



Department of Energy
 Richland Operations Office
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Mr. Mike A. Wilson, Program Manager
 Nuclear Waste Program
 State of Washington
 Department of Ecology
 P.O. Box 47600
 Olympia, Washington 98504-7600



Dear Mr. Wilson:

GROUNDWATER/VADOSE ZONE (GW/VZ) INTEGRATION PROJECT

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In response to your letter to Ms. L. K. Bauer and Mr. S. D. Liedle, "Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project Stakeholder Meeting," dated April 16, 1998, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Richland Operations Office (RL), wants to thank you and others from your staff for participating in the April 14, 1998, meeting to begin planning for the GW/VZ Integration Project and for your continued interest in this project.

RL agrees that the stakeholder involvement process, defined to include Tribal Nations, regulators, citizen activist groups, the Hanford Advisory Board, and the public, is fundamental to the success of the GW/VZ Project. It is especially important that we work with our stakeholders at the beginning of this Project to build trust. Collectively, we must work to prepare an effective and open public involvement process to move the Project forward. Also, please know that our DOE-Headquarters, including both the Environmental Management (EM) Programs and the Undersecretary, is actively participating in the project and will continue to be fully linked into the project activities.

RL shares your perspective with regard to the need for ensuring "quality" is a first priority for the project. RL's sense of urgency and commitment to integrating the GW and VZ activities at the Hanford Site, the project will continue to work toward completing key project deliverables such as the project specification, the project management plan, the public involvement plan, the long range plan, and the detailed work plan by October 1998. These products represent critical near-term planning documents which must be completed with the beginning of fiscal year 1999 and which will be developed without constraint on what has become a completely open stakeholder involvement process.

You will note that RL has made progress on the two action items resulting from the first stakeholder meeting held on April 14, 1998. The initial discussions regarding the Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment (CRCIA) alignment with the GW/VZ Project, and the

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inclusion of CRCIA requirements within the Project's requirements, occurred at a meeting between Tom Woods, Rich Holten, and Bechtel Hanford, Inc. (BHI) Project engineers on April 27, 1998. A follow on workshop with our stakeholders was conducted on May 20, 1998. Additional discussions are expected to be held with stakeholders over the next few months. The second action directed a core group of stakeholders and Tribal Nation's representatives to meet. On April 29, 1998, this group convened to continue discussions and begin planning for the best possible public involvement process and next workshop. A widely announced public and Tribal Nations workshop was scheduled and held on May 21, 1998, to continue work on the public involvement process and to provide a discussion of the GW/VZ Project mission and approach. RL appreciates the support from your staff by participating in this important meeting.

RL continues to look for ways to improve communication and encourage active involvement on the GW/VZ Project. The weekly "brown bag" meetings previously conducted between the RL/BHI Project Team, State of Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have now been opened to all interested groups and people. At the suggestion of our stakeholders, we have rescheduled these routine meetings to Mondays at 1:00 p.m. A 1-(800) call-in phone number has been provided to assist those unable to attend. Meeting notes will be posted on the BHI website (<http://www.bhi-erc.com>). RL believes these meetings are a meaningful way to keep the RL/BHI Project Team in touch with our stakeholders on a real time basis. RL looks forward to Ecology's continued participation in these meetings.

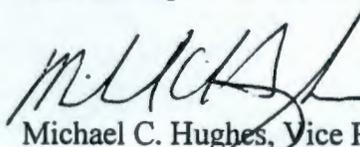
Ecology's support and assistance is critical as we move forward on this important project. Your expertise on public and Tribal involvement, CRCIA, and groundwater management is of great value to our team. RL appreciates the advice and assistance Ecology professionals continue to provide as we work together to protect the waters of this region and health of our citizens.

If you have any questions please contact Mr. Bryan Foley of my staff on 376-7087.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Holten, Director
Restoration Projects
Richland Operations Office



Michael C. Hughes, Vice President
Operations
Bechtel Hanford, Inc.

GWP:BLF

cc: M. J. Graham, BHI
M. K. Harmon, EM-442