



Department of Energy
 Richland Operations Office
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DEC 7 1998

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 STATUS REPORT

This letter is in response to the State of Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) letter to us from you, same subject as above, dated September 10, 1998.

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It is our belief that the GW/VZ Project Team has made real progress since we received the above referenced letter from you. With help from the regulatory agencies, the Tribes, and the stakeholders, three working teams have been chartered to work together to move the project forward. Active work teams are addressing the Project Baseline/Long Range Plan, the System Assessment Capability, and the Policy Issues. The teams are meeting one to three times weekly, and our progress looks good.

A draft Strategy was prepared in late September 1998 to take the first step in collecting and compiling data and setting a technical strategy and direction for the GW/VZ Project. The GW/VZ Project Baseline/Long Range Plan, which is now under development by the work team, will be drafted by December 18, 1998. Comprehensive public involvement will follow in January and February 1999. This plan will be updated often to reflect new information, including the Science and Technology Roadmaps.

The Expert Panel was convened, and held its first meeting in Richland, Washington, on September 15-17, 1998. Ecology staff and others were active participants during this meeting, and contributed to its success. The Expert Panel is helping to establish the necessary technical credibility to enable the GW/VZ Project to add value.

We continue to work to resolve fiscal year 1999 funding issues, and will keep you informed as decisions are made.

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Mr. Mike A. Wilson

-2-

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We appreciate your support and direction as we move the GW/VZ Project forward with the Project Baseline/Long Range Plan. If you have suggestions, questions, or perspectives to support the GW/VZ Project in the important weeks ahead, please contact Ms. Linda K. Bauer at (509) 376-6628.

Sincerely,



Linda K. Bauer, Assistant Manager
for Environmental Restoration



Steven D. Liedle, President
Bechtel Hanford, Inc.

RP:RAH