



U.S. Department of Energy
Office of River Protection

P.O. Box 450
Richland, Washington 99352

02-ORP-106

OCT 31 2002

Ms. Paige Knight, President
Hanford Watch
2285 S.E. Cypress
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Ms. Knight:

RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER TO ED AROMI, CH2M HILL HANFORD GROUP, INC.
(CHG)

Thank you for a copy of your letter, dated October 21, 2002, to Ed Aromi, President and General Manager of CHG. I would like to address several points in your letter.

The announcements to the Hanford Advisory Board's Tank Waste Committee and the media on October 8, 2002, were to provide information on an aggressive set of performance incentives recently negotiated with CHG under their contract with the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection (ORP). Those incentives do not change, in any way, our cleanup priorities for the tank waste program. If anything, they provide added and needed emphasis to safely removing waste, closing single-shell tanks, and treating tank waste for ultimate disposal off the Hanford Site.

There is no doubt the incentives are aggressive. But as I've stated publicly, I intend to drive this cleanup and not let the cleanup drive me. We are challenging a lot of assumptions, looking at this project with "fresh eyes" and seeking some much needed innovation. I agree that we cannot chart an aggressive course in spite of environmental laws or the support of stakeholders and the public. Let me assure you that we will not sacrifice the quality of this cleanup and we will continue to comply with the Tri-Party Agreement.

It was not ORP's intention to surprise the State of Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) when we made the announcement. I further agree that open communication is vital for building trust and ultimately for project success. We are working closely with Ecology to define the closure process for tank C-106, the first Hanford tank to be closed, and we are also developing a strategy to jointly communicate that process to stakeholders and the public.

It has also been my experience that trust cannot be built nor earned by missing commitments. One of the ways I hope to build trust and credibility for this organization is to meet and beat tank waste cleanup commitments under the Tri-Party Agreement. We recently beat a major milestone to remove waste from single-shell tanks by several days, and we soon expect to beat another milestone for installing and starting pumping equipment in tank C-103 by several months.

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This is an exciting time for the high-level waste cleanup project. The Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant is under construction and we are working closely with our regulators to interim close the first Hanford tanks. We will continue to seek ways to finish this monumental project sooner while complying with the framework of the Tri-Party Agreement, and without sacrificing quality. I thank you and Hanford Watch for being ardent supporters for Hanford cleanup and I look forward to working together to complete this important mission.

If you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me, or your staff may contact Erik Olds, (509) 372-8656.

Sincerely,


Roy J. Schepens
Manager

ORP:TEO

cc: Tom Fitzsimmons, Ecology
E. S. Aromi, CHG