



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

July 27, 2006

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Bryan C. Bower, Director
U.S. Department of Energy
West Valley Demonstration Project
10282 Rock Springs Road
West Valley, NY 14171-9799

SUBJECT: NRC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE DECONTAMINATION, DEMOLITION, AND REMOVAL OF VARIOUS FACILITIES AT THE WEST VALLEY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT (DOE/EA-1552), DATED JUNE 26, 2006

Dear Mr. Bower:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has conducted a programmatic review of the subject document and offers the enclosed comments to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for consideration.

NRC supports DOE's timely efforts to decontaminate, dismantle, and remove facilities that are no longer needed. We recognize that the facilities subject to the Environmental Assessment are either free of radiological contamination or contamination is limited in extent and/or amount and they are separate from the facilities to be evaluated in the "Environmental Impact Statement for Decommissioning and/or Long-Term Stewardship at the West Valley Demonstration Project and Western New York Nuclear Service Center" currently under development.

If you have any question regarding the enclosed comments, please contact Chad Glenn of my staff at (301) 415-6722.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith I. McConnell".

Keith I. McConnell, Deputy Director
Division of Waste Management
and Environmental Protection
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety
and Safeguards

B. C. Bower

2

Enclosure: NRC Comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Decontamination, Demolition, and Removal of Various Facilities at the West Valley Demonstration Project (DOE/EA-1552), Dated June 26, 2006

cc: R. Armstrong, Seneca Nation of Indians
P. Giardina, USEPA
S. Hammond, NYSDEC
P. Piciulo, NYSERDA
A. Salame-Alfie, NYSDOH

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NRC Comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Decontamination, Demolition, and Removal of Various Facilities at the West Valley Demonstration Project

1. Dismantlement of West Valley Demonstration Project Facilities

During the period that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has exclusive use and possession of the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) facilities, it should ensure that provisions exist for the continued monitoring and surveillance of site activities, and that facilities necessary for site decommissioning are retained.

2. Cleanup Levels for Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Decommissioning

Section 1.1 of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) states that DOE proposes to demolish and remove 42 unneeded and unused buildings and other structures at the WVDP, DOE would decontaminate any facilities as needed, and the various wastes resulting from decontamination and demolition would be transported off-site for disposal at licensed commercial or DOE disposal facilities. DOE should be mindful that cleanup levels established for remediation under the draft EA may be different from those established for site decommissioning. Therefore, any decontaminated facilities or remediated soils that are not removed prior to site decommissioning may be subject to further remediation based on cleanup levels established for site decommissioning. Further, clean soils placed over such areas may need to be exhumed potentially resulting in the generation of additional waste.

3. Benefit of Radiation Surveys to Support Subsequent Decommissioning

Appendix A of the draft EA describes each of the 42 facilities and provides general information on whether the particular facility is radiologically contaminated. In the discussion of the proposed action (Section 2.1, page 15), the draft EA indicates that DOE would perform radiation surveys/sampling before and after decontamination activities to characterize radiation levels. DOE should also consider the potential benefit of this type of information to support subsequent decommissioning activities (e.g., historical site assessment, characterization surveys, and final status surveys). If survey and sampling activities under this EA can be used to support subsequent decommissioning activities, they should be designed with that benefit in mind.

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Enclosure