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U.S. Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550 MSIN HO-12
Richland, Wa . 99352-0550

17 May 1999

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DOE/RL/DIS

Dear Mr Ferns,

I would like to comment on your Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Hanford Remedial Action proposal.

The area under consideration has been argued about for many years back to the proposal to build a Ben Franklin Dam on the Columbia to back water up into this area. During that time the Corps of Engineers conducted a study of the area to determine it's value for wildlife. The river system supported not only salmon spawning but many species of waterfowl use the area for feeding and resting during different times of the year. The surrounding uplands supported blue heron heroneries and many species of songbirds , small mammals and insects. Bald eagles perch in the cottonwoods and forage along the river during salmon migration. The mule deer swim out to several islands to drop their fawns during the spring of the year to avoid the coyote predation. Swallows nest in the dirt banks of the river. The uplands which include the Wahluke Slope support many species of birds. I have observed long billed curlew, ferruginous hawks , sage thrashers, barn owls and loggerhead shrike just to name a few of the State species of concern by the State wildlife dept. Many surveys have been conducted in this area to authenticate its value to wildlife. In addition this type of habitat is rapidly disappearing due to development by the local communities for local profit to a few people. Once these areas are destroyed they cannot reclaim the wildlife uses .

Many farmers or orchardist are claiming that the State Growth Management Act restricts their options for land use. That is if they can't make it with agricultural uses then they should be able to convert the land to commercial or residential uses. This negates the whole argument that we need the land for agricultural uses. We are talking about a few people trying to get rich at the expense of the wildlife resources and taking over public land.

We believe that Hanford Reach and the associated uplands including the

Wahluke Slope should be managed as a permanent National Wildlife Refuge as an arid land ecology reserve. Mining, grazing and agriculture should not be allowed in this area. Grazing has destroyed the bottomlands for wildlife use in many wildlife refuges around the U.S.

We urge you to adopt the preferred alternative of this EIS and preserve this area as a Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you for letting us comment on this EIS.

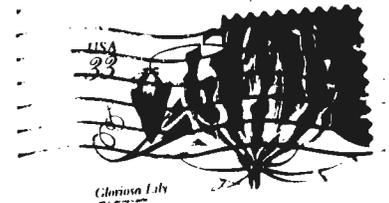
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leonard Steiner".

Leonard Steiner

Board Member

Washington Wildlife Federation

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