



THE WEST VALLEY CITIZEN TASK FORCE

April 16, 2013

Ms. Tanya Berquam and
Ms. Loraine Heckenberg
United States House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies
The Capitol, H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Berquam and Ms. Heckenberg,

We want to express our sincere thanks to you for taking the time to meet with us in early February. We met with the full Citizen Task Force (CTF) on March 27 and reported on our meetings with you and David Huizenga and his staff at the Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management.

The CTF is well aware of the fiscal constraints that the country faces and the fact that the administration and congress need to prioritize funding decisions. That being said, the CTF hopes the West Valley Demonstration Project receives funding at an adequate level to accomplish the Phase 1 work, and plan for the Phase 2 decision as scheduled. We have made the following points to DOE:

1. **Short-term savings will increase long-term costs.** Reductions in funding from planned levels will increase costs in the long-term as a result of delays.
One prime example given at the meeting is that millions of dollars should not be wasted on a new roof for the Main Plant building. That building is overdue to be taken down and must be demolished in the immediate future during Phase 1 activities.
2. **Completion of Vitrification should result in accelerated decommissioning, not delayed decommissioning.** West Valley has been a responsible steward of its funds and has removed or reduced a number of the significant hazards. Some of the work, such as vitrification, that was piloted at this small but complex site is now benefiting the rest of the DOE complex. One of the consequences of reducing risk from hazards such as liquid high-level waste is that, under the integrated priority list system, West Valley is less likely to receive funds to finish the cleanup in a timely manner. In other words, doing good work makes it harder to finish the cleanup.
3. **A global impact.** While the risk may be lower now, it has not been eliminated. The two burial grounds contain a significant inventory of long-lived radionuclides and a mixture of other hazardous material. Although the final determination with respect to this is a Phase 2 decision, in the interim the grounds are at risk from the increasing frequency and duration of severe weather events. Downstream from the burial grounds lie the Great Lakes which contain 21% of the *world's* surface freshwater supply. Contamination of these water bodies from a release would be catastrophic not only for the people and environment in the region but also the United States and Canada.

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West Valley should not be considered a small site, a low risk site, or a problem site. Rather it should be considered a wise investment and an opportunity. It is a *wise investment* because funds spent now will save funds in the future and bring the site closer to closure. It is an *opportunity* because action now will reduce or eliminate future risk to a global resource of fresh water. It is an *opportunity* where DOE can pilot new techniques and technologies on exhumation and other issues at a complex site and use the lessons to more effectively and expeditiously cleanup other sites within the complex. We hope the Committee will recognize this and support the Citizen Task Force in influencing DOE to make the right decision.

Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,



William Dallas



Michael Hutchinson



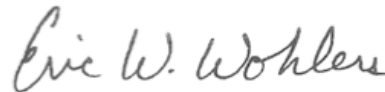
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On behalf of the West Valley Citizen Task Force