

July 26, 2002

Ms. Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary
for Environmental Management
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (PMP) FOR THE CLEAN-UP
OF THE BATTELLE WEST JEFFERSON SITE

Dear Ms. Roberson:

The Region III Office of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has safety and regulatory oversight responsibilities for the decommissioning project at Battelle Columbus Laboratories' West Jefferson site. As a matter of regulation, the NRC requires timely completion of decommissioning activities, consistent with safety, efficiency and maintaining public confidence.

In January, 2002, representatives of NRC Region III and the DOE Ohio Field Office met to:

- confirm a common vision for the timely completion of decontamination and decommissioning of the Battelle West Jefferson Site;
- review their respective roles in the oversight of the clean-up effort; and
- agree on measures to enhance cooperation and mutual support in timely agency reviews and decision making.

The recently completed revision to the Baseline for the Columbus Environmental Management Project (CEMP) sets forth an aggressive plan for closure of the West Jefferson Site which is intended to reduce overall project costs by investing earlier in hazard removal and accelerated building dismantlement. We have reviewed the Performance Management Plan (PMP) for this project. The PMP describes how optimum funding of the baseline plan will achieve the accelerated site closure desired by both DOE and the NRC.

The NRC staff endorses the PMP initiatives leading to timely decommissioning, and we assume that sufficient funding will be provided. Early investment as described in the PMP can accelerate reduction of site hazards as well as reap large schedule and cost reductions. We also endorse continued support from DOE-Headquarters in taking all steps necessary to achieve the accelerated schedules and clean-up goals envisioned in the PMP. This includes maintaining access to DOE sites and contracts for disposal of project-generated radioactive wastes. Consistent with the Performance Management Plan, an essential first step is the approval by your office and DOE's Richland Operations Office to begin remote-handled transuranic waste (RH-TRU) shipments from the West Jefferson site to Hanford this summer.

Once this inventory of high activity material has been removed from the site, the remaining decontamination and building demolition can proceed safely. We appreciate your continued support of implementation of the Columbus/West Jefferson PMP initiatives. Success will rely on DOE securing the necessary funding, as well as providing complex-wide leadership and integration for all inter-site transactions. In return, we want to reiterate our commitment to work pro-actively with the Department with the goal of expediting the West Jefferson clean-up, and assuring public safety while ensuring effective and efficient use of taxpayer resources.

This letter has been coordinated with the Division of Waste Management in the NRC Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards.

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Sincerely,

/RA/

J. E. Dyer
Regional Administrator

cc: M. Virgilio, NRC, NMSS
J. Greeves, NRC, NMSS
L. Camper, NRC, NMSS
N. Gantos, BCDLP
R. Vandegrift, ODH
T. Ballieul, DOE, OFO, CEMP

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