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AUG 6 1998

Mr. G. M. Pollett, Executive Director
Heart of America Northwest
1305 Fourth Avenue, Suite 208
Seattle, Washington 98101



Dear Mr. Pollett:

RESPONSE TO LETTER TITLED "CONTINUING LACK OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONTACT FOR PLANNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE CRITICAL GROUNDWATER/VADOSE ZONE INTEGRATION PROJECT"

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This letter is in response to your letter, same subject as above, dated July 9, 1998. We appreciate your interest in the GW/VZ Integration Project and agree with you that the project is of great importance to Hanford, the Tri-Cities communities, and the northwest region. We hope that you and your organization will assist us in assuring the success of this project.

The GW/VZ Integration Project hopes to build much needed trust and credibility through openness and collaboration. Following the April 14, 1998, workshop, a group of Tribal representatives, stakeholders, and regulators agreed to meet with the GW/VZ Integration Project Team to help plan a better focused workshop to address the needs of all. This workshop was divided between three major topics: project involvement, project mission and objectives, and Columbia River Comprehensive Impact Assessment (CRCIA) requirements. As you pointed out, and others have commented, it is difficult to craft an effective involvement approach prior to reaching some agreement and understanding of the project's mission, goals, and overall approach. The workshop was conducted on May 21, 1998, in Richland, Washington. We provided a toll-free phone line to link people into the meeting unable to travel. While it is always better to attend these meetings in person, the phone link has proved useful.

Because the GW/VZ Integration Project is focused on such critical issues, the stakeholders, Tribes, and regulators agreed to convene for weekly meetings, beginning Monday, April 23, 1998. These meetings are open to all interested people and are attended by the GW/VZ Integration Project Team, including RL, DOE-Headquarters, and contractors. These meetings are also accessible via toll-free phone line, and detailed notes are prepared and sent to a large list of interested people and organizations to keep them informed of upcoming meetings, project issues, and actions. Recent topics at the Monday GW/VZ Integration Project Team meetings have been CRCIA and inclusion of CRCIA requirements into the Project Specification document. We regret that we have not had the benefit of the participation of some of the stakeholder groups such as Heart of America Northwest in these weekly meetings and hope that we can reach some mutually agreed upon venue to involve these groups in our project.

Mr. G. M. Pollett

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After several months of discussions with the Tribes, regulators, and stakeholders the GW/VZ Integration Project Team determined it would be useful to prepare a Draft Tribal Government and Public Consultation Plan (Plan) to facilitate discussion of key issues and the overall project involvement approach. This Draft Plan was sent to the people, organizations, and Tribal Governments on our distribution list for their review and comment. A GW/VZ Integration Project Workshop was held on July 14, 1998, to discuss this Draft Plan and other GW/VZ Integration Project issues, including CRCIA alignment, science and technology approach, and GW/VZ Integration Project mission and objectives. Breakout sessions were used to address GW/VZ Integration Project credibility. This workshop was very useful; however, the absence of your organization and several others was noted with regret.

At the request of a Tribal representative, the Draft Plan comment period has been extended two weeks to August 21, 1998. This extension will allow the Detailed Work Plan and Draft Project Specification to be adequately reviewed prior to settling on the best GW/VZ Integration Project involvement approach. We hope to talk with you soon to better understand and reflect your perspectives and suggestions in the Final Plan. (The Final Plan will in fact be a living document; updated as needed to best serve the stakeholders, Tribes, and regulators as the project moves from planning to implementation.) The Draft Plan proposes opportunities for involvement and information in various ways, including:

1. Routine open Project Team meetings and notes,
2. Maintenance of a Project web site that posts meeting notes, project documents, and upcoming meetings (<http://www.bhi-erc.com>),
3. Strategic Project Workshops,
4. National Laboratory Meetings, and
5. Regional Public Forums.

The GW/VZ Integration Project is focused on using applied science to solve critical technical questions necessary to make the right clean up decisions. The urgency to take additional remedial actions to protect Hanford's soil, groundwater, and the Columbia River is an overriding concern of the GW/VZ Integration Project Team. However, we realize that a disciplined scientific approach and a full and open decision making process must not be compromised in the interest of schedule alone. Balancing the need for action and the need for adequate involvement is a line we walk daily on this project.

We regret that you have not been satisfied with our involvement efforts to date. We are always striving for improvement, and will make every attempt to accommodate your needs and schedule requirements. In addition, we appreciate your identifying the interest groups you mentioned who were not on our distribution list and will try to reach out to those groups too. RL will continue to learn and improve as we move forward, and ask for your help as we plan this important project.

Mr. G. M. Pollett

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If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Bryan Foley on (509) 376-7087.

Sincerely,


for Richard A. Holten, Director
Restoration Projects


M. J. Graham, GW/VZ Project Manager
Bechtel Hanford, Inc.

cc: M. K. Harmon, EM-442
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