



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAY 21 2012

OFFICE OF  
SOLID WASTE AND EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE

Mr. Larry W. Camper, Director,  
Division of Waste Management  
and Environmental Protection  
Office of Federal and State Materials  
and Environmental Management Programs  
U.S Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Camper:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 22, 2012, regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Low Level Radioactive Burial Site at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in Beltsville, Maryland. Your letter notified the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the BARC site has triggered a Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) consultation with EPA in accordance with the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entitled: "[Consultation and Finality on Decommissioning and Decontamination of Contaminated Sites](#)" (OSWER No. 9295.8-06, signed by EPA on September 6, 2002, and NRC on October 9, 2002). This letter responds to the request received pursuant to Section V.D.1 of the MOU. This section provides that when NRC requests EPA's consultation on a decommissioning plan or a license termination plan, EPA will provide written notification of its views within 90 days of NRC's request.

The March 22 letter constitutes a Level 1 consultation as specified in the MOU because the consultation involves proposed derived concentration guideline levels (DCGLs) for certain radionuclides in the Decommissioning Plan (DP) which exceed soil concentration values in Table 1 of the MOU for residential use.

The views expressed by EPA in this letter regarding NRC's decommissioning are limited to discussions related to the area specified in the MOU. The comments provided here do not constitute guidance related to the cleanup of sites under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) authority.<sup>1</sup> EPA's

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see the memorandum entitled: "[Distribution of Memorandum of Understanding between EPA and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#)" (OSWER No. 9295.8-06a, October 9, 2002) which includes guidance to the EPA Regions to facilitate Regional compliance with the MOU and to clarify that the MOU does not affect CERCLA actions that do not

views on the matters addressed by this letter were developed from information furnished by NRC in the March 22 letter, other materials provided by NRC, and staff discussions.

### **EPA Consultation Views**

This response is limited to those matters that initiated NRC's request for consultation. NRC initiated this consultation because the DCGLs in the DP exceeded the MOU trigger values for three radionuclides in soil. It is EPA's understanding that DCGLs are generally developed for all radionuclides that a licensee was permitted by NRC to use. It is also our understanding that these three radionuclides may be present only in very limited trace amounts in the media (soil) discussed in this letter, and that the remediation activities associated with NRC's decommissioning process are likely to significantly decrease the levels of those radionuclides that are present to residual levels below the DCGLs.

### **Soil: Land Use**

NRC triggered the consultation for soil on the basis of DCGLs for Cl-36, Cs-137, and Ni-63 exceeding the residential Table 1 values in the MOU. It is EPA's understanding that the future land use for this site with significant soil contamination is uncertain after NRC decommissions the site.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 contains trigger values for both residential and industrial/commercial land use. At CERCLA sites and at some Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) sites, EPA generally uses the guidance "Land Use in the CERCLA Remedy Selection Process" (OSWER Directive No. 9355.7-04, May 25, 1995) to determine what is a reasonably anticipated land use. This guidance document may be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/relocation/landuse.pdf>.

NRC is planning to release the site for unrestricted use. However, a more restrictive land use, such as industrial, could be chosen. Ensuring continuance of a restricted land use, such as industrial, however, is likely to involve the use of institutional controls. For further information regarding how EPA selects institutional controls, see "Institutional Controls: A Site Manager's Guide to Identifying, Evaluating and Selecting Institutional Controls at Superfund and RCRA Corrective Action Cleanups" (OSWER Directive 9355.0-74FS-P, September 2000). This guidance document may be found on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/correctiveaction/resource/guidance/ics/icfactfinal.pdf>

### **Soil: Modeling**

The Table 1 soil values in the MOU that NRC's DCGLs may exceed at this site are based on a  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  cancer risk developed using an electronic calculator entitled:

---

involve NRC (e.g., the MOU does not establish cleanup levels for CERCLA sites). This memorandum may be found on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/health/contaminants/radiation/pdfs/transmou2fin.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that in accordance with section 121(c) of CERCLA EPA, when remediating a site for an industrial/commercial land use, is also likely to review the site for continued protectiveness at least every five years.

“Radionuclide Preliminary Remediation Goals (PRGs) for Superfund.” This calculator generates PRG concentrations at the  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  risk level. The PRG value at  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  was multiplied by 100 to derive the  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  value for Table 1 consultation triggers. (At CERCLA sites, PRGs based on cancer risk should continue to be developed at the  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  level.) The soil concentration values were developed using conservative default parameters. At most sites, higher soil concentrations corresponding to a given risk level may generally be justified using site-specific parameters. The radionuclide PRG calculation tool may be found on the Internet at: <http://epa-prgs.ornl.gov/radionuclides/>.

In EPA’s view, if the licensee is unable to meet the Table 1 soil values for residential, NRC should consider the use of a more restricted land use, such as industrial, and appropriate institutional controls. In addition, NRC should consider determining if the use of site-specific parameters was justified in modeling at this site. The use of site-specific parameters would not alter NRC’s obligation to possibly trigger a Level 2 consultation, if Table 1 soil values were found to be exceeded after the Final Status Survey measurements. If a Level 2 consultation is needed, NRC should furnish any site-specific parameters used and their rationale for allowing their use during the dose assessment for the site, in order to facilitate EPA offering its views with a more accurate estimate of the risks posed by residual contamination at the site.

### **Conclusion**

EPA staff are available to NRC for consultation if needed at the Site. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me or have your staff contact Stuart Walker of my staff at (703) 603-8748.

Sincerely,



Phyllis Anderson, Acting Director  
Assessment and Remediation Division  
Office of Superfund Remediation and  
Technology Innovation