



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

APR 25 1996

Mr. John T. Greeves
Office of the Director
Division of Waste Management
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Greeves:

SUBJECT: High Level Waste Tank Closure Initiative

Members of the the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Savannah River Operations Office (SR), and Westinghouse Savannah River Company staff appreciated the opportunity to meet with your staff and other Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff on April 16, 1996 to discuss the high level waste tank closure initiative at the Savannah River Site. It was a most productive meeting and we gleaned useful NRC insight to incorporate into our closure strategy.

Our goal is to close a high level waste tank by December 31, 1996. We are working closely with our regulators, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Environmental Protection Agency, Region IV, to develop closure criteria, establish performance objectives, and formulate a closure plan that will demonstrate protection of human health and the environment. All parties involved believe that this is an important initiative.

Section 202 of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 provides for the NRC to exercise licensing and related regulatory authority over facilities authorized for the express purpose of subsequent long-term storage of high level radioactive wastes generated by DOE. A letter from Mr. R. Bernero (NRC) to Ms. J. Lytle (DOE) dated March 2, 1993, provided further guidance with regards to DOE high level waste tanks and the possible classification of residual tank waste as "incidental". The letter further states that if the residual waste meets the "incidental" waste definition the waste would not be subject to NRC licensing.

As discussed in the April 16, 1996, meeting, SR plans to prepare a letter to the NRC providing technical justification for the classification of the residual waste as "incidental". The letter will discuss the following: (1) the waste removal process, (2) extent of waste removed that is technically and economically practicable, (3) closure alternatives, (4) performance evaluation methodology; and (5) performance criteria. Since our staffs will discuss a draft of this letter, additional issues will be included as appropriate.

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Mr. John T. Greeves

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Again, I want to thank the NRC staff, especially Mr. Michael Bell and Mr. Richard Weller for their time and continued support. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please call me or Larry Ling at (803) 208-8248.

Sincerely,



A. Lee Watkins
Assistant Manager
for High Level Waste

PD:LTL:ehh

MB-96-0118