



Oregon

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August 24, 1999

Rich Holten
U.S. Department of Energy
Richland Operations
P.O. Box 550
Richland, Washington 99352

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DOE-RL / DIS

Dear Mr. Holten:

We appreciated the opportunity to meet with you last week at the Portland Airport. We found the meeting very productive, and appreciate the time you took to address some of our concerns about the Groundwater Vadose Zone project. To ensure there is no confusion about what we discussed and agreed upon, attached are the key points we heard from the discussion. If there are corrections please call me. If you have no corrections please return a signed copy to Dirk Dunning for our records. I will then return a copy to you with both signatures.

We look forward to meeting with you again to continue the dialogue about this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Blazek, Administrator
Oregon Office of Energy
Nuclear Safety Division



Groundwater Vadose Zone Project Discussion August 18, 1999

Meeting Participants:

Rich Holten, USDOE

Mary Lou Blazek, Oregon Office of Energy

Dirk Dunning, Oregon Office of Energy

Steve Sautter, Oregon Office of Energy

1. Rich agreed that there has not been much progress in the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project this year and improvement is needed.
2. Rich is concerned with how slowly the project is proceeding. He also voiced concern that the project has not focused on the "phenomenology" of why waste has moved to its present locations, where it is located now and how it may move in the future.
3. Rich agreed to issue written guidance to the contractor(s) that Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment (CRCIA) is the basis for the comprehensive impact assessment and that the environmental transport pathways are part of the scope of the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project. For example, the intrusion by plants and animals into disposal sites and the consequent transport of radioactive and hazardous wastes is a pathway that will be included in the comprehensive assessment and will not be treated as a later add-on analysis.
4. Rich commented that the project is in the process of drilling the first characterization well. Oregon has pressed for investigation of the deep vadose zone and the movement of leaked wastes under tanks for over a decade. Oregon recommended pursuing horizontal or slant drilling methods to overcome the limitations in our collective understanding of where waste is under tanks, how fast and how it is moving, and confusion from drag down in vertical wells.

Oregon noted that the SX tank farm expert panel and later the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project expert panel both recommended strongly that DOE drill slant wells to resolve these issues. Rich replied that DOE would drill two slant wells in the SX farm next year. The first well will be to prove the technology. The second will be to investigate waste movement and the deep vadose zone under SX-108.

Oregon asked how high Rich's confidence level is that the slant well drilling will occur. Rich replied 90%. Oregon asked if DOE-RL had the money. Rich replied that they did - \$7 million. Oregon questioned why the cost was so high and where the analytical work would be done. Rich replied that it would be done at the 222-S analytical lab for about \$1 million. Oregon expressed alarm that it would be done on-site and still cost so much.

5. Oregon disagreed about the value and merits of drilling a vertical well southwest of SX-115. Rich felt it had merit. Oregon disagreed and expressed concern that this well may show

little about the movement of wastes in the tank farms. Oregon questioned both the cost and value of drilling a vertical well in this location.

6. Rich noted that characterization is needed under the tank farms and that this is a major vulnerability. He also noted that DOE already has \$10 million and may get another \$10 million toward this work. Rich explained that \$6 million was in integration, management and Systems Assessment Capability and about \$5.5 million would go to actual Science and Technology work.

Oregon questioned whether the Science and Technology money was focused at Hanford and on the specific near term needs of the project. Oregon commented that based on other discussions (from the detailed work plan meetings) that half of this money would be focused on Hanford and the other half on other Groundwater/Vadose Zone needs around the nation.

Rich noted that results would not be available from the Science and Technology work for three years. Oregon expressed concern that these projects may not be well-focused on Hanford's needs.

7. Rich commented that well drilling and characterization was being largely driven by regulatory needs and that he does not believe that DOE has adequately looked at phenomena. Rich commented that well drilling could not be used for determining the inventory under the tanks.
8. Rich commented that the Systems Assessment Capability (SAC) team is working to define needs and that they need to look at what DOE intends to accomplish with characterization under the tanks. The SAC came in with high cost estimates for doing modeling and they need to be lower.
9. Rich noted that the inventory Scoping process was focusing on prematurely screening out materials rather than on assessing inventory. Oregon expressed concern that this was inappropriate and that the database used was incomplete and did not reflect the Waste Information Data System data. Rich replied that the inventory report leaves a lot to be desired.
10. Oregon expressed concern that stakeholder participation in the project has been poor and that the project has not been financially supportive of stakeholder participation. Oregon noted that it is difficult for stakeholders to participate with short meetings held frequently and without financial assistance for stakeholders who do not live in the Tri-Cities. Rich agreed.
11. Oregon noted that commenting on Groundwater Vadose Zone Project reports and papers is no longer productive. A face to face meeting of the teams is needed. Rich agreed to hold a Summit between the CRCIA team and the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project team in conjunction with a meeting of the Hanford Advisory Board Environmental Restoration committee to:
 - a) Resolve issues and problems in the incorporation of the CRCIA methodology into the project assessment by having the CRCIA team members meet directly with the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project team.

- b) Allow for Environmental Restoration committee members to also be involved in the discussions.
 - c) Provide a mechanism through the Hanford Advisory Board to help fund the participation of stakeholders in the process. Rich agreed to fund the travel not covered by the HAB.
 - d) Ensure that all major parties are involved in the integration effort, including the Office of River Protection staff and their support staff in the Primary Hanford Management Contractor.
12. Oregon raised the issue of leveraging site resources, such as the supercomputer at the Environmental Molecular Sciences Lab. Oregon noted that this facility was justified based on supporting site cleanup at enormous taxpayer expense. Oregon noted that it is not being used for site cleanup support and that when that was proposed, the high costs of the facility were a problem. The site should not now be charged for cost recovery of a taxpayer owned facility beyond the operations costs and that we should be using these resources to support cleanup. Rich agreed to look into the issue. Rich also commented that he expected the Groundwater/Vadose to have a draft of the computer platform specification and design out by the end of the fiscal year.
13. Oregon noted that it would be helpful if USDOE would prepare a one-page list of accomplishments of the Groundwater/Vadose Zone integration program. Rich agreed. Oregon commented that the accomplishments list will be used to brief the Oregon Hanford Waste Board on what DOE-RL has accomplished on this project for the money spent. Rich commented that he would like to include a simple schedule of events for the project. He also noted that the project critical path was too complex for most people to read or understand. Oregon agreed.

Approved,

Rich Holten
Environmental Restoration Program
U.S. Department of Energy

Approved,

Mary Lou Blazek
Nuclear Safety Division
Oregon Office of Energy