

HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD

A Site Specific Advisory Board, Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act

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US Environmental
Protection Agency
Washington State
Dept of Ecology

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December 12, 2013

David Huizenga
Senior Advisor for Environmental Management
EM-1/Forestral Building
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20585

Maia Bellon, Director
Washington State Department of Ecology
300 Desmond Dr. SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Re: Openness and Transparency Related to Tank Waste Treatment

Dear Mr. Huizenga and Ms. Bellon,

Background

The Hanford Advisory Board (Board) has long been an advocate for the open and early discussion of Hanford Site issues and proposed solutions prior to and during the decision making process.¹ The Board does not believe that this open interchange of ideas and proposed solutions has been the case for at least the last year. During this time many major technical and safety culture issues concerning the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) have been raised. Certain decisions, such as requiring non-disclosure agreements for the WTP U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretarial technical review teams, are an indication that reforms are needed to increase timely information sharing and openness.

Secretary of Energy Moniz released the *Hanford Tank Waste Retrieval, Treatment, and Disposition Framework* (Framework) on September 24, 2013. The Board believed this document would be a vehicle to share the findings of the Secretarial review teams and DOE's path forward for the WTP. However, the document released in September was written as a high-level strategic framework to begin conversations about addressing challenges at the WTP. Secretary Moniz has committed to work with the State of Washington to solicit input on the path forward for the WTP: "The Department looks forward to engaging with the State of Washington, and ultimately Hanford's stakeholders, to discuss this approach to the tank waste mission and the alternatives for specific waste streams, and to create a sustainable path forward for addressing Hanford tank wastes" (Framework, p.20).

The Board is writing this advice to urge a more open and transparent process in full accord with the President's memorandum to all agency heads on *Transparency and Openness, and Freedom of*

¹ HAB Advice #31, 89, 104, 178, 192, 235, 239, 240

Envirolssues

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HAB Consensus Advice # 273
Subject: Openness & Transparency
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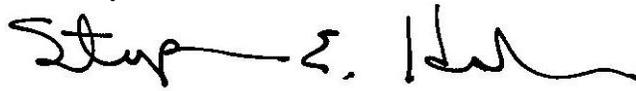
Information (January 21, 2009); to more effectively involve the regulatory agencies, the Board, and the broader stakeholder community in the decision discussions as this WTP Framework is developed; and in accord with previous advice on openness and transparency this Board has provided. The Board urges openness and transparency in the development and discussions of all future actions and plans related to tank waste treatment.

From the Board's point of view, it is always more constructive to engage stakeholders and the public early in the process and as it proceeds, rather than at the end when DOE resorts to a 'decide – announce – defend' mode of operation, which seriously jeopardizes public support for critical decisions.

Advice:

- The Board advises DOE to take actions to ensure an open and transparent process related to tank waste storage and pretreatment, resolving the technical difficulties involving the WTP, and the vitrification of Hanford's tank waste. Please refer to our previous advice and letters related to openness and transparency and the President's direction to all agencies on *Openness and Transparency, and on Freedom of Information* issued his first day in office.
- The Board advises DOE to release a compilation of the recommendations made by the technical experts to former Energy Secretary Chu with respect to the technical issues at the WTP and tank farms.
- The Board advises DOE to provide the topics that the Secretarial teams are currently reviewing for Energy Secretary Moniz, and to provide a detailed timetable concerning the findings and recommendations for each team when the findings are available.
- The Board advises DOE to deeply engage the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) early and often in the decision making process for the WTP, especially in areas where there is a great deal of uncertainty about how to proceed with resolving issues and concerns.
- The Board advises DOE and Ecology to engage the Board, the public and stakeholders in timely and meaningful involvement to provide input into the process through which the WTP's challenges and issues are resolved.

Sincerely,



Steve Hudson, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

This advice represents Board consensus for this specific topic. It should not be taken out of context to extrapolate Board agreement on other subject matters.

cc: Ernesto Moniz, Secretary of Energy, U.S. Department of Energy, Headquarters
Matt Urie, General Council, U.S. Department of Energy, Headquarters
Steve Silverman, U.S. Department of Justice
Matt McCormick, Manger, U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations
Kevin Smith, Manager, U.S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection
Jeff Frey, Deputy Designated Official, U.S. Department of Energy Richland
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Catherine Alexander, U.S. Department of Energy, Headquarters
The Oregon and Washington Delegations