

March 11, 1998

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Jackson
FROM: John C. Hoyle /s/
SUBJECT: COMSAJ-98-002 - COMMENTS ON THE 1998 STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITY ISSUES FOR THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR WASTE

This memorandum is to inform you that all Commissioners have concurred in your proposed response to the ACNW with the changes as indicated in the attached letter.

This completes action on COMSAJ-98-002.

Attachment: As stated

cc: Commissioner Dicus
Commissioner Diaz
Commissioner McGaffigan
ACNW
OGC

NOTE: THIS SRM, COMSAJ-98-002, AND THE VOTES OF ALL COMMISSIONERS WILL BE MADE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE 5 WORKING DAYS FROM THE DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THE LETTER.

B. John Garrick, Chairman
Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Garrick:

Subject: Comments on the 1998 Strategic Plan and Priority Issues for the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste

This responds to your letter dated December 23, 1997 that provided a copy of the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste (ACNW) Strategic Plan. The Commission would first like to thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on your Strategic Plan. As a result of our review, we had the following general comments.

The Commission commends you for linking your goals to the goals, strategies, and substrategies in the NRC's Strategic Plan. The NRC's Strategic Assessment and Rebaselining Initiative was intended to provide a sound foundation for the agency's direction and decision-making for the rest of this decade and into the next. Linking your goals to that of the agency's will ensure that the ACNW's priorities will facilitate the NRC accomplishing its priorities in the area of nuclear waste. However, the Commission recommends that your Strategic Plan be modified to reflect all the objectives, scope, and duties outlined in the ACNW Charter. Specifically, the plan is silent on the ACNW's role in advising the NRC on legislative mandates and interacting with representatives of ACRS, other Federal agencies, State and local agencies, Indian Tribes, private organizations, and other organizations, as appropriate.

We understand that the ACNW operating plan is being developed to support the Strategic Plan which contains a set of clear metrics for ACNW activities. Where appropriate, specific timeliness goals, such as in providing advice to the Commission, should be included.

Use of the "Strategic Plan" terminology implies that this Plan is part of NRC's overall Strategic Planning Process required by the Government Performance Review Act (GPRA). GPRA imposes considerable administrative requirements such as the development of a performance plan and operating plan. Therefore, the ACNW Strategic Plan should be considered as a performance criterion, required of all NRC independent oversight committees, as directed by the Commission on DSI-19 -- Independent Oversight -- and not a Strategic Plan in terms of GPRA.

Finally, the Commission notes that the second-tier priority assigned to the low level waste (LLW) issues by the ACNW may well need to be revisited in light of the number of complex LLW issues which the staff is currently addressing. Areas where the Commission would benefit from ACNW advice include the Trojan waste classification, issues surrounding Envirocare and generic criticality issues at LLW sites, and setting appropriate standards for clearance levels of materials.

Again, thank you for providing the Commission an opportunity to comment on your Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,
Shirley Ann Jackson