



**West Valley
Citizen
Task
Force**

April 26, 2002

Ms. Jesse Roberson
Assistant Secretary, Environmental Management
U.S. Department of Energy
Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

RE: Accelerated Cleanup Plan

Dear Ms. Roberson:

The members of the West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) have serious reservations about the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Accelerated Cleanup Plan for West Valley, and the fact that stakeholders' comments were not solicited before the plan was announced. We also have concerns about the West Valley Nuclear Service Company (WVNSCO) contract. It's clear you have concluded that the extension of the existing WVNSCO contract is the best method of fulfilling DOE's responsibilities at West Valley.

We've been told that this proposed contract extension and accelerated cleanup is based on a need to take advantage of the momentum that currently exists on the decontamination work (in order to avoid unnecessarily impeding progress). We have also been told that in order to streamline the way DOE-Environmental Management does business, Congress has been asked to establish an \$800 million fund to support acceleration of cleanup projects. If Congress appropriates such a fund, West Valley could compete for a portion of such a fund by showing acceleration and cost savings.

We are uncomfortable with both decisions: the extension of the contract and acceleration of the work. Performance of the present site contractor, WVNSCO, on the high-level waste vitrification, has been satisfactory as far as we know. Their policy has appeared to be cautious, with the protection of the local environment, and public health and safety being given top priority. It has never appeared that actions at the project were driven by a hurried time frame simply to qualify for incentives. The CTF believes that speed can be very costly. DOE's performance on other projects with managing fast-track contracts and incentives, as well as overseeing contractors, has been embarrassing. Therefore, we believe this to be an unacceptable strategy.

In addition, WVNSCO is not the same company since the Washington Group International took over in 1999. Although many of its same principals are still involved, their priorities may not be the same. We are not familiar enough with the newly formed company to evaluate its track record. We have recently witnessed a large personnel cut back and are aware of present eagerness to accelerate the decontamination work and extend the WVNSCO contract.

The question we have is will WVNSCO perform satisfactorily in the future. The West Valley site has many problems that are equally important to the clean up, and



the local health and safety of the community. The CTF does not want to slow down the clean up or impede the safe progress, but moving in a fast, unsure direction for possible monetary benefit is not reasonable.

For the past 20 years, federal, state, local, and public cooperation has helped make the WVDP a success. This spirit of cooperation must continue for the many years that remain. Foregoing public input with a plan to accelerate the cleanup at West Valley seems contrary to the kind of cooperation we are used to. Therefore, we strongly encourage the DOE to take a closer look to avoid what could be another fast-track embarrassment.

Sincerely,

William T. King
Town of Ashford Supervisor
On behalf of the West Valley Citizen Task Force

