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PORT OF BENTON

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June 7, 1999

Thomas W. Ferns, HRA-EIS Document Manager
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Richland, Washington 99352

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DOE-RL/DIS

Reference: **Revised Draft Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement and Comprehensive Land-Use Plan, DOE/EIS-0222D**

Dear Mr. Ferns:

The Department of Energy is to be congratulated for an excellent draft of alternative options for establishing a comprehensive plan for the reuse of the Hanford site.

Of the four proposed options, ***the Port of Benton supports Alternative Three***, which best combines a generous and balanced use of the site for conservation, recreation and industrial developments. Alternative Three is a fair option, which addresses and meets the various needs of local, state and national agencies striving to develop plans which best meet the human and natural needs for preserving the quality of life for future generations.

The Port of Benton is a direct descendant of the Manhattan Project, which created the Hanford Site. It was created by local taxpayers in 1958, when the first downsizing of the Hanford Site was implemented by the federal government. The Port was formed to be a critical economic development agent for the area. The Port's charter consists of two basic goals: 1) to develop infrastructure and sites to facilitate the exchange of people and freight being transported by water, air, rail and highways; and 2) to develop industrial sites for manufacturing.

The southeast area of the site, as proposed in Alternative Three, meets the needs for industrial development while conserving the critical natural areas. As proposed in Alternative Three, the Port is recommending only that a modification be made to the final DOE Plan, which ensures that the main rail line, which extends through the central portion of the site, be identified as a critical rail freight corridor and the rail line along the Columbia River be identified as a potential route for a tour train heading to-and-from the B-Reactor, which has been declared a National Historic Site. There are local and federal plans to convert the reactor to a museum. Preserving a tour train route for people to use would best conserve the lands along the river while allowing tourist and residents the opportunity to appreciate the historical use of the lands and the beautiful area along the Hanford Reach.

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The Port of Benton, the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Legislative Transportation Committee are funding ($600,000) a major study to determine the feasibility of using the central rail line in assisting the State and Port in meeting long range freight mobility needs of the region and the nation. The comprehensive study will determine if the Hanford main rail line should be reconnected to Ellensburg, as it was in the 1970's, as an alternate route for the Yakima Valley rail traffic flowing between the Puget Sound and the Tri-Cities. The current Yakima Valley route passes directly through all the cities in the Valley, including the cities of Yakima and Kennewick, who have plans to developed their downtown areas to be more people friendly.

Again, we congratulate you for a well researched and comprehensive draft document. The Port will continue to keep you abreast of its thoughts and proposals concerning the future use of proposed industrial areas of the Hanford Site.

Sincerely,

Ben Bennett
Executive Director

c: Director Sid Morrison, WSDOT
Director Donna Hammond, WSDOT Trans-Aid
Senior Staff Jeff Doyle, Legislative Transportation Committee
Chairman Claude Oliver, Benton County Commission
President Robert G. Grave, Benton County PUD Commission
Mayor Larry Haler, City of Richland
Mayor James R. Beaver, City of Kennewick
Mayor Herb Schmidt, City of Prosser
Mayor John Puccinelli, City of Yakima
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