

ORP manager responds: 'We share the same goals'

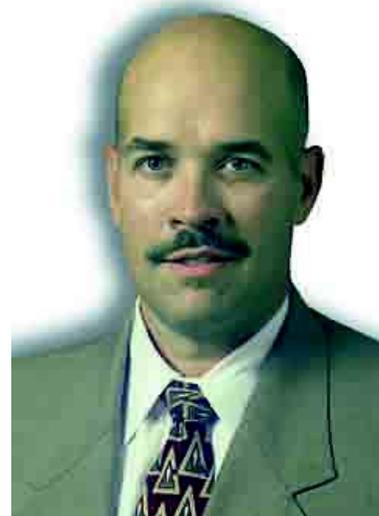
Harry Boston, Manager
Department of Energy Office of River Protection

I believe the Washington State Department of Ecology and the U.S. Department of Energy share a sense of urgency to clean up Hanford's tank waste — and protect the Columbia River and the people of the Pacific Northwest. Simply put, our agencies agree that we must complete this important project without further delay.

And that is what DOE's Office of River Protection is doing. Our plan keeps the project on schedule to meet the Tri Party Agreement milestone dates to begin waste treatment plant operations in 2007. Our scheduled start of construction in 2002 allows us to preserve this key date and keeps the project on track to continue making safe, technically sound progress. We fully expect our regulators to hold DOE accountable for continued progress and for meeting the key 2007 date and other commitments for Hanford tank waste cleanup.

Unfortunately, cancellation of the privatization approach, despite the subsequent expedited award of a traditional contract, makes it impossible for DOE to meet the milestone date of July 31 to begin construction. Over the past year, DOE and Ecology have made much progress on regulatory issues, but in the end our agencies could not agree on modifying the TPA to extend the date for the start of construction.

Regardless of this dispute, we hope to continue a constructive working relationship with Ecology and to clean up Hanford's tank waste under the framework of the TPA. The tank waste project is a large, complex and difficult job, and we expect to encounter and overcome challenges at each phase of this project. But we remain firmly committed to completing this critical project and keeping our promise to the citizens of the Pacific Northwest. ♦



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