Oregon
Tina Kotek, Governor

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June 3, 2026

Attn: Dana Cowley U.S. Department of Energy
Delivered via Email
CleanupPriorities@rl.gov

Re: Hanford Fiscal Year 2028 cleanup priorities comment letter

Dear Ms. Cowley,

Oregon Department of Energy appreciates this annual opportunity to provide comment on the Hanford cleanup and budget priorities for the near future, focusing on fiscal year 2028. Oregon's priorities for 2028 can be summarized in five categories: *information, transportation, stabilization, characterization, and remediation*. The Hanford mission has reached an inflection point: where the funding needed in 2028 to complete the work on the timeline established by the 2025 Lifecycle Scope, Schedule, and Cost Report (DOE/HFO-2025-13) is more than double that allocated by Congress for 2026, and the proposed FY 2027 budget is approximately $400 million less than FY2026 - between $2.5 and $4 billion below what is needed by DOE's own calculations. If DOE's Lifecycle Report estimates are accurate, such a significant budget shortfall would cause the cost and timeline of cleanup completion to be extended, projects and milestones to slip, or the quality of the cleanup to be lowered. While navigating the uncertain budget environment is a familiar challenge for DOE and its stakeholders such as Oregon, we suggest that future versions of the lifecycle report which are used to estimate a complaint budget amount should be revisited to align with Congressional funding realities including a flat funding estimate in the 2028 Lifecycle Scope, Schedule, and Cost Report so priorities can be set within the confines of realistic funding. In the meantime, Oregon's priorities and what they mean to Oregonians are presented below.

Information

DOE and the contractor team do amazingly challenging work within financial constraints, and they do it safely. But it can be hard for that information to break through. In recent years it seems that communications from the Hanford Field Office (HFO) is not always released in a timely manner. Particularly with the activities described below, Oregon's other priorities, we suggest that DOE reinvest in and support their communications team. Messaging from contractors is an important piece, but the HFO comms team should be a single federal point of contact for reliable and timely information. We have every confidence in the DOE communications team at the site. Efforts should be made to ensure that they have staffing and support commensurate with their obligation to provide timely information on a complex

cleanup. A piece of this strategy is ensuring that outlets such as the Hanford Advisory Board and Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board have appropriate staff support and can have collaborative communications without delay.

Transportation

Fiscal 2028 will see the resumption of Transuranic/Mixed Transuranic waste from Hanford to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The HFO has an experienced and accomplished partner in the Carlsbad Field Office in this project and should build on that relationship to develop lessons learned for upcoming shipping campaigns. Specifically, the HFO should use this time to develop Program Implementation Guides in collaboration with states and tribal nations along shipping routes for solidified Effluent Management Facility (EMF) still bottoms and for solidified treated low activity waste from the 200-West WATT (HFO-71486_Draft_2-5-26_Public_200_W_WIR_2-3-26.pdf) program. The rollout of the guide in 2028 may be a bit late for the EMF campaign, but it will give something for the reinforced communications team to bring to communities along the shipping corridor to address their concerns. The three campaigns will see dozens of shipments a week for a decade or more, and the HFO needs to be out ahead of those campaigns, laying a foundation of trust, partnerships, and training.

Stabilization

This year marks the first time in history that the HFO is producing low-activity glass and disposing it in the Integrated Disposal Facility. This is a major accomplishment, and Oregon commends the designers, trades people, construction crews, tank farm operators, and everyone associated with the facility. Early operations have been necessarily cautious and the plant has been deliberately and carefully brought online – something that should be done for any complex first-in-kind facility. By 2028, we trust that the plant throughput will be optimized and as much treated tank waste as safely possible will be vitrified in 200-E. Doing so will demonstrate the value in the investment taxpayers made in the facility and reduce the need to ship additional grouted waste over the nation's highways. It is Oregon's hope that the low activity waste melters prove to be so efficient that some treated waste from the 200-W WATT facility is able to be vitrified following transfer using the supernatant cross-site transfer line. Grouted off-site disposal is a good backup tool to have, but vitrification remains a priority. On the subject of grout: Oregon expects that 2028's activities will include permitting and construction of an onsite grouting facility to support the 200-W WATT shipping campaign and will provide what support we can to facilitate that effort. It is Oregon's longstanding position that tank waste must be grouted before it leaves the site for disposal. Finally, 2028 should see the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility without cesium or strontium capsules, following the successful transfer to dry storage complete. This is another major accomplishment, and Oregon commends the work done to date. We have consistently advocated for thorough scientific testing of the WESF basin following dewatering. The ability to collect data on concrete's properties in this unique long-term environment is not something that should be missed, and perhaps DOE can partner with PNNL on this research effort.

Characterization

Before any contamination can be cleaned up, first we have to know what is there. Oregon has voiced concern about a "characterization-gap" in the past, and those concerns remain. The development of the comprehensive cleanup milestone package and the M-100 series of milestones certainly is a step in the right direction to address this gap. The vision of the adaptive process is for the Tri-Party Agreement agencies to evaluate the cleanup work remaining within the constraints of expected funding and sequence of needed activities. This novel approach has great potential to efficiently execute long awaited characterization and cleanup projects. Once an M-100 milestone is set, it should be a priority. Otherwise, the collaborative exercise could be seen as another reason for delay. Characterization should be prioritized in the near term so remediation decisions can be finalized and longer-term budget estimates can accurately present the work to be completed.

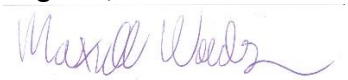
Remediation

Remediation is the "cleanup" in cleanup priorities. Given the critical work being conducted on the site and the aforementioned fiscal constraints, we understand that it is unlikely that FY2028 will see major advancements in remediation. We ask that DOE continue to manage groundwater contamination with the highly effective pump and treat systems, maximizing removal of contaminants before they have a chance to reach the Columba River. DOE should continue taking an opportunistic approach to remediating soil waste sites where possible – each one completed is one less to do later. The greatest on-site resource for remediation – aside from the work force – is the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. This resource is finite, and there are periodic concerns raised by regulators that clean soils are sometimes used to void-fill and compact debris. Opportunistic remediation of waste sites reduces the need to "waste" space in the landfill with clean materials. To the extent practical, DOE should prioritize enough remove treat dispose remediation work to ensure as little clean fill is used in ERDF as possible. In addition to remediation, Oregon also expects DOE to continue its legal obligation to fund restoration assessments through the Hanford Natural Resource Trustee Council. Preventing future harm through remediation coupled with restoration will provide lasting benefit to the region.

Oregon Department of Energy continues to believe that deliberate progress towards cleanup and risk mitigation at Hanford has shown significant value for the funds appropriated by Congress, but much work remains to be accomplished. We expect that DOE will make transparent and informed plans – including grouting treated tank waste prior to offsite transportation - in collaboration with those along the transportation route. The federal government has an obligation to the region and to the nation to ensure that the Hanford cleanup meets agreed-upon milestones and protects the people and environment of our region.

If you have any questions please contact me or Tom Sicilia (tom.sicilia@energy.oregon.gov) of my staff.

Regards,



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