waste Program
Washington State Department of Ecology

cc: U.S. Senator Gordon Smith
U.S. Senator Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator Patty Murray
U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer
U.S. Representative Darlene Hooley
U.S. Representative Greg Walden
U.S. Representative David Wu
U.S. Representative Doc Hastings
James Rispoli, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management, DOE
Matthew Duchesne, Environmental Compliance Advisor, Environmental Management, DOE
Nick Ceto, EPA
Stuart Harris, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Gabriel Bohnee, Nez Perce Tribe
Russell Jim, Yakama Nation
Todd Martin, Hanford Advisory Board

cc electronic:
Hanford Natural Resource Trustees

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