



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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April 9, 2020

20-NWP-071

Gerry Pollet, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Heart of America Northwest  
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Director Pollet:

Thank you for your April 3, 2020, letter to Director Laura Watson and me regarding public comment periods and regulatory decisions related to the cleanup of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. We share a mutual goal of ensuring the public has meaningful opportunities to provide input on regulatory decisions the Department of Ecology (Ecology) makes on Hanford cleanup while Governor Jay Inslee's 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' order is in place.

We are sensitive to the concerns you raised about the current crisis impacting the public's ability to engage in our regulatory processes. For that reason, we've instituted measures across our agency to ensure full and robust public engagement while continuing to move forward with our critical environmental work, including Hanford cleanup. Our goal is to enhance virtual public participation opportunities while not slowing our pace on protecting the environment. For that reason, we respectfully disagree with your suggestion that we should suspend everything but routine decision-making at Hanford.

Many of the regulatory decisions Ecology is being asked to make on Hanford cleanup right now, such as permits for Direct Feed Low Activity Waste facilities, are time-sensitive priorities for Ecology, the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE), and the greater cleanup mission. Ecology needs to continue work on these permits so USDOE can make progress towards its obligations under the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Compliance Order and the federal consent decree.

For these permits, Ecology will solicit and consider public input as we always do. The relevant documents are available online for the public to review, and our mechanism for the public to provide comments is electronic. Here is a link to our website with current open comment periods <https://ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Nuclear-waste/Public-comment-periods>.

Those who would like to review a hard copy of permit materials can request the documents and arrangements will be made to deliver them. In addition, we continue to receive mail and will accept public comments through U.S. Mail. Finally, we are receptive to requests for extensions of specific comment periods if members of the public need more time to review permit documents. It is important to us that the public be able to fully engage. If an extended public comment period will facilitate that engagement, then we will want to accommodate that request.

During this time, Ecology is also committed to holding public meetings. We have the capability to conduct public meetings virtually, and we will do so during this time when required or requested.

As you know, we do not have the ability to control how USDOE or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency conduct business during this time. However, we have shared our position with them that robust public engagement is critically important to us. We would also encourage you to reach out to them directly if you have not yet.

Ecology remains committed to fulfilling our regulatory and oversight roles for the Hanford cleanup, even while COVID-19 restrictions are in place. We appreciate Heart of America's continued interest in, and advocacy for, compliant Hanford cleanup. Please do not hesitate to contact Ecology if you or any members of your organization would like to seek an extension to a specific public comment period or need permit documents provided in hard copy or on a DVD.

Sincerely,

**Smith, Alex**  
(ECY)

Digitally signed by Smith,  
Alex (ECY)  
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