



Nez Perce

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION & WASTE MANAGEMENT
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February 1, 2005

Kevin Leary
Richland Operations Office
United States Department of Energy
PO. Box 550, MSIN A6-38
Richland, WA. 99352

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EDMC

Re: Proposed Plan for Remediation of the 221-U Facility (Canyon Disposition Initiative)

Dear Mr. Leary;

The Nez Perce Tribe's Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Program (ERWM) has reviewed the above-mentioned document.

Since 1855, reserved treaty rights of the Nez Perce Tribe in the Mid-Columbia have been recognized and affirmed through a series of Federal and State actions. These actions protect Nez Perce rights to utilize their usual and accustomed resources and resource areas in the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River and elsewhere. Accordingly, the ERWM responds to actions that impact the Hanford ecosystem.

ERWM Philosophy of Hanford Cleanup

In order to understand our specific comments on disposition of the 221-U Facility we feel it necessary to provide a brief background of the tribe's philosophy concerning cleanup of the Hanford Site. Whenever the tribe is asked to comment on a Hanford cleanup action, the question that always arises is, How Clean is Clean? What level of cleanup should occur at Hanford?

In general, ERWM believes that the ultimate goal of the Hanford cleanup including the canyons should be to restore the land to a safe, unrestricted use condition. ERWM has long held that our ultimate goal for the Hanford site is unrestricted use with no risk to human life and the ecosystems associated with the site. ERWM believes that this level of cleanup is necessary for the Nez Perce Tribe to be able to utilize the site for their usual and accustomed activities. Our view is that the majority of cleanup actions at Hanford are interim measures only. ERWM recognizes the difficulties in accomplishing this goal and are aware of many of the obstacles that must be overcome. To accomplish this long term cleanup goal ERWM recognizes the following:

1. This goal may require several generations before it is finally attained.
2. The Nez Perce Tribe will continue to work with DOE via its cooperative agreement on cleanup issues to ensure that treaty rights, cultural and natural resources are being protected and that cleanup decisions are protective of human health and the environment.

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3. Technology to cleanup or dispose of some contaminants may not yet exist, but as the Department of Energy continues to develop these technologies and they become available, the Nez Perce Tribe will work with the federal government to further reduce the levels of any residual contamination.

221-U Canyon Initiative Comments

The ERWM has reviewed the 221-U Canyon Initiative and feels that of all the alternatives, alternatives one and six are the most reasonable measures to consider.

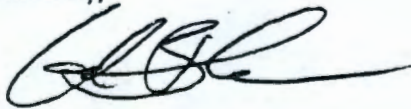
ERWM believes the best way to avoid future risk to people and the environment is to remove all contaminants. This would mean complete demolition and removal of the building and all the ancillary equipment, and it would require removal and disposal of the radioactive and hazardous materials. ERWM recognizes that such removal (Alternative 1) constitutes a high short-term worker risk and that it is currently impossible to eliminate many of these contaminants. These radionuclides and chemicals will remain a long term risk, as an ERDF-type disposal will not protect in perpetuity.

However, with some modification Alternative 6 may be the most appropriate resolution. Short term risk is reduced. Long-term risk is reduced and eventually eliminated when adding the commitment to Alternative 6 to continue research and development of technologies with the goal to render radioactive and chemical hazards harmless. From this perspective, we see Alternative 6 as a reasonable interim remediation action, but not as final clean up for this canyon facility

ERWM also wants to go on record as stating that we do not believe the process of closure for the 221-U Canyon, which is the least contaminated facility, should be necessarily used as a template for closure of the other four canyon facilities at Hanford. Each canyon will need to be treated separately and appropriate remedial actions determined.

The ERWM staff appreciates the attention you give to our comments and will continue to monitor and participate in the Canyon Disposition Initiative. If you have any questions or comments you wish to address to us, please contact John Stanfill, of my staff at 208-843-7375, ext. 2369 or e-mail him johns@nezperce.org.

Sincerely;



Gabriel Bohnee
ERWM Interim Director

Cc: Craig Cameron
Stuart Harris
Russell Jim
Kevin Clarke