

Version #: 5

Date Revised: 01/28/2026

Update the version number and revision date with each iteration.

Letter Heading:

To: [This is who the letter is directed to; Add names, titles, and organizations, as appropriate]

The CC list is separate and provided at the end of the template.

Subject: Building Trust through Public Involvement

Background/Executive Summary:

The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB, Board) appreciates the invitation to engage the Tri-Party Agreement Agencies (TPA Agencies, Agencies) on the topic of public involvement in Hanford cleanup.

Strong public involvement throughout the region is crucial to the future of Hanford cleanup. The foundation of public involvement is knowledge. Regional leaders and residents require education about the types of waste and contamination, the risks, and the potential solutions. But more than just education, making effective, long-term cleanup decisions requires sustained public involvement to keep communities engaged, build trust, and advocate for funding. The gold standard for public involvement is whether the public believes that Agencies listen and respond to public concerns. This is referred to as “efficacy” of involvement.

The results of the TPA Agencies’ annual public involvement survey demonstrate very low trust that public input influences the Agencies’ decisions. Improving public involvement, building awareness, and increasing public trust will help ensure continued focus and funding to protect our region and the Columbia River for future generations.

The HAB has offered many pieces of advice on this topic, which offer important insights that may help the Agencies successfully engage the public on Hanford cleanup. This advice is included in the following attachment: HAB Advice Related to Public Involvement, May 15, 2024

In addition to this brief advice, the Board has prepared a sounding board on public involvement, included as an appendix to this advice, that provides more detailed suggestions on how to successfully engage the public in Hanford cleanup. The sounding board is a compilation of suggestions from a variety of Board members, not a list of ideas that are wholly agreed upon by all Board members. The Board hopes that this sounding board will be used to strengthen public involvement efforts at the Hanford Site.

Thank you for considering our advice.

Advice:

As requested, this advice provides specific, additional guidance on public involvement strategies—whether that be general education or formally required outreach. The first step is to develop specific measurable goals, identify target audiences, understand how to reach different audiences through meetings/social media/other types of gatherings and communication, and measure success for different types of outreach and education. Public engagement goals must be adopted for multi-year periods, updated each year (considering prior year evaluation), and evaluated to inform and continuously improve future engagement opportunities. These goals need to be developed well in advance of the start of a comment period or engagement activity, in collaboration with the HAB.

- The Board advises the TPA Agencies to embrace an approach to public involvement and engagement based on the following principles as articulated in HAB Advice #239:

“The art and craft of public involvement is successful when: clear goals are defined; stakeholders contribute early to the design and development of public involvement; involvement is interactive, inclusive, engaging and respectful; the public has early input influencing the decision-making process (for example, the identification of alternatives for evaluation); the decision-makers demonstrate openness to having input influence their decisions and the decision-making process; and the public sees meaningful results from participation.”

https://www.hanford.gov/files.cfm/HABAdv_239.pdf (Nov. 5, 2010)

- The Board advises the TPA Agencies to regularly gather input on public involvement, both formally and informally, from the HAB, stakeholders, and Tribal Nations.
- The Board encourages the TPA Agencies to consider and incorporate ideas articulated in the referenced sounding board as part of the Agencies’ ongoing public involvement practice. Contained within the sounding board are Board members’ and interested members of the public’s ideas for engaging community members to increase public trust.
- The Board advises the TPA Agencies to leverage the unique cross-section of stakeholders and Tribal Nations of the HAB to review and discuss targeted involvement and communication strategies.

DRAFT ADVICE: Building Trust through Public Involvement



Originating Subcommittee: Community Outreach and Engagement

Issue Manager Team & Authors: Amber Waldref, Dan Solitz, Gerry Pollet, Liz Mattson, Michelle Holt, Miya Burke, Tom Sicilia, Susan Coleman

Appendix: [Title]

[Insert Sounding Board Document]

References:

1. HAB Consensus Advice #239, *Incorporating Public Involvement Strategic Planning into the Community Relations Plan*, November 5, 2010. Link: https://www.hanford.gov/files.cfm/HABAdv_239.pdf

Attachments:

1. HAB Advice Related to Public Involvement, May 15, 2024

CC/BCC:

Mark all applicable names/organizations to be included as advice recipients (in addition to the addressees).

TPA Agency Representatives

- Tim Walsh, DOE-EM
- Ray Geimer, DOE
- Stephanie Schleif, ECY
- Dr. Laura Buelow, EPA
- Meegan Tripp, DOE
- Ryan Miller, ECY
- Roberto Armijo, EPA
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Site-Specific Advisory Boards

- Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
- Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board
- Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board
- Paducah Citizens Advisory Board
- Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
- Idaho Cleanup Board
- Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board
- Kelly Snyder, DFO

OR/WA Congressional Delegations (to Chief of Staff)

- Sen. Patty Murray, WA
- Senator Maria Cantwell, WA
- Rep. Suzan DelBene, WA-01
- Rep. Rick Larsen, WA-02
- Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, WA-03
- Rep. Dan Newhouse, WA-04
- Rep. Michael Baumgartner, WA-05
- Rep. Emily Randall, WA-06
- Rep. Pramila Jayapal, WA-07
- Rep. Kim Schrier, WA-08

- Rep. Adam Smith, WA-09
- Rep. Marilyn Strickland, WA-10
- Sen. Ron Wyden, OR
- Sen. Jeff Merkley, OR
- Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, OR-01
- Rep. Cliff Bentz, OR-02
- Rep. Maxine Dexter, OR-03
- Rep. Val Hoyle, OR-04
- Rep. Janelle Bynum, OR-05
- Rep. Andrea Salinas, OR-06

Write-in/Additional

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Requests to Receive Advice

- Jessica Keys, Staff to Sen. Merkley