



Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550
Richland, Washington 99352

99-OHA-032

DEC 31 1998

Ms. Mary Lou Blazek, Spokesperson
Hanford Openness Workshops
4225 Roosevelt Way, NE, Suite 100
Seattle, Washington 98105

Dear Ms. Blazek:

HANFORD OPENNESS WORKSHOPS' FINAL REPORT

Let me first reiterate the appreciation expressed in my letter of October 30, 1998, for the dedication, creativity and cooperation apparent in the Hanford Openness Workshops' (HOW) final report and recommendations. Although we may not always agree on priorities, progress, or specific proposals, it is my conviction that we share common goals.

When I look at the HOW mission, purpose, and goals, then evaluate Hanford's efforts to be open, it is apparent to me that the HOW's emphasis is on improving several existing means of communication, establishing some new ones, and redefining others. For example, several HOW recommendations seek to enhance openness within the Public Involvement and Employee Concerns programs at the Richland Operations Office (RL), others focus on development of new ways to identify relevant pieces of information and separate them from the irrelevant, and others relate to accountability for openness.

The HOW is to be admired for taking on the task of helping to define the concept of "openness." I believe that at RL we define openness in its broadest sense -- facilitating access to any information of interest to the public to which the public legally has a right. Your efforts have focused that definition on environment safety and health concerns, declassification priorities, timely access, and locating useful information.

I concur with the recommendation made by Al Alm, former U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, in his letter to Tom Carpenter, dated October 29, 1996. In that letter, Mr. Alm recommended the HOW establish an official relationship with the Hanford Advisory Board (HAB). The HAB represents the broad stakeholder community and is already chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Because of their complementary interests, I feel that the HOW could increase its effectiveness by working within the framework of the HAB. By working with the HAB, perhaps as an ad hoc committee similar to the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board's Openness Advisory Panel, the HOW could assess and facilitate the information needs of the HAB community. It could also take advantage of existing infrastructure and relationships with RL program managers, and still raise unique issues that are outside of the immediate scope or interests of the HAB. Of course,

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both the HOW and the HAB would have to agree that this relationship would be mutually beneficial.

The HOW should carefully avoid an attempt to create a second layer of bureaucracy for program areas for which RL has an existing policy and program manager, specifically, Tribal Nations, Employee Concerns, Public Involvement, and Environment, Safety and Health. RL cannot support efforts which duplicate or attempt to circumvent the policies and managers of these programs. I strongly support HOW efforts to work with each of these programs on openness issues important to its membership.

The attachment to this letter addresses HOW's recommendations as presented to RL in its final report. Each has received careful consideration by the appropriate program managers and by me. Our response is both honest and realistic. The HOW has made some recommendations which RL has already implemented. Some require long-term efforts which we can initiate, some require funding that may not currently be available, and others simply reflect a difference in philosophy on openness which I cannot support.

I would also like to make the following general comments regarding the recommendations:

- If the HOW understands the existing barriers to specific recommendations, it can better work to overcome them. At HOW's request, RL staff will be glad to provide background briefings to better understand these barriers.
- Resources are not available to implement all recommendations which have merit. If the HOW will prioritize those projects, and funding should become available, the programs will know which are most important to your membership.
- Several HOW recommendations were quite specific (e.g., "blanket release all records classified 'Restricted', " make dose reconstruction information databases available, "conduct a special workshop") and there is little question as to their meaning. Others, however, were very broad (e.g., "streamline declassification," "release in a timely manner," "meet requirements for records access ..."). If my response to a particular recommendation is that RL has already implemented the recommendation, and the HOW disagrees, the recommendation in question is likely to be one of the broad ones. In future recommendations or in discussions with RL program managers, you will find that the more specific you can be, the greater the likelihood a recommendation can be adopted. If the HOW is unable to be more specific because it is not familiar with a particular program, please request a briefing.
- Finally, concrete examples of when RL either "did it right" or "did it wrong" would help programs to model successful efforts or not repeat unsuccessful ones.
- Should the HOW agree to additional recommendations related to openness issues, I encourage you not to wait until the end of the fiscal year, but to make them as they arise. I suggest that you work directly with Yvonne Sherman who has been the RL representative at the workshops. She can refer them to the new Manager or the appropriate program manager as well as track the response and report back to the HOW.

As you know, this is one of the last letters I will sign before I retire from DOE. In the HOW charter I agreed to direct dialogue with the HOW but because of my imminent departure, I must pass that baton to my successor. It would be appropriate to allow the new Manager the time to

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evaluate openness issues at Hanford. However, in order to maintain momentum, I ask that you allow time for discussion of your report and this response with the managers of the programs I identified above at one of your first meetings. I think that most of you recognize that RL has not only learned the value of openness, but has been a leader within the DOE community in its support. The HOW is a reflection of the fact that stakeholders and the government can work together to acknowledge and reconcile differences, and still achieve our common goals. The HOW has my best wishes for continued progress and success in Fiscal Year 1999.

Sincerely,



John D. Wagoner
Manager

OEA:YTS

Attachment

cc w/attach:
R. C. Burrow, AB-1
R. K. Heusser, NN-52
M. B. Reeves, HAB