

THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
GOVERNOR



September 26, 2003

Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board
625 Marion Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-3742

Dear Board Members:

You have a unique and daunting challenge.

Huge quantities of radioactive and hazardous wastes at the Hanford nuclear site pose a tremendous long-term risk to the citizens of the Northwest, the Columbia River and the environment, and to the economy of this region. Thankfully, we are seeing some progress.

As Oregon Attorney General a decade ago, I worked with my counterparts in Washington State and with other Attorneys General from across the nation to compel the U.S. Department of Energy to acknowledge their responsibility to meet environmental laws, and to respect the states' rights - including adjoining states such as Oregon - to have a role in cleanup. As Governor, I continue to seek a greater role for Oregon to participate in decision-making over Hanford cleanup.

It is gratifying to see there has been some important progress in recent years towards cleaning up Hanford's wastes and reducing the hazards they present. Your efforts have certainly played a key role in that success. You should look with pride on the positive impact you have had on cleaning up Hanford. Your work benefits the environment, and a healthy environment helps sustain the economy.

But there are still vast challenges ahead, and the citizens of Oregon need your continued dedication, your vigilance, and your perseverance to ensure a successful cleanup of Hanford. Many important decisions remain to be made. Many difficult technical questions need to be answered. Several projects vital to the protection of the Columbia River - the immobilization of Hanford's tank waste and cleanup of the contaminated groundwater plumes - are not yet underway. We need to ensure that these projects are completed in a manner that protects Oregon and its citizens.

I appreciate the precedent set by Governors Barbara Roberts and John Kitzhaber by articulating to the Oregon Hanford Waste Board their expectations and their goals for progress in cleaning up the Hanford Site. Looking back, we can see where Oregon has been most effective, the amount of progress that has occurred, and where problems and concerns still exist.

When Governor Roberts' message to the Waste Board was delivered in February 1992, Hanford cleanup was barely underway. There was hope that construction would soon begin on facilities to immobilize the millions of gallons of tank waste, and that those facilities would be operational by 1999. That effort was unsuccessful, and again we find ourselves hopeful that the current effort to construct these essential facilities will succeed.

The target date for the start of operations of these facilities is now 2011. And that is optimistic. In 1992, we thought that the start of operations would be in 1999. Now, it is 2003, and we are still at least eight years away from the start of operations. It is discouraging to see the time that has been lost - while the waste storage tanks become that much more brittle with age.

We cannot accept another failure. We cannot accept another lost decade.

Three missions have been at the forefront of the Board's activities since its inception - protecting the Columbia River, ensuring the safe transport of radioactive materials through the state, and elevating Hanford cleanup issues in the minds of Oregonians.

I commend you for the extensive work you did last year in focusing attention on groundwater contamination and the series of recommendations that you developed to help protect the Columbia River. Groundwater contamination issues would not have achieved the current level of visibility without the efforts of Oregon and the Waste Board. Still, questions about the effects of Hanford contaminants on salmon in the Hanford Reach need to be answered. And much more can certainly be done in the near future to keep the groundwater contamination problems from getting worse.

I urge you to frequently revisit your recommendations, and to keep them visible with the regulators and the U.S. Department of Energy. I also urge you to continue to work with others who have interests at Hanford - such as the Native American tribes and the Hanford Advisory Board - to demand a cleanup that is protective of Oregon's environment, economy and future generations.

Recommendations developed by this Board 15 years ago have become the framework for how all states work with the U.S. Department of Energy to ensure the safe transport of radioactive materials. We are likely to see an increase in Hanford shipments - both to and from the site. Continue your work with the Oregon Department of Energy to ensure that local

emergency responders have the training, the equipment, and the information they need to effectively respond to an incident involving one of these shipments. And keep pressure on the U.S. Department of Energy to maintain the standards that have been adopted which have greatly reduced the likelihood of any incident occurring.

The message we get from the federal level toward cleanup at Hanford seems to be focused on speed and reducing cost - not protection of the environment and the people.

Earlier this year, I signed a bill into law that changed the name of this Board - reflecting our collective goal for Hanford. And I expect the Oregon Hanford *Cleanup* Board to continue to weigh in on these and other issues important to Oregon and its citizens.

I commend you for your dedication and your persistence, and I admire you for the passion with which you approach your work on Hanford.

As Governor, I will look to you to keep me informed of these issues. As we know through past experience, Oregon's ability to influence some of these decisions is limited. Oregon is not a regulator. Our efforts to get a seat at the negotiating table have been repeatedly rejected. But that only means we will have to be more persistent, and make a stronger case so that we are not ignored.

With your help, we can clean up Hanford and the surrounding area. I think of it as a present to our children and future generations - the gift of a pristine Oregon, an Oregon we all deserve.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore R. Kulongoski', with a stylized flourish at the end.

THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor