



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



550 Capitol St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

Phone: 503-378-4040

Toll Free: 1-800-221-8035

FAX: 503-373-7806

[www.oregon.gov/energy](http://www.oregon.gov/energy)

July 2, 2018

Alex Smith  
Nuclear Waste Program Manager  
Washington Department of Ecology  
3100 Port of Benton Boulevard  
Richland, WA 99354

Dave Einan  
Manager, Hanford Project Office  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
825 Jadwin Ave, Suite 210  
Richland, WA 99352

Doug Shoop,  
Manager, Richland Field Office  
U.S. Department of Energy  
PO Box 550, MSIN H5-20  
Richland, WA 99352

Dear Ms. Smith, Mr. Einan and Mr. Shoop:

I want to express my disappointment in proposed Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) milestones related to moving Hanford's cesium and strontium capsules to dry storage. In January of this year, the Oregon Department of Energy strongly urged the Tri-Party agencies not to delay movement of Hanford's cesium and strontium capsules to dry storage until 2025 (as the completion date). Our comments were in response to an *agreement in principle* on draft milestones for the cesium and strontium capsules. Now, the public is being asked to formally comment on that same proposed 2025 milestone.

In our January letter, we again outlined the concerns we first raised in 2013 that the concrete walls of the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility pools may have suffered a loss of structural integrity due to high radiation exposure. Similar concerns are identified in great detail in several DOE contractor documents. Since 2013, in a variety of forums, the U.S. Department of Energy and its regulators have indicated repeatedly that moving the cesium and strontium capsules to dry storage is a high priority. No one has really challenged that the risk from a basin failure could potentially be significant.

The notice for this comment period says that the TPA agencies will consider all comments submitted before the proposed changes are incorporated into the TPA. I recognize that our

January comments were prior to the formal comment period. However, given that they had no discernible effect, it's hard to believe any public comments at this point will influence these proposed milestones. I hope to be proven wrong.

I'd like to believe that Oregon and the public are able on occasion to influence cleanup decisions and priorities at Hanford. The Federal Register notice of May 18, 2018 of an amended Record of Decision for the cesium and strontium capsules credits the State of Oregon and the Yakama Nation for raising this issue, which directly led to consideration of dry storage of the capsules. We appreciate that acknowledgement, but hoped our January arguments against delays to 2025 would have been sufficiently compelling to affect a change.

We recognize that budget limitations are likely the main reason for the delay and acknowledge that there are many competing priorities. We simply believe this should be one of the highest spending priorities at Hanford and again encourage the Tri-Parties to elevate this project so that this risk is alleviated well before 2025.

Should you wish to discuss our comments, please contact me at 503-378-4906.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Niles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "N".

Ken Niles  
Assistant Director for Nuclear Safety

C.c. Matt Johnson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation  
Rose Longoria, Yakama Indian Nation  
Jack Bell, Nez Perce Tribe  
Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board  
Susan Leckband, Hanford Advisory Board