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It's interesting to be here as a speaker tonight, since for many years I helped with the listening part of such meetings. I'm a strong advocate of public involvement. Public involvement seeks to know and bring together all the diverse and even opposing views about a decision and find a solution that in some ways meets all of those needs. As a government agency you are required to do your best to find solutions that incorporate and meet all interests - not just a few. It's distressing then to see that in your preferred alternative, you did not consider, much less find a way to meet, the interests of the people of this area.

We the people of Mattawa and this area are the most affected public for the north section of Hanford, called the Wahluke Slope. It's not the people of Seattle; it's not the people of Portland; it's not the people of Washington, D.C. or even the people of the Tri-Cities who live next to the Wahluke Slope every day, 365 days a year. And who must you consider in your decision but the affected people? If you want to know what the affected people think - listen. We want multiple uses for the Wahluke Slope. That's what we said before. We'll say it again. So do we like your alternative? Of course, not. You didn't listen. You didn't consider. You didn't incorporate our ideas. You have not accomplished true public involvement.

We do not want; we have not wanted; we will never want all of the Wahluke Slope to be a wildlife refuge. That area is not pristine habitat. Much of it was formerly used for farming and grazing, and we want some of it available for similar purposes. Every year in August, the people or descendants of the people who were forced out of the Hanford/White Bluffs area return for a reunion. They have many sympathizers, because they were so quickly and uncaringly forced off of their farms and homes when the government took over the land. I was amazed to read that Secretary Richardson felt designating the Wahluke Slope as a wildlife refuge was a compensation for the people who lost so much in those days. It's not compensation. It's taking the land away from the local people again and giving it again to a government agency. DOE has the opportunity to right some of the wrongs that were done in the 40s, but your preferred alternative only increases the wrongs. A just and fair compensation would be to restore some opportunity to use the land in a practical, economically beneficial manner.

Mattawa has been in the news a lot the last couple of years. It's not because we are a rich and affluent community that needs a large playground in our backyard. We've been in the news because we are a very poor and distressed area. A high proportion of our population is Hispanic, including

many seasonal and migrant workers. I doubt that many of them will show up tonight. Why? Because they simply want to earn a living, have a decent place for their families to live, a good education for their children, and the same opportunities as you and I to start and own businesses.

There's a policy of the US government called environmental justice where the poor must be treated with equality; where they must be given the same opportunities as the higher economic classes. Our community fits the description of a community that needs equal and fair treatment in these decisions. But your preferred alternative does nothing to help this area. Making the Wahluke Slope a wildlife refuge totally negates all practical and economic opportunities for this area. That's sad, because DOE could really help this area by giving it the opportunities for economic development that it does to Benton and Franklin counties. There's a lot of space on the Wahluke Slope.

This isn't an all or nothing proposition. We're not asking that our interests be the only ones considered as some groups do. We're not asking that the entire Hanford Site be turned over for agricultural or economic development. But we also are never going to be happy having our interests totally ignored. You've made some first steps in acknowledging us as an affected public with a legitimate right to our interests. You've also begun to look at our interests in the revised draft with Alternative Three. But you still have a long ways to go. You still need to make our interests part of the preferred alternative. Only then can you claim a true public involvement success.