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Mr. Thomas W. Ferns
U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550, MSIN HO-12
Richland, WA 99352-0550

Dear Mr. Ferns

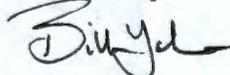
It is critical to keep the best of what remains of the shrub-steppe ecosystem intact. As a third generation native of eastern Washington we've seen nearly all of the native habitat degraded or destroyed. We must retain what remains. Large blocks of intact habitat are needed to support the hundreds of diverse native plants and animals dependent on this habitat - peregrine falcons, ferruginous hawks, white pelicans, pygmy rabbits, and rare wildflowers. In addition, the Hanford Reach is critical to provide a migration corridor and spawning and rearing habitat for fall chinook salmon. The Hanford Reach and adjacent, uncontaminated DOE lands represent an irreplaceable natural legacy.

I urge the DOE to protect all of the ecologically significant lands at Hanford. This can be done best by implementing the Preferred Alternative with some modifications. The following adjoined DOE lands should be managed as a permanent National Wildlife Refuge: the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, the McGee Ranch, DOE's entire Wahluke Slope, the Hanford Reach, and the Columbia River islands. This will provide a large, continuous "crescent" of protected habitat lands surrounding central Hanford.

Additionally, to ensure long-term protection for key native species and systems located across the Site (including central Hanford), there should be no agriculture, commercial mining, or livestock grazing permitted. To expedite a final decision on management of uncontaminated lands, DOE should issue separate decisions for the areas mentioned above.

Thank you for your work to preserve this site for the future.

Sincerely,



Bill Yake
4032 Green Cove St. NW
Olympia WA
98502-3520

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