



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

JUN 27 1989

B.J. Youngblood, Deputy Director
Division of High-Level
Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Materials
Safety and Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Youngblood:

The purpose of this letter is to note our understanding of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) position regarding NRC's involvement in the Waste Acceptance Process (WAP) for the DOE's Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) and the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP), as expressed at the April 20, 1989, DOE/NRC meeting on our interactions schedule.

At our meeting on April 20, 1989, my staff was informed that the NRC does not plan to review the WAP technical documentation. Instead, NRC indicated that it will review and provide acceptance in the area of quality assurance regarding high-level waste (HLW) production and process control. Specifically, the DOE will submit to the NRC the process control and quality assurance documentation which will be used to control the quality, consistency with specifications, and uniformity, of the high-level vitrified glass waste form. It is our understanding that the NRC will only provide its acceptance of the quality assurance and production/process control program. Final acceptance of the waste form for emplacement in a repository will occur as part of the site characterization effort and subsequent analysis and presentation in the repository license application.

In addition, on a related matter, previous discussions with NRC led to the identification of a list of NRC "Open Items" relative to waste acceptance. DOE will continue to give full consideration to NRC's technical concerns expressed as WAP "Open Items", while NRC can still maintain an awareness of DOE's approaches to address these items because they will be reflected in the WAP documentation.

NRC should recognize that DOE intends to proceed with its waste acceptance and production activities at DWPF and WVDP, seeking only NRC acceptance of its quality assurance and production control processes, recognizing such acceptance is not a prerequisite to facility startup. As noted above, this view recognizes the NRC's need to gain assurance relative to the consistency and uniformity of the waste form resulting from the waste producers programs by involvement in the quality assurance and process control aspects. This would be followed by NRC's evaluating the repository programs assessment of the eventual performance of the waste form in the repository environment.

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It is also our understanding that this NRC position in no way negates the requirements of the Waste Valley Demonstration Project Act. Nor does it impact the interaction and coordination established between NRC and DOE in the West Valley implementing MOU. Questions concerning this correspondence should be addressed to myself or G. Appel of my staff at 586-1462.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ralph Stein".

Ralph Stein
Associate Director for Systems
Integration and Regulations
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management

cc:
J. Linehan, NRC