

February 8, 2007

Ms. Leonore Lambert
West Valley Citizen Task Force
Melinda Holland and Associates
31 Bessie Lane
Columbus, North Carolina 28722

Dear Ms. Lambert:

I am responding on behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to your letter to Chairman Klein, dated December 22, 2006. Your letter, submitted on behalf of the West Valley Citizen Task Force, expresses concern about the continued spread of the strontium-90 groundwater plume at the West Valley site and the actions taken by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to address the plume. Your letter urges the NRC to "...take steps to compel DOE to immediately begin development of a plan to remediate the source of the plume" and requests that "...future NRC monitoring visits consider/acknowledge the inevitability of human health risks associated with further unchecked spread of the plume...."

The West Valley Demonstration Project Act (WVDP Act) prescribes a consultative role for NRC, which includes monitoring DOE's actions for the purpose of ensuring the public health and safety. This role was formalized in a 1981 DOE-NRC Memorandum of Understanding. The WVDP Act does not provide to the NRC regulatory authority to direct DOE's activities at the site, including activities associated with the strontium-90 plume.

The NRC believes appropriate steps are currently being taken to ensure the public health and safety with regard to the strontium-90 plume. As noted in the NRC's monitoring report for April 2006, the plume does not represent an imminent threat to public health and safety. Based on DOE environmental monitoring data available in April 2006, the potential dose to the off-site member of the public most likely to receive the greatest exposure was conservatively calculated to be less than 1 millirem per year, well below regulatory limits. DOE is monitoring the plume and continuing pump and treat activities to mitigate its spread. However, consistent with our consultative role, NRC has offered several recommendations for DOE's consideration to enhance the effectiveness of its monitoring program for the strontium-90 plume.

Your letter also states that the remediation of the plume's source must be addressed in the West Valley decommissioning Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In March 2006, involved Federal and State agencies reviewed and submitted comments on a predecisional draft EIS that contained evaluations of options for remediating and monitoring the plume. Also, in conjunction with the development of the EIS, DOE has initiated a Core Team process to resolve outstanding technical issues. The Core Team approach is a formalized, consensus-based process in which individuals with decision-making authority work collaboratively to reach agreement on technical issues. A number of the Federal and State agencies involved in the review of the draft EIS are also participating in this process. DOE has identified the strontium-90 plume as one of the technical issues to be addressed in this forum. The Core

Team process is a responsible approach for addressing and reaching consensus on effective options for resolving this, and other significant technical issues in the decommissioning EIS.

I want to assure you that NRC takes its consultative role for West Valley very seriously. The NRC staff will continue to conduct periodic monitoring visits and follow DOE's monitoring program to assess potential impacts to public health and safety from DOE's activities at the site, especially as they pertain to control and mitigation of the groundwater plume.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-7197, or Larry Camper at (301) 415-7437.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Charles L. Miller, Director
Office of Federal and State Materials
and Environmental Management Programs