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DOE

HANFORD TANK WASTE PUBLIC HEARING IN PASCO, WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) will hold a public hearing on Thursday, May 2, 1996, in Pasco, Washington. The public hearing will be held at Columbia Basin College in the Hawk Union Building from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The public hearing is on the draft environmental impact statement for cleaning up nuclear weapons waste in aging tanks near Richland, Washington. The document proposes a path for tackling one of the most challenging, costly and complex environmental risks in the Nation's former nuclear weapons complex.

"Public hearings provide a way for stakeholders and the general public to learn more about the preferred approach for cleaning up the tank waste and for the agencies to receive input from stakeholders on the issues of importance to them as we continue to move forward with this important project. We need to know the views of stakeholders in order to make decisions that best protect public health and the environment," said John Wagoner of DOE's Richland Operations Office.

The Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), jointly prepared and issued for public comment by DOE and Ecology, explores nine alternatives for dealing with or remediating the approximately 56 million gallons of radioactive and hazardous waste stored in 177 large underground storage tanks as well as approximately 60 smaller inactive miscellaneous underground tanks that are part of the tank waste transfer system at the Hanford Site. DOE and Ecology's preferred alternative for tank waste is the Phased Implementation alternative, which would carry out the existing program identified in the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order (Tri-Party Agreement). The analysis also identifies four alternatives for management and disposal of radioactive cesium and strontium capsules located in the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility. DOE and Ecology have not identified a preferred alternative for the capsules.

"We have heard the message from the public, and that message is to get on with cleaning up Hanford while protecting the environment and the people of the Northwest," said Dan Silver, Ecology assistant director for waste management. "We believe the preferred alternative provides the best opportunity to get these tank wastes cleaned up as soon as possible, along with the flexibility to make any changes necessary."

A public comment period on the Draft EIS began on April 12 and continues through May 28, 1996. Following the end of the public comment period, DOE and Ecology will prepare a Final EIS. The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed in July 1996.

Written comments should be mailed to Ms. Carolyn Haass, TWRS EIS NEPA Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office, P.O. Box 1249, Richland, Washington 99352, or Mr. Geoff Tallent, TWRS EIS Project Lead, Washington State Department of Ecology, P.O. Box 47600,

Olympia, Washington 98504-7600.

Copies of the Draft EIS can be reviewed at DOE Public Reading Rooms in Richland, Seattle, and Spokane, Washington, and in Portland, Oregon. A copy of the TWRS Draft EIS also can be obtained by calling the Hanford Cleanup line toll free at 1-800-321-2008.

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