



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor



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February 15, 2007

Mr. Bret Leslie  
Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
MS EBB-02-B02  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Leslie,

Thank you for notifying Oregon about the Nuclear Regulatory Commission review of the Department of Energy's (DOE) regulatory processes for the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant (WTP). We appreciate that you have sought our input and concerns.

This congressional review request highlights the recognized value and the importance of having an independent agency license and oversee the operation of nuclear facilities. Experience shows that disciplined self-regulation is difficult to achieve – whether by DOE or any other agency. Thus, while the NRC does not now have regulatory or licensing authority over the Hanford WTP, we believe that external regulation of this tremendously complex project by the NRC would be beneficial.

In addition, after being involved in the Hanford cleanup for more than twenty years, Oregon has an overarching concern that pertains to both the WTP and to the many other nuclear waste management projects at Hanford: the confusing and inconsistent patchwork of waste definitions used by DOE and the NRC form a significant barrier to efficient, cost-effective nuclear waste management.

We hope you will use the opportunity provided by this review to raise awareness both within the Commission and within Congress of the need for a single, uniform nuclear waste classification system—one that is based on objective, measurable waste attributes (activity/half-life, chemistry, etc.) rather than waste history (how, where, or when generated). Until that occurs, the difficulties of classifying and safely managing and disposing of nuclear waste for as long as it remains intrinsically hazardous will be needlessly magnified.



If you have any questions about our comments, please contact Dirk Dunning of my staff at 503-378-3187.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ken Niles".

Ken Niles  
Assistant Director

c.c. Shirley Olinger, DOE Office of River Protection  
Jane Hedges, Washington Department of Ecology