



## INL Site Environmental Management

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February 18, 2011

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State of Idaho

Mark Lindholm

Idaho Cleanup Project

### Support Staff

North Wind Services

1425 Higham Street

Idaho Falls, ID 83402

Phone 208.557.7886

Fax 208.557.7899

Dr. Inés R. Triay

Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management

U.S. Department of Energy

1000 Independence Ave., S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Assistant Secretary Triay:

The Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site Environmental Management Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) is very pleased with the progress of the Idaho Cleanup Project. We recognize and commend the significant accomplishments made in reactor and spent fuel reprocessing, facility deactivation and decommissioning, buried transuranic waste exhumation, contact- and remote-handled transuranic waste disposition, spent fuel transfer from wet to dry storage, and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act cleanup activities. This work is critical to protecting the Snake River Plain Aquifer, and the cleanup contractor and workforce have performed this work with one of the best safety records in the Department of Energy complex.

The CAB hopes that the Department and Congress will consider the potential impact of inadequate funding and staff reductions on the performance of these highly trained cleanup crews – impacts that could negatively affect safety as well as production. The CAB requests that the Department consider this excellent performance during budget deliberations on the Idaho cleanup acquisition strategy, post-FY 2012.

In the past five years, the CAB has seen significant improvement in safety, cleanup progress, open and frequent communication, and relationships with regulators, all contributing to a spirit of cooperation. We understand that the Department has recently developed a plan for accelerating and largely completing the cleanup of the INL Site by the end of FY 2015 and believes the plan will:

- Complete the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act closure of the sodium bearing waste tanks
- Exhume all buried waste and process sodium-contaminated remote-handled transuranic waste
- Ship all contact- and remote-handled transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
- Deactivate and decommission the Tank Farm facilities at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC) and install a temporary protective cap over the Tank Farm
- Ship all Experimental Breeder Reactor II fuel from INTEC to the INL facilities at the Materials and Fuels Complex, resulting in significant cost savings to the taxpayer.

The CAB wholeheartedly supports such a plan, which would enable Idaho to be the first of the three remaining large sites in the complex to complete cleanup of the last significant, contaminated areas and facilities.

We hope that the Department and Congress can see the wisdom of resisting cuts of a few million dollars now and increasing funding modestly from FY 2012 to FY 2015, to achieve both environmental risk reduction and a savings of over \$2 billion in life-cycle cleanup costs. In addition to protecting the Aquifer, this cleanup work will enable the INL Site to further its Nuclear Energy Research and Development Mission and minimize the considerable number of layoffs projected for the end of FY 2012, instead providing the funding to continue the important cleanup work at the Site, while retaining the talented workforce in Idaho. We believe that deferral of these reductions to 2015 will provide a more gradual off-ramp, for these workers, due to other growing nuclear projects both at the INL lab and a major commercial upstart in eastern Idaho.

The CAB recommends that the Department provide, and Congress support, an increase in funding to the Idaho FY 2012 Environmental Management budget request from \$412 million to \$460 million, a total increase of \$48 million. Maintaining this \$460 million funding level through FY 2015 will allow the Idaho Cleanup Project to complete the cleanup mission 9 to 10 years earlier, resulting in life-cycle savings of over \$2 billion. Most importantly, we believe this will provide stability over the next 4 to 5 years for the project workers and the citizens of Idaho.

The significant life-cycle cost savings combined with accelerated cleanup results and potential job preservation would be a tremendous achievement for the Department, the State of Idaho, and all stakeholders. The CAB members eagerly await your decisions and actions on this important venture and stand ready to support you.

Regards,



R.D. Maynard  
Chair

cc: Senator Mike Crapo  
Senator James Risch  
Representative Mike Simpson  
Rick Provencher, DOE-ID  
Merle Sykes, DOE-HQ  
Jim Cooper, DOE-ID  
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