Comments Submitted During Public Hearings
Hood River Transcripts (THR)

Public Hearing May 14, 2003 – Hood River, Oregon

DOE meetings/hearings to acquire comments on the Revised Draft Hanford Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Management Program Environmental Impact Statement were conducted in a combination of forums to allow full participation of the audience and commenters. The overall forum consisted of periods for introductions, presentations, informal question and answer sections, panel discussions, and formal comment periods. The identification of comments from the transcripts of these meetings required close reading and interpretation. The results are shown in the identification of formal comment speakers, numbering of comments related to the revised HSW EIS, and bar-coding of copies of the transcripts contained in Volume IV of the HSW EIS. Information in the transcripts related to those informal portions of the meetings are not numbered or bar-coded and do not constitute formal comments. Formal responses to this information were not prepared.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REVISED DRAFT HANFORD SITE SOLID
(RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS)
WASTE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(HSW EIS)

PUBLIC MEETING

MAY 14, 2003
7:00 P.M.
HOOD RIVER INN BEST WESTERN
1108 EAST MARINA WAY
HOOD RIVER, OREGON

BRIDGES & ASSOCIATES
Certified Shorthand Reporters
P. O. Box 223
Pendleton, Oregon 97801
(541) 276-9491 - (800) 358-2345

Introductions

MR. GREG deBRULER: Good evening. My name is Greg deBruler and I represent Columbia River Keeper. It used to be Columbia River United.

We have worked on this issue for Hanford for, what, 14 years now since the signing of the Tri-Party Agreement.

I want to thank you all for coming. Tonight we are going to be talking about the Hanford Solid Waste EIS, which will we get into a little bit more.

Dee Willis is the facilitator. He is going to help facilitate the discussions, keep people moving along. And then we also would like to have the State of Oregon, do you want to say hello?

MR. THOMAS STOOPS: We will just have comments along with everybody else.

MR. GREG deBRULER: The State of Oregon is here. Tom Stoops is representing the State of Oregon. He is a hydrologist. He will be giving comments tonight.

And with that, I think we are ready. Here we go. Thank you for coming.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks, Greg.

Introductions (contd)

As Greg said, I am Dee Willis. I will be the facilitator. My job is to make sure you have an opportunity to speak tonight, and say what you think. This is the --

Oh, housekeeping. Restrooms back there through that entrance there. Okay? Water in the back.

This is the fifth of six public meetings held by the Department of Energy on the revised draft of the Hanford Solid Waste Environmental Impact Statement. We are here because DOE listened to you a year ago. Well, a few months ago, and said we are going to do it over again. So I think that's testimony to the power of public involvement.

Thanks for being here. The purpose -- the main purpose of the meeting tonight is to get your comments about the revised draft.

The comments we get from you tonight, along with DOE's responses, will be addressed as part of the Final EIS.

There are several ways to offer comments on the draft. You can talk tonight. You can provide us written comments. And there

Introductions (contd)

are written comment forms on that back table. Just write them up and give them to any of the people at the table over there, or to Yvonne Sherman.

Yvonne, where are you?

MS. YVONNE SHERMAN: Over this way.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Right there. There's a fact sheet at the back table, too, that gives you all kinds of addresses, telephone numbers, E-mail addresses. You can also send comments via E-mail.

We are going to record your comments tonight verbatim by audiotape, and also by court reporter. Two ways.

So, because of that, when you speak we are going to ask you to talk into the mike. There is a lot of related information on the back table. Help yourselves.

Agenda. Pretty simple agenda. Multi colored. We are doing the intro now.

After the introduction, DOE's going to have a brief presentation. That's Mike Collins. And by the way, this is a curious crowd usually in Hood River, and you've got a

Introductions (contd); Presentations

lot of questions, and that's great. I'm going to ask you to let Mike finish his presentation before you ask questions. We will have a brief question and asking period after Mike finishes.

After the DOE presentation, we will get some EPA comments from Nick Ceto. Nick, are you here tonight?

MR. NICHOLAS CETO: Yes.

MR. DEE WILLIS: All right. After that we will here from Columbia River Keeper, their perspective on the EIS. And then we will get from you, get some public comments, straight up public comments.

After that we will get more informal, we will have a panel involving DOE, Greg, and who else is going to be on the panel? Heart of America. Yeah.

All right. Any questions about the agenda? No hitting, kicking, scratching. I am sorry. Those are Seattle ground rules. Not for you.

All right. That's it. We'll go on to the DOE presentation. Mike Collins.

(Mr. Collins made presentation).

MR. DEE WILLIS: Are there any

Informal Question and Answer Section

factual questions about Mike's presentation? Ma'am?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you were giving the totals of the waste, what did you say, 750 cubic meters?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Thousand cubic meters, plus 340,000 cubic meters.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What kind of space does that represent?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: For the low-level waste, if you were to add all the off-site waste and on-site waste, assuming we got all that off-site waste, we would be looking at a football field 146 feet tall.

For mixed low-level waste, 103 feet tall.

And transuranic waste, 35 feet tall.

For this immobilized low-activity waste, which is completely a new part of this Environmental Impact Statement, something, 157 feet tall.

And then for that 280,000 cubic meters that's already in the ground, 206 feet tall.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Other factual

Informal Question and Answer Section (contd)

questions?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Cyndy had one.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Cyndy. Here is the mike, Cyndy.

MS. CYNDY deBRULER: The public's heard that there were 70,000 truck loads approximately that could come from this proposal.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Uh-huh.

MS. CYNDY deBRULER: As I recall, in the first round you had said that it could actually be higher than that.

Is that accurate, or is that changed?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: No. 70,000 was based on a Heart of America estimate. It's within the order of magnitude that we say. The EIS actually says if we got the whole volume, it's somewhere around 25,000.

Same order of magnitude, so it is still a lot.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Mike, would you clarify the notion of truck loads. Truck loads of what?

Informal Question and Answer Section (contd)

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Oh. Truck loads of waste coming to Hanford.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Okay. Other factual questions?

MS. IRENE FIELDS: Irene Fields. You said about 750,000 cubic meters of waste that has been or will be generated at Hanford.

Is Hanford still generating waste?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: It is generating some as a result of cleanup actions. What happens, as you literally, you go in there in your protective outfits, and those get contaminated themselves, so you don't reuse them. So you end up creating some waste.

In addition some of the waste is already there. For example, 10,000 cubic meters of the transuranic waste is waste we plan on digging up from an existing burial ground.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Other factual questions?

Okay. We will go to Nick Ceto.

MR. NICHOLAS CETO: Thanks, Mike. Nick Ceto, Environmental Protection

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Presentation; THR-0001

Agency.

(Mr. Ceto made presentation).

MR. DEE WILLIS: Questions for Nick.

MS. JUDY NELSON: Judy Nelson. You said you were going to vitrify the radioactive water?

MR. NICHOLAS CETO: No. Well, first off, EPA isn't doing any work. It's DOE. But their proposal was to vitrify the tank waste.

MS. JUDY NELSON: So do you evaporate it first? How do you vitrify water?

MR. NICHOLAS CETO: Yeah. Well, it wouldn't be -- It would be managed to a -- There is an evaporator in the treatment loop, and it would basically take the sludges that are there, the water that's there, add different things to it. So they end up with I guess almost a slurry that would be ultimately vitrified.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Other factual questions? Thanks, Nick.

Greg deBruler.

THR-0001 MR. GREG deBRULER: Hi, there.

THR-0001 (contd)

You all know who I am so I don't need to tell you who I am anymore.

My job with Columbia River Keeper is to do the analytical work, ask the questions that people who live in the Northwest want to know one thing, are they going to clean up Hanford, will you be able to use the site when they are done cleaning it up, will you be able to use the groundwater, will you be able to use the river, and will the ecosystem, and all the little critters, be protected. Kind of a logical question.

So my job is to find out on these goals that they are trying to do now, ship more waste into here, does it make sense, and with this one tonight, it's called the Hanford Solid Waste EIS.

The National Environmental Policy Act says real clearly and very simply that the Department of Energy, if they are going to make a major action like this, has to consider all the potential ramifications of the risks that are out there from adding more waste.

But it also says that if you have a waste site like Hanford, think of Hanford as

THR-0001 (contd)

being highly contaminated, that you have to look at the existing waste.

So, I will give you just a few quick slides here to kind of paint a picture of what we are talking about.

This is the Hanford Site. And if you look up at the green, they call that now the central plateau. That was where they did all the processing to make the plutonium for the bomb.

Hanford in that core zone there, the green and out to the reactor sites is the most contaminated site in the Western Hemisphere. Just think North America. It's highly contaminated. So contaminated it could cost literally hundreds of billions of dollars to clean it up if they do it right.

So, the logical question that's being asked is, from a lay person, is why would anybody want to dump more waste there?

And that gets back to what the Department of Energy is planning. Because for every reason they do something, there's something pushing them.

About two and a half years ago the

THR-0001 (contd)

Department of Energy, well, when George Bush came into office, the Department of Energy changed their strategy, and it's called accelerated cleanup. And the Under Secretary of Energy, after being in office for about six months, wrote a letter to the Office of Management and Budget, it's called the bank, literally, they are the ones that check off, you know, are you spending money right and all of those things.

And they said, this is what we are going to do. We are going to reduce the cost of cleanup by 100 billion dollars.

Remember, this lady had been in office for about six months. We are going to cut time to clean up by 30 years. That's kind of lofty. They are going to save us taxpayers money, they are going to get the job done faster. Sounds great, right? And we are going to shrink the size of the USDOE complex by 40 percent by 2006.

I forgot how many sites are there in the complex?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: She is responsible for 104 or something like that.

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THR-0001 (contd)

MR. GREG deBRULER: 104 sites. So 46, 44 of those sites are going to go away. And they are all over the United States.

And by the way, we are going to eliminate the need to vitrify 75 percent of all the high-level waste at Hanford. And Hanford has 53 million gallons. Well, that's a lofty goal.

And my way of looking at it was, how could you technically say you are going to do that? And if you are going to say that, give me the technical analysis that's been done that shows that you can actually achieve that.

They never did that. But today they are coming to you and they are saying, they want to ship up to 70,000 truck loads of more waste to Hanford.

Well, they want to ship more waste to Hanford because they want to reduce 40 percent of the site by 2006.

So, in the EIS they are being asked to analyze this. And I have spent some time now in the last week and a half to go through and look at it, to see if they are doing the things that's required by law.

THR-0001 (contd)

200 Area. This is an example of the waste that's been dumped in the ground. About 500 billion gallons, 450 billion. You've got all sorts of stuff here, strontium, uranium, technetium, all stuff with fancy names, radioactive. Some of it will last a very, very long time. Iodine 129 will last for 17 million years. So, a long time. Uranium 238, which they say isn't a problem, we call it depleted uranium, lasts for 4.3 billion years, a long time.

But in their infinite wisdom, they it want to add more waste. So, as you look at their EIS, you want to make sure they do the proper analysis.

Well, here is another problem. We have got 177 high-level waste tanks which hold 53 million gallons of waste. Of that 53 million gallons of waste, over a million gallons, let's say a million-plus, has leaked into the ground.

Here is kind of a schematic pictograph showing you it has leaked into the ground.

They are doing a Solid Waste EIS.

THR-0001 (contd)

Remember, the barrels over here, you know, that stuff, and they are putting it in the ground. But they aren't talking to you about the liquid waste that's leaked under the tank and they aren't talking about the waste that they are going to leave in the tanks, because they aren't going to vit. 75 percent of it, and they aren't encompassing all of this in this big EIS that's supposed to look at the long-term protection of the groundwater, of the river, and the future users.

Remember that thing he showed us, this big football field?

Can you imagine in the year, 100 years from now, which they estimate two million more people will be living out there, can you imagine in 200 years, beautiful scenic Columbia River, gorgeous weather, two million people, two and a half million people living there, somebody's up there digging around, comes into this football field. Hello. He digs down. The next thing you know, it ruins their day.

In their EIS they aren't looking at compaction. They aren't telling the shipper out there in the other sites, the 40 percent,

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THR-0001 (contd)

by the way, we want you to compact that down like your trash compactor at home. Make a big bag into a small one, and then ship it to us. Because it's much cheaper for them to do one thing. Ship it to Hanford, drop it in the ground, and say good-bye to it. Is this what we want for the Northwest?

Are they doing the analysis to find out if they are going to be truly protective?

Here is what happens when you dump the stuff. It goes into the ground, moves into the groundwater, and eventually goes into the Columbia River.

Here is a picture of the radioactive contamination. This is, pardon me, of all the contaminants at the Hanford Site. This is the groundwater plumes that are at Hanford, of which there is 180 square miles of groundwater that's already contaminated.

You just heard EPA saying that they have no intention of cleaning up the groundwater yet. There's no plans to clean it up. In their analysis they never assumed that it would ever be cleaned up. And they just say to you in the future and everybody else in the

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THR-0001 (contd)

1 future generations, you can't drink it, you
2 can't use it.
3 But they fail to analyze in the EIS,
4 what is the cost of the loss of that resource.
5 What is the cost of one acre-foot in today's
6 dollars, in a dry, arid climate with
7 agriculture, what's it going to be worth in 100
8 years, 200 years, 300 years, or a thousand
9 years? No analysis. None.
10 So, what do they say? They default
11 to the future and say, you can't use the water.
12 Is that what they are supposed to be doing in
13 the EIS? Nah.
14 Here is the radioactive
15 contamination that basically shows you another
16 perspective of radiation. And here is their
17 prediction in one of the models that they do to
18 run what they think the future will look like,
19 that they use, this is the year 2060, the dark
20 red is basically high cancer rates, folks,
21 reaching the river.
22 So they already predict that in the
23 future you are going to have a big problem.
24 But yet they want to ship more waste.
25 So, when you are thinking about

THR-0001 (contd)

this, like I said, what I had to do was go back and talk and think and look and check and see if they are doing all of this work that they are supposed to be doing.

Now I am going to back up for a second. This evening you saw somebody walk in here that was "mourning openness."

I have to commend the Department of Energy today, under NEPA, they are here. They are actually having a public meeting. Are you happy? You know, they are here. Good. I'm glad they are here.

But the problem is, is that the

3 state of Washington, the state of Oregon, the Hanford Advisory Board, Columbia River Keeper, Heart of America Northwest, and I don't know how many others.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: The Umatilla Indians.

MR. GREG deBRULER: The Umatilla Indian nation, solvereign nation, sovereign government, asked the Department of Energy for at least a 30 day extension. Why?

Because they gave us a 3,000 page document and said, here, go look at it.

THR-0001 (contd)

Folks, it's on the table back there. You've got CD's. You have until May 27th to look at it. Hurry up and do it, do your homework and comment.

NEPA says real clearly by the law you have to have adequate time to assimilate

3 it, to do the work, to do the analysis, to engage the public, because it's their resource, and that's why NEPA, the federal law, says that.

As far as I'm concerned, they are violating it. That's another issue.

I just want to let you know that we are very upset. That's why we are saying, here, shame on you, we want openness. We don't want secrecy. We want public involvement. We want to go back to the way the Department of Energy used to do business, before this administration changed and decided they wanted to go behind closed doors.

So, enough on that one. When we think about transportation risks, they did a Waste Management Programmatic EIS. Okay? Big word. 1997 they release that document. It looked at all of the complex, all the hundred

THR-0001 (contd)

sites, whatever, added them all up and said, we've got a bunch of waste here, we've got to ship it here, ship it here, ship it here, and they did their transportation risk scenarios. They said, we'll ship "x" amount of trucks to Hanford, "x" amount of trucks to Nevada, "x" amount of trucks to Savannah River, and the risk of a wreck will be X, X, X, and they wrote it off and said that's their analysis.

Well, it might have been good in 1997. But in the year 2003, after 9-11, the whole world has been changed differently. We don't look at transportation like we used to. Homeland security is a whole new office and has a whole new responsibility, but yet in this EIS they failed to assess the true transportation risk that might occur.

For example, state of Washington said, we've got nine bridges in the state -- pardon me, State of Oregon, we've got nine bridges that we have a concern of overweight loads. When they ship this transuranic waste, which is the stuff that we will say it's in barrels that's radioactive, the remote handled stuff, the hot stuff, according to their

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THR-0001 (contd)

numbers, says that if you are sitting beside
it, by it on a highway, if it was parked there
and I was like sitting here for an hour, just
4 looking at you for an hour, I'd get 20 chest
x-rays, something like that, on a low case.
But what they haven't done is they
haven't analyzed the fact that they can't use,
because these bridges can't support it, that
they are going to have to take a route and come
through some municipality. So they didn't do
that in their analysis.
Another thing they didn't really
5 look at is what is the potential for terrorist
attack for dirty bombs. Now, I am not a
terrorist. You all know that. So I am going
to say something tonight, so don't report to
Tom Ridge or whatever his name is. If I was a
terrorist, and I wanted to make a dirty bomb, I
would take a transuranic waste cask. Because
it's highly radioactive. I mean, that is a
big object. They are big, big, big things. I
mean, they look like they are dangerous. It
doesn't look like a regular truck driving down
the road, you know.
So, I said to myself, you know, look

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THR-0001 (contd)

it, all we are asking you to do is do the analysis.

Do I think it's going to happen? No. I personally don't believe it. I think they are going to ship this stuff, and I think there is probably very little risk, and the bottom line, it will probably be shipped safely, but they are required by law to do all of these analyses. They are required to look at Hanford completely for all the waste that's there, look at Hanford like you are going to use the groundwater. Look at all the waste that they have at Hanford, all at one time, and say, how are we cleaning it up, are our cleanup actions going to protect this, and if they aren't, what are the risks? Do all of that analysis.

Now they want to add more waste. Then they have to that analysis and they have to lay in on the top of it the new waste and analyze that. But they also have to take the tank waste, and they are doing a Tank Waste EIS that won't even be completed until, the draft will come out in September, and won't complete it until next year.

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THR-0001 (contd)

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So, they say they are doing a cumulative impact analysis, or cumulative impact assessment. They aren't. They are doing it piecemeal. They are looking at little parts of the puzzle, and they really want to do one thing.

Remember, I only have to show you that one. 40 percent of the sites need to be cleaned up by 2006, 40 percent need to be cleaned by 2006.

They want to have a Record of Decision issued by the end of July. They want to have a Record of Decision that says, we've done our analysis, we don't see any risk, we are going to ship this stuff.

By September they want to issue that Record of Decision, and they want to start moving the stuff. So, our role, my role is to do the analysis, to give the public comment, to give my technical comments, and then if they don't do the work, then we have the option to pull them into Federal Court and let a judge decide.

But we need the public to put your values into the process, because, remember one

THR-0001 (contd); Informal Question and Answer Section

thing, it's our Northwest. Because somebody in D.C. has got a different vision for the Northwest, that doesn't mean that's how we have to have it. We politically can change them. If we can't do it in court, we politically can change their decision.

So with that, I will get off my thing. If you have any comments, questions, feel free.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks, Greg. I want to go down to item 5 on the agenda, taking public competents. We can start doing that.

I want to remind you that you can either give comments now or you can wait. You can wait until after you hear some of the give and take and the panel discussion, where you ask questions, and give comments later. Or you can do both.

So, if I call your name in the next few minutes and you want to wait, just say pass, and I will come back to you. All right?

I'd like to take comments in this way. I want to ask people who have pressing concerns, pressing obligations at home, to talk

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Informal Question and Answer Section (contd)

first. After that, I will read your name in the order that you signed up to give comment. All right?

When you give comment, I'd appreciate it very much if you would limit your comments to five minutes. Most people can do it in far less than that. I will let you know when you have been talking three minutes, and then I will let you know when you have talked five minutes.

During the comment period I'd appreciate it very much, if you don't have any give and take questions and answers, it is just you talking to DOE, there will be give and take in the panel discussion part of the program tonight.

Any questions about the format approach? All right. Yes, sir?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you don't want question comments, you just want comments right now?

MR. DEE WILLIS: I want comments right now.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions?

THR-0002

MR. DEE WILLIS: No questions yet.

Any other questions about the approach?

All right. So, if you need to get home, if you have pressing concerns, obligations, would you raise your hand, and you want to make a comment. Raise your hand.

Okay. So we will start first with Amber Waldref, Heart of America.

One more thing. I'm sorry. When you start speaking, give us your name and affiliation. All right.

THR-0002 MS. AMBER WALDREF: Thanks. Hi. I am Amber Waldref with Heart of America Northwest, Hanford watch dog group.

I'm just going to give my comments and I have a few slides to show with them. I will get organized here.

So, like Greg was saying, we are also very dissatisfied with this Environmental Impact Statement, and we've done some analysis of the document, and I want to say why. We are still feeling like it's not meeting the needs under NEPA.