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Sent: Monday, January 09, 2006 12:54 PM
To: HANFORD-INFO@LISTSERV.WA.GOV
Subject: Off-site shipments of waste to Hanford on hold

This message is from the Washington State Dept. of Ecology.

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Off-site shipments of waste to Hanford on hold USDOE agrees to new environmental review in settlement with state of Washington

OLYMPIA - The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) will not import four categories of radioactive and hazardous waste to Hanford at least until it completes additional environmental review, according to a settlement just reached with the state of Washington.

The four categories are low-level waste, mixed low-level waste, transuranic waste, and mixed transuranic waste.

In 2003, Washington filed a lawsuit challenging a decision by Energy to bring transuranic (TRU) and mixed transuranic (TRUM) waste to Hanford for interim storage. Based on the state's motion, the federal district court issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting USDOE from making further shipments.

The suit was filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington (Yakima).

In 2004, the state amended its complaint to also challenge the delivery of low-level and mixed low-level waste to Hanford for permanent disposal. The state argued that Energy's existing environmental impact statement was inadequate, and groundwater modeling in the document unreliable for making waste management decisions at Hanford.

The federal court issued another injunction against shipments of these waste types to allow the state a chance to gather additional information about the energy department environmental impact statement.

In responding to the state's request for information, USDOE discovered discrepancies in its environmental impact statement. This led the parties to begin settlement discussions.

"Although I'm disappointed we had to file a lawsuit to get this result, this is a great outcome for a long and contentious case," said Attorney General Rob McKenna. "Had we not filed this suit, the Department of Energy would have gone ahead and disposed of radioactive and hazardous waste based on an environmental analysis that all sides now agree is not trustworthy."

Under the settlement, USDOE will not rely on its current solid waste environmental impact statement to make decisions regarding disposal of the waste identified in the lawsuits.

Instead, the settlement calls for developing an environmental impact statement that contains a comprehensive groundwater analysis that examines both the closure of Hanford's single-shell tanks and the management of other wastes at Hanford, including the disposal of low-level radioactive and mixed hazardous wastes.

Under the agreement, the state Department of Ecology will cooperate with USDOE in developing the new environmental impact statement.

"This settlement agreement ensures that the state will have meaningful input into developing the EIS, which will enhance our ability to protect Hanford groundwater and make better waste-management decisions," said Ecology Director Jay Manning. "I'm very pleased

the Department of Energy has agreed to re-examine the impacts of waste disposal at Hanford so we have greater confidence that future waste disposal will not increase the threat to the Columbia River."

The settlement delays importation of the four categories of wastes until an environmental impact statement is in place.

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