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West Valley Nuclear Services Company, Inc.

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June 17, 1994

Distribution:

West Valley Nuclear Services Company (WVNS) is currently developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate construction and operation of a contaminated soil consolidation area (CSCA) at the U.S. Department of Energy's West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP). The WVDP is located at the New York State owned Western New York Nuclear Service Center (WNYNSC) near West Valley, New York.

The CSCA would provide interim storage for some contaminated soil pending decisions on long-term management. Long-term management options are being evaluated as part of an Environmental Impact Statement being developed for completion of the WVDP by the DOE, and closure and/or long-term management of the WNYNSC by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

To provide the public information on the CSCA proposal and receive comments and suggestions, the enclosed summary of the CSCA proposal is being made available. A public meeting will be held on July 6, 1994 at the West Valley Central School in West Valley, NY from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. to review and discuss the proposal and the EA.

WVNS, as the DOE's managing and [illegible]ing contractor for the WVDP, is conducting these activities early in the EA process to encourage public input that can be considered in EA development. The approved EA will also be made available for public review and comment prior to a DOE decision on the proposal. Completion and approval of the EA is scheduled for November 1994. The EA is being prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA, and the DOE NEPA regulations.

If you wish to receive further information about this proposal, please contact Russ Gill, WVNS Community and Environmental Affairs Specialist, at (716) 942-4547.

Sincerely,

John Chamberlain

John Chamberlain, Manager
WVNS Community Relations

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Summary of Proposal to Construct and Operate a Contaminated Soil Consolidation Area at the West Valley Demonstration Project

INTRODUCTION

In October 1980, Congress enacted Public Law 96-368, the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) Act, which directs the Department of Energy (DOE) to develop and demonstrate technology for solidifying the high-level radioactive waste (HLW) at West Valley, into a form suitable for long-term disposal in and transportation to a federal repository. The HLW is a by-product of spent nuclear fuel reprocessing conducted between 1966 and 1972 at the site. The DOE, through a Cooperative Agreement with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), assumed operational control of the reprocessing facility in 1982 to conduct the WVDP. West Valley Nuclear Services, Inc. (WVNS), a subsidiary of Westinghouse Electric Corporation, manages and operates the site for the DOE.

Following evaluation of several solidification alternatives in an environmental impact statement, the DOE selected solidification into borosilicate glass. To solidify the HLW, construction of new facilities and modifications of existing facilities were required. These construction activities and required site maintenance activities have resulted in the excavation of radiologically contaminated soil.

NEED FOR ACTION

Radioactively contaminated soil that is excavated during activities supporting the WVDP is placed in steel containers for storage. Currently about 3,700 cubic yards of contaminated soil are stored at the site. Approximately 75 percent of the soil is stored in steel boxes housed in on-site fabric-covered, weather structures, which are nearing capacity. The remaining 25 percent is stored outdoors in 100 covered, steel roll-off dumpsters. The level of contamination in most of the soil is low enough to be stored in bulk form. Storing low activity soil in bulk form would free up an estimated two years worth of storage space given current low level waste generation rates.

PROPOSED ACTION

To provide safe temporary storage for contaminated soil and minimize overall low level waste storage costs, the DOE is considering a proposal to design, construct, operate, and decommission a covered, contaminated soil consolidation area (CSCA). The storage area would be used to store soil until state and federal decisions are reached on alternatives for completion of the WVDP, and for closure and/or long-term management of the Western New York Nuclear Service Center (WNYNSC). Estimated design life for the facility is twenty-five years.

The CSCA would be designed to store up to 8,000 cubic yards of radiologically contaminated soil in bulk form. The CSCA would consist of a covered and lined area on which the contaminated soil would be stored. The area would be 100 feet wide x 20 feet high and up to 250 feet long (See Figure 1). The proposed location for the CSCA (See Figure 2) is next to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Licensed Disposal Area (NDA) within the 200 acre WVDP site.

The CSCA would be an engineered water-tight pad (See Figure 3) upon which the soil is piled and covered to prevent water infiltration and dispersion by the wind. A drainage system would collect leachate that would be sampled, tested, and treated (if necessary) before release to the environment.

A perimeter drainage ditch would be constructed to collect run-off from the surface of the tarp cover and discharge it through a drainage channel to Erdman Brook. The drainage ditch would also serve as a barrier to prevent surface water from running onto the soil pile.

A contaminated soil consolidation area, as described above, is a proposed action for temporarily storing radiologically contaminated soil at the WVDP. This design would permit the soil to be retrieved at any time. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, alternatives to the proposed action (a design alternative, a location alternative, and a no action alternative), are being reviewed.

ALTERNATIVES

Design Alternative

WVNS is considering a soil storage facility at the same location as the proposed action, but of a different design. This design alternative (See Figure 4) would consist of a concrete and earthen retaining wall structure around a base pad. The facility would have a leachate collection system, and as Figure 4 indicates, the facility would be covered by a roof.

Location Alternative

This alternative to the proposed action would consist of constructing a storage facility identical to the proposed action, but in an alternate location. The location being considered is on the northern area of the WVDP site (See Figure 2).

No-Action Alternative

All NEPA documents require federal agencies to evaluate the potential impact of taking "no action." WVNS would include an evaluation of the potential effects of keeping the soil management program status quo (i.e., continuing to place material into metal boxes).

Soil Washing Alternative

This technology is currently being used successfully at other DOE facilities to decontaminate large quantities of contaminated soil. However, discussion with representatives of seven soil washing vendors revealed that current technology cannot adequately treat the specific soil and nuclide combination found at the WVDP site. WVNS will continue to evaluate future technologies for application at West Valley.

Commercial Disposal Alternative

The commercial disposal alternative would examine disposing of the soil at a commercial low level waste disposal facility. According to recent news releases by June 30, 1994 the Barnwell Low Level Waste Disposal Site, the primary site for WVDP consideration, will no longer be available to the WVDP.

SUMMARY

WVNS is currently preparing a draft Environmental Assessment of the contaminated soil consolidation area in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The Environmental Assessment would support DOE decision-making for the interim storage of contaminated soil at the WVDP. In order to further the purposes of NEPA through public involvement in DOE decision making, WVNS is inviting comment on the proposed contaminated soil consolidation area and the alternatives considered.

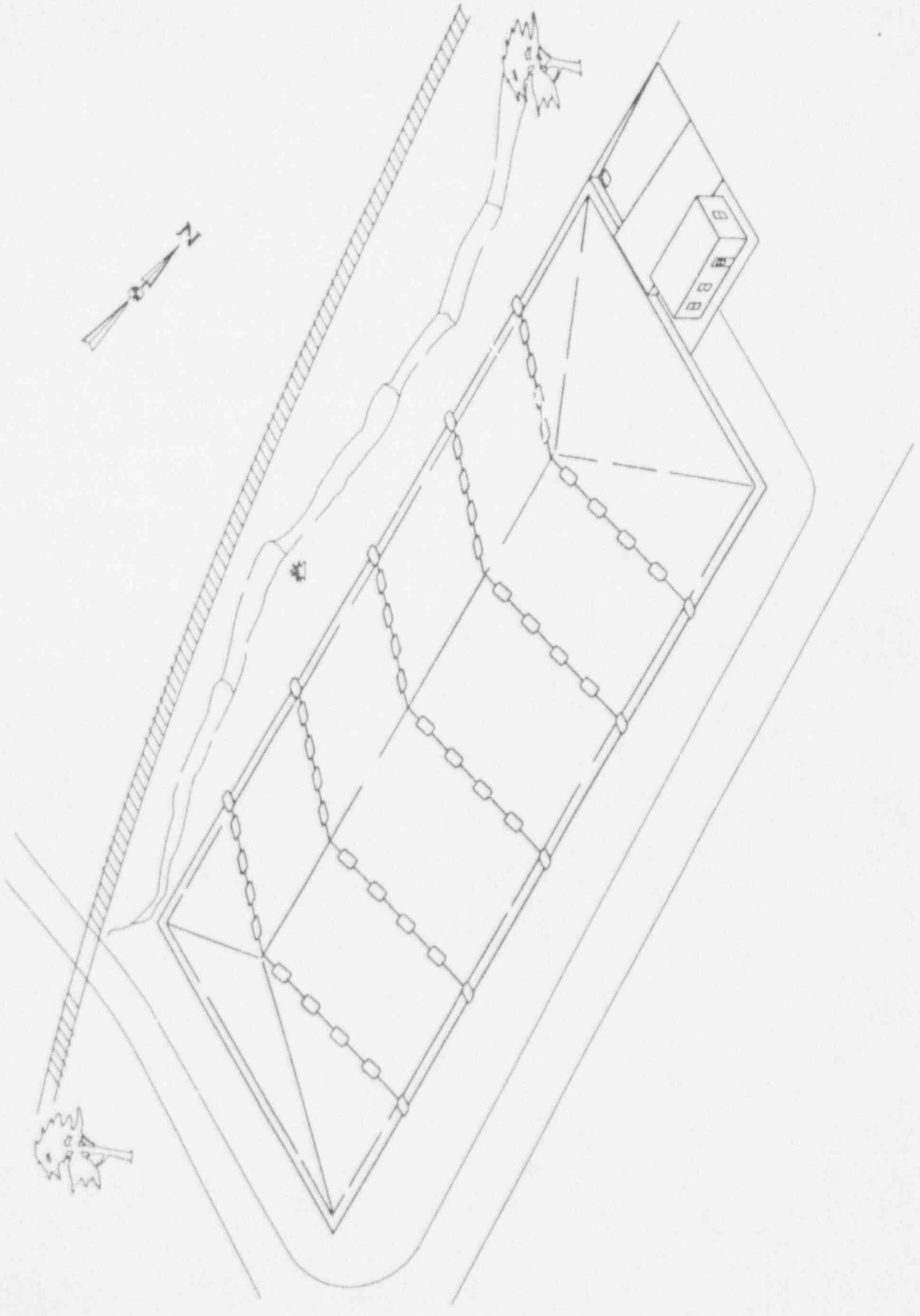

Figure 1 - Isometric View of CSCA from Northeast

Figure 2 - Primary & Alternate Sites

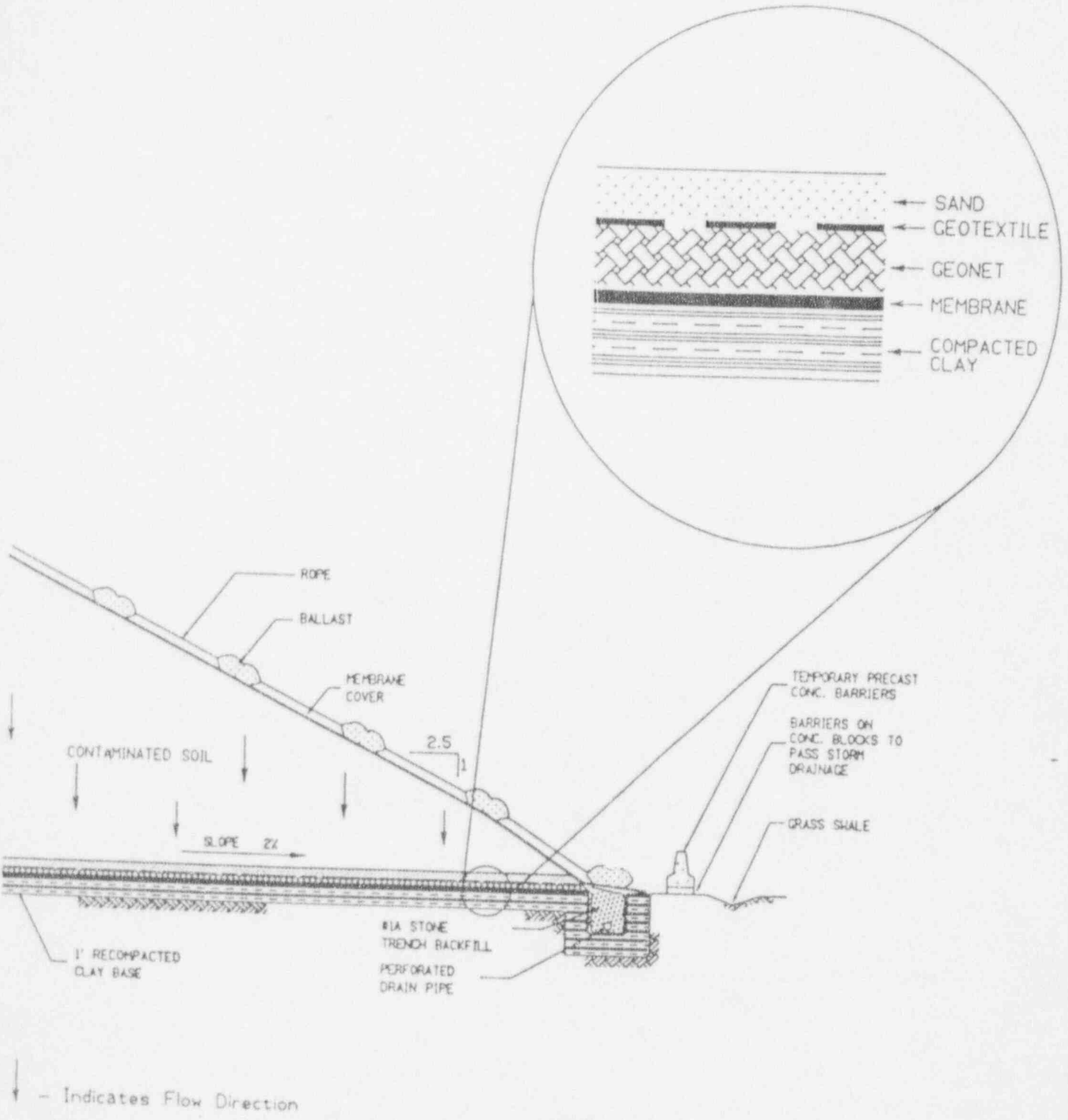

Figure 3 - Typical Cross Section of CSCA

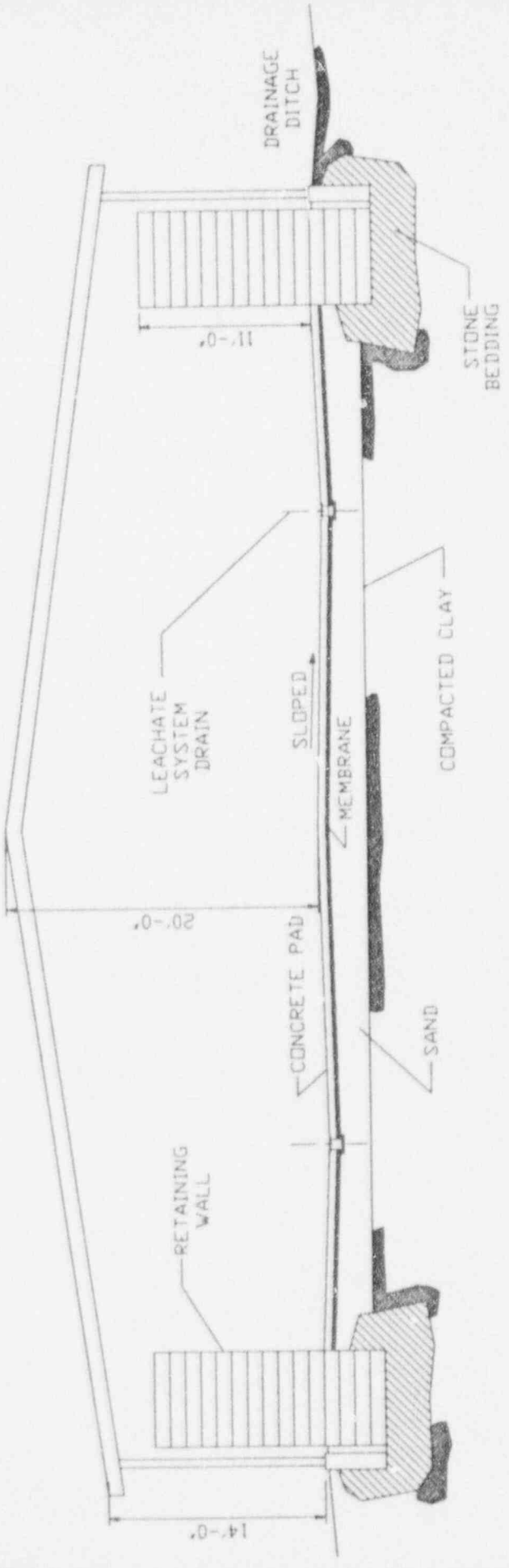

Figure 4 - Design Alternative