

**SECTION 1**  
**OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

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# SECTION 1

## OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

This section of this Comment-Response Document (CRD) describes the public comment process for the *Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement for the Hanford Site, Richland, Washington (Draft TC & WM EIS)* and the procedures used to respond to public comments. **Section 1.1** summarizes the organization of this CRD. **Section 1.2** discusses the public comment process and the means through which comments on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) were received and addressed. **Section 1.3** describes the public hearings on the *Draft TC & WM EIS*, including hearing locations and dates. **Section 1.4** notes the role of the cooperating agencies.

*Comment Document* – A communication in the form of a verbatim transcript or written comment from a public hearing, a letter, or an electronic communication (e.g., fax, email) that contains comments from an American Indian tribal government, government agency, organization, or member of the public regarding the *Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement for the Hanford Site, Richland, Washington (Draft TC & WM EIS)*.

*Comment* – A specific statement or question within a comment document regarding the content of the *Draft TC & WM EIS* that conveys approval or disapproval of proposed actions, recommends changes in the environmental impact statement, raises concerns or issues, or seeks additional information.

### 1.1 ORGANIZATION OF THIS COMMENT-RESPONSE DOCUMENT

This CRD comprises the following sections:

- **Section 1** describes the organization of this CRD, the public comment process, the public hearings, and the role of the cooperating agencies in the CRD development.
- **Section 2** presents a discussion of topics of interest raised in the public comments received and the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) responses. These topics of interest appeared frequently in the comment documents or are of broad interest or concern. The reader may find this section useful as a summary of the comments and responses found in **Section 3** of this CRD.
- **Section 3** presents copies of the comment documents received during the public comment process, including transcripts of oral comments given during the eight public hearings. Each comment document has been delineated into individual comments; each delineated comment is marked by a bar in the margin and a unique comment number. Responses to delineated comments are displayed to the right of the comment. There are three indices at the front of this volume for locating the comment documents presented in **Section 3**. The first index lists all public officials, organizations, and interest groups that submitted a comment document. The second index lists all individuals or organizations that submitted a comment document, including the officials and the entities listed in the first index. The third index lists all individuals who submitted a comment document as part of Campaigns A and B (see the last paragraph under this bullet). All three indices are listed in alphabetical order. **Section 3** of this CRD is further divided into three subsections, as follows:
  - Individual and unique comment documents (includes various government agency and stakeholder organization comment documents).
  - Transcripts (each person who gave an oral comment at a public meeting was assigned a unique comment document number).
  - Campaign or petition comment documents. These are multiple submissions of an equivalent comment document (i.e., campaign) or submission of the same comment document with multiple individuals (i.e., petition).

Unique, sequential numeric designations were assigned to each comment document in order by date received (with the exception of campaign comment documents). The sequential numeric identifiers (e.g., comment document 1, 2, 3) were assigned regardless of the transmission method used to submit the comment document. These transmission methods include U.S. mail, fax, email, voicemail, and public meeting transcripts of oral comments.

Two email campaigns were received during the comment period. The campaigns were designated as “Campaign A” and “Campaign B.” Alphanumeric designations were used for each campaign comment document received, e.g., A-1 (for Campaign A) and B-1 (for Campaign B). If a campaign commentor added unique text to the standard campaign letter (identified as A-1 and B-1) that constituted an additional comment, then a comment document number was designated in the order received (e.g., A-2, A-3, A-4).

- **Section 4** presents the references cited in this CRD.

## **1.2 PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

The *Draft TC & WM EIS* was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the following proposed actions:

- The retrieval, treatment, and disposal of waste from 149 single-shell tanks (SSTs) and 28 double-shell tanks (DSTs) and closure of the SST system
- The final decontamination and decommissioning of the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF), a nuclear test reactor
- The disposal of the Hanford Site’s (Hanford’s) waste and other DOE sites’ low-level radioactive waste (LLW) and mixed low-level radioactive waste (MLLW)

An important part of the NEPA process is solicitation of public comments on a draft EIS and consideration of those comments in preparing a final EIS. DOE issued the *Draft TC & WM EIS* in October 2009 (74 FR 56194) for review and comment by other Federal agencies, states, American Indian tribal governments, local governments, and the public. DOE distributed copies to those organizations and government officials who were known to have an interest in the EIS, as well as to those organizations and individuals who requested a copy. Copies were also made available on the Internet and in regional DOE public document reading rooms and public libraries near the locations addressed in the draft EIS. Notifications were mailed to stakeholders on record, and advertisements stating the availability of the *Draft TC & WM EIS* and when and where public hearings were to be held were published in local newspapers.

Initially, the formal public comment period was 140 days, from October 30, 2009, through March 19, 2010. DOE extended the comment period in March 2010 (75 FR 13268) for an additional 45 days. In total, the comment period was 185 days (longer than the required minimum of 45 days), from October 30, 2009, to May 3, 2010. During the 185-day comment period, public hearings were held in eight locations surrounding Hanford. The public hearing locations and estimated attendance are discussed in detail in **Section 1.3**. In addition, the public was invited to submit comments on the *Draft TC & WM EIS* to DOE via the *Draft TC & WM EIS* email address (tc&wmeis@saic.com), the U.S. mail, a toll-free fax line, and a toll-free telephone line (voicemail).

DOE received 510 individual comment document submissions. In addition, DOE received comment documents from two campaigns: Campaign A included 4,256 individual commentors (4,256 comment documents), and Campaign B included 54 individual commentors (54 comment documents). In total,

generated from all campaign and non-campaign comment documents, DOE received 2,885 unique comments. Table 1–1 lists the numbers of comment documents received by method of submission.

**Table 1–1. Numbers of Comment Documents and Submission Method**

Method	Number of Submissions
Public hearing (oral comment)	181
Public hearing (written comment)	49
Letter via U.S. mail	63
Fax	6
Voicemail	2
Email	209
Campaign A email	4,256 <sup>a</sup>
Campaign B U.S. mail	54 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,820</b>

<sup>a</sup> Campaign A included 3,957 comment documents that were essentially identical and 299 comment documents that required additional response.

<sup>b</sup> All 54 Campaign B comment documents were essentially identical. Fifty-five photos were submitted from 54 commentors.

DOE considered all comments on the *Draft TC & WM EIS* to determine whether corrections, clarifications, or other revisions were required before publishing this final EIS. All comments were considered equally, whether written, spoken, faxed, mailed, or submitted electronically. The text of each comment document was delineated into unique comments and categorized according to the specific concern addressed, and each separate comment was assigned an individual, sequential number. Thus, one comment document could have one, two, or more comments. Comments were reviewed and responses prepared by policy experts, subject matter experts, and NEPA specialists, as appropriate. The originally submitted comment documents and transcribed oral comments made at public hearings are included as part of the administrative record for this *TC & WM EIS*. Figure 1–1 illustrates the process used to collect, track, and respond to comments. Topics of broad public interest were characterized as “topics of interest” and are included in **Section 2** of this CRD. The comments and DOE’s responses are presented in **Section 3** of this CRD in a side-by-side format, with each delineated comment displayed to the left of its corresponding response.

The comment-response process was integral to preparation of this *Final TC & WM EIS*, as it was used to focus revision efforts and ensure consistency throughout this final EIS. Comments were evaluated to determine, for example, whether (1) the alternatives and analyses presented in the *Draft TC & WM EIS* should be modified or augmented; (2) information presented in the draft EIS was incorrect or outdated; and (3) additional or revised text would clarify or facilitate a better understanding of certain issues.

A strict quality assurance plan was implemented to ensure all comment documents were captured and recorded for the administrative record. Several identical comment documents were submitted twice (sometimes three times) via multiple transmission methods (e.g., identical comment documents from several of the tribes were submitted via email and U.S. mail). To maintain administrative record traceability of receipt, each comment document received (regardless of duplication) was identified with a specific identification number (comment document number) in chronologic order. These traceable identification numbers were carried through the entire comment-response process, including being used as the specific comment document identifier in this CRD. As such, several of the duplicate comment document numeric identifiers are not included in this CRD (only one of the duplicate comment documents was responded to and presented in this CRD). A summary of the comment document numeric identifiers excluded in this CRD is provided in Table 1–2.

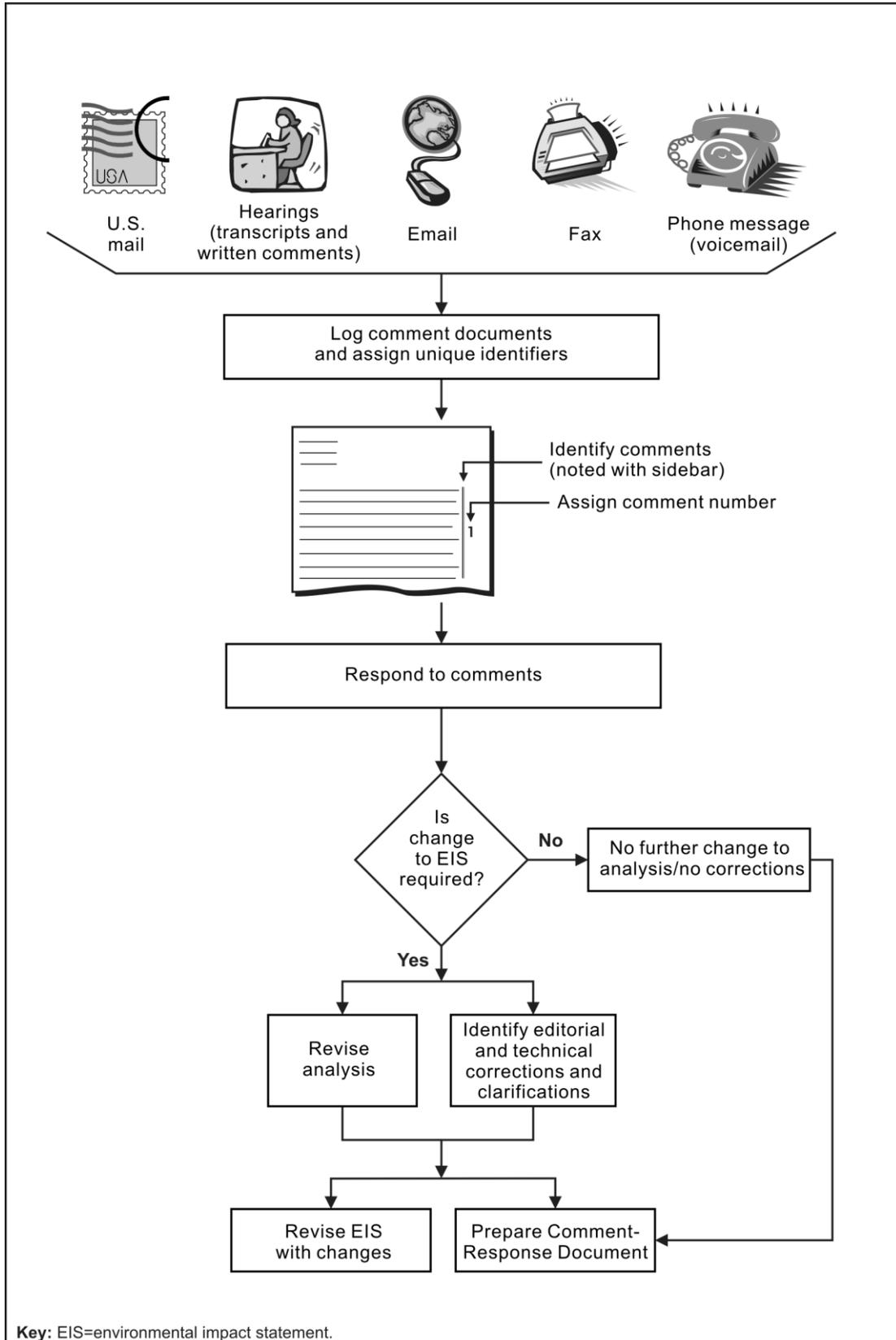


Figure 1-1. Comment-Response Process

**Table 1–2. Duplicate Comment Documents Excluded in This Comment-Response Document**

<b>Comment Document Numeric Identifier (CD Number)</b>	<b>Reason</b>
CD 12	Identical to CD 10
CD 21	Identical to CD 15
CD 84	Identical to CD 73
CD 177	Identical to CD 127
CD 196	Identical to CD 183
CD 198	Campaign A submission
CD 204	Identical to CD 174
CD 223	Identical to CD 218
CD 225	Identical to CD 182
CD 228	Identical to CD 200
CD 248	Identical to CD 212
CD 253	Identical to CD 513
CD 257	Identical to CD 213
CD 262	Identical to CD 231
CD 264	Identical to CD 240
CD 272	Identical to CD 201
CD 497	Identical to CD 499
CD 515	Identical to CD 514
CD 521	Identical to CD 467
CD 522	Identical to CD 488
CD 525	Identical to CD 508
CD 526	Identical to CD 498
CD 527	Identical to CD 523
CD 528	Identical to CD 480
CD 529	Identical to CD 467
CD 530	Identical to CD 503

### 1.3 PUBLIC HEARINGS

As described in the DOE Notice of Availability of the *Draft TC & WM EIS* (74 FR 56194) and subsequent DOE public notices (75 FR 1048 and 75 FR 3902), public hearings were held to encourage public comments on the draft EIS and to provide members of the public with information about the NEPA process and the proposed actions.

Each of the public hearings started with an open house that lasted approximately 1 hour. *TC & WM EIS* information posters were displayed and factsheets were made available to the public. Subject matter experts were present during the open house; members of the public were invited to view the displays and ask questions of the subject matter experts either before or after the formal hearings were conducted. Posters and various factsheets addressing the NEPA process, a summary of the alternatives, a summary of impacts, and a timeline of EIS-related steps were available to the public at each hearing. Electronic (e.g., compact disc) and paper copies of the *Draft TC & WM EIS* were also available at the public hearings.

Table 1–3 lists the location, date, estimated number of attendees, number of oral commentators, and comment document identifier range for each public hearing. The attendance estimates are based on the number of people who signed in, as well as a rough “headcount” of the audience.

**Table 1–3. Public Hearing Locations and Attendance**

Location	Date	Estimated Number of Attendees	Number of Oral Commentors	Comment Document Number Range
Richland, Washington	January 26, 2010	65	11	98 – 108
Boise, Idaho	February 2, 2010	6	1	109
Hood River, Oregon	February 9, 2010	50	22	383 – 402
Portland, Oregon	February 10, 2010	300	49	274 – 318
La Grande, Oregon	February 22, 2010	85	18	403 – 420
Spokane, Washington	February 23, 2010	65	22	421 – 442
Eugene, Oregon	March 1, 2010	75	30	359 – 382
Seattle, Washington	March 8, 2010	250	42	319 – 358
<b>Total</b>		<b>896</b>	<b>195</b>	

After the open house, DOE gave a presentation that comprised an overview of the *Draft TC & WM EIS* and an explanation of the analyses presented in the draft EIS. Further, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) gave a presentation summarizing its involvement as a cooperating agency and its insight regarding the alternatives and associated analyses. In addition, at the four Oregon hearing locations, the Oregon State Department of Energy gave a short presentation summarizing its comments on the draft EIS after Ecology’s presentation.

Following the various presentations, attendees were given an opportunity to provide oral and written comments. Each oral comment, recorded by the court reporter as part of the hearing transcript, was treated as a comment document. Each written comment collected during the hearing was likewise treated as a comment document. The transcripts and written comments from each public hearing are presented in **Section 3** of this CRD.

#### **1.4 COOPERATING AGENCIES**

The consideration of comments and preparation of comment responses were coordinated with the cooperating agencies, Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).