Panel Discussion (contd)

Oregon over 20 years have negotiated, or 15 years, whatever it is, a very strong program. That means that the risk is reduced, but it's not inherently safe.

And the second and the last point is: Unfortunately, when DOE doesn't consider those risks, and they haven't in this case, that's when states can go to court, citizen groups go to court, and we can stop them at least for the time being. And that's what we've done.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Just a statement here. I haven't said it a lot, but DOE and Gerry and Shelley and other folks are going to disagree on a lot of things, and this is one of them, so --

MR. DEE WILLIS: Ms. Roth, did you get your question answered?

MS. SANDRA ROTH: Uh-huh.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Who's next? Next question or comment.

MR. KEN NILES: Can I ask a question of Mike from Oregon Department of Transportation, if you would.

Do you have any plans for total

Panel Discussion (contd)

reconstruction of bridges that would require rerouting of all trucks on 84 in the near future?

MR. MIKE BARRY: Well, I saw your chart up there. What ODOT does, generally, and speaking on the freeways, we always try to stage traffic on the freeway.

Because in any community, sending all of the freeway traffic through a community, hazardous or not, is not a very popular option. So we spend a lot of money doing that.

There was a couple of places, I saw you mention 120-mile detour. We have some bridges that are cracking.

And as they crack, we monitor those structures and we make some engineering determinations about what kind of loads they can continue to carry.

Now, these structures right outside of La Grande, at one time, were clear down to 80,000 pounds, which is the basic load that is allowed for trucks on the interstate.

We oftentimes allow, in fact a lot of loads, up to 105,000 pounds. With an $8 permit you can carry that much extra.

Panel Discussion (contd)

But the rub is you also get to pay extra weight mile tax when you do that, so that's okay.

But in the long run, you know, we ran out there and we fixed that right away, so we could get that back up to the 105,000 pounds.

So those long detours are, generally speaking, the oversized loads in terms of weight, okay. So these loads, I would suspect, are going to be pretty much legal loads.

And as legal loads, they're going to stay on that route whenever possible. And for the most part, I think, on the interstate system, that means very short detours or staged construction so that we can allow that.

So out west here, we're going to detour all the traffic on to one structure, tear down that one, rebuild it, and then do the same to the other structure the next year.

And so we can keep those trucks on the route.

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: Mike, can you speak to the numbers? Because I think the last that I'd heard, we see between 15- and

Panel Discussion (contd)

18,000 cars, vehicles come through this valley a day; and about 8,000 of them, 6- to 8,000 are trucks.

MR. MIKE BARRY: It's 8,000 on the interstate here.

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: 8,000 a day, total.

MR. MIKE BARRY: Yeah. Island City strip, 16,000 -- or 1,600. 16,000, yeah.

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: 16,000.

MR. MIKE BARRY: Yeah. It's a lot of trucks. So on the interstate, it's 8,000. And we have one of the highest truck-to-car ratios in the country. We have 46 percent trucks on our interstate.

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: Thank you.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Next question. This is your chance to yell at the Government.

MR. KEN NILES: Dee, let me make one real quick comment. And this is for our facilitator and the rest of you.

Are you guys enjoying this format? I think it's great, this question and answer. And I would encourage Dee to try and use it in

Panel Discussion (contd)

other public meetings when the audience allows it and when it works good. But I'm enjoying this and I hope others are finding it informative.

MR. DEE WILLIS: We'll give you body armor in Seattle.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: And can I just add something. You need a better DOE public speaker up here for this kind of format.

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: Well, you're it.

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: My name is Jacque Lee-Oberteuffer. And I have a question, just so I know that we're speaking the language. I don't know what vitrification means.

And I'm hearing it at some Safeway store, the waste. And I'm just not clear. So I'd just like an explanation.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Basically what they do is they mix the waste with sand or frit or something like that, heat it up real high and so it turns into glass.

MR. DEE WILLIS: This is liquid waste.

Panel Discussion (contd)

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Liquid waste from the tanks is what they're proposing it for.

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: Does it actually have to --

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: No. They're building the vitrification plant right now. It's probably several years out. I don't know what their schedule is.

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: So is that supposed to make it less radioactive?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: No. But it contains it better.

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTUEFFER: It contains it. So it doesn't liquefy into the water table --

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: So it doesn't, called, what's leach out as easy.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Will you clarify the DEIS note about that?

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: Right.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Where it touches on vitrification is what's called the immobilized low-activity waste, which is a

Panel Discussion (contd)

fraction of the tank waste. And we do look at the disposal of that fraction of the tank waste.

MR. GERRY POLLET: Fraction is, to be exact, we're talking about moving, which is what I think Senator Wyden was referring to.

The Hanford cleanup agreement requires 100 percent of this waste to be glassified by the year 2028. All of the liquid waste, from these high-level waste tanks, 53 million gallons, million gallons, which is already --

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: So that means, opening up each tank?

MR. GERRY POLLET: Pumping it out, because a teaspoon full of this waste in this room would kill us all. It's so radioactive.

So it gets pumped out remotely and gets brought to the vitrification plant. The first vitrification plant they're building, it's a set of three really, but it's not going to be big enough to do all 53 million gallons by 2028.

And the administration has issued a

new set of goals that said that they would eliminate vitrification of 75 to 80 percent of the waste.

And that waste, instead of being glassified, they're talking about using cement and other things and burying it in these shallow trenches instead of glassifying it and having it stored retrievably for possibly going to deep underground geologic repository in Yucca Mountain, Nevada, or somewhere else.

So it would stay forever in Hanford's shallow trenches, 80 percent of the waste, it's not a fraction any more.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Did you get your question answered?

MS. JACQUE LEE-OBERTEUFFER: Yes.

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Just a little addition to that. Those alternative treatment technologies that Gerry was talking about, the grout and those sort of things, they're going to be discussed as part of another Environmental Impact Statement, which I believe you're going to have a chance to comment on in September. Don't quote me on

Panel Discussion (contd)

that date, but --

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: I guess I'd like to speak to that too, because really what's lacking in this huge document is a comprehensive understanding of all of the waste and its ultimate disposition at this site. And that's probably one of the biggest issues.

And I know one of the things we haven't touched on at all is groundwater. I think Owen mentioned, actually the fact that it's sitting on the basalt. I didn't realize you knew that. You get an A tonight.

But I attended meetings last week. Part of this document leans on what's called the System Assessment Capability, which is a model that is being touted.

And I know you would say that it isn't misrepresented. But I believe that people who don't understand what the limitations are of the SAC, the System Assessment Capability, do think that it is a one-size-fits-all for understanding groundwater movement. And it isn't.

And that's a very big concern, that we aren't able to quantify how groundwater is

Panel Discussion (contd)

moving at the site.

I attended meetings last week that were hosted by the Molecular Sciences Lab, and they were called the principle investigators workshops.

And this is an opportunity, four days of letting scientists roll out their latest research. And I sat in on the groundwater portions of it for a Tuesday afternoon, because I wanted to hear what the latest and greatest was.

And to a scientist, they began with the caveat: My motto won't comprehensively tell, you know, explain fate and transport of water at this site.

And we're looking at one, two, three, four -- there were suites of models that were being used by these scientists in very different ways; models that independently cannot begin to comprehensively describe what's going on with groundwater.

And collectively, I can't even begin to imagine how you could take them and utilize them and paint a picture of what's really going on on-site.

Panel Discussion (contd)

So that was very illuminating for me to go to those meetings and hear the cautionary note of those discussions.

The other piece that I want to mention again, it's very important, is this issue of points of compliance.

This is where we draw a line in the sand and we say "You've met a level at this point that's unaccepting. And anything beyond this physical location is unacceptable. We don't want to see waste move any further."

And it's imperative, as Dennis Faulk said from the Environmental Protection Agency, that we set those points of compliance at the operable unit boundaries, not a kilometer away where we'd have to wait 20 years for a plume to reach that point of compliance. And at that point, it would be impossible to --

MR. DEE WILLIS: Plume?

MS. SHELLEY CIMON: Underground plume of waste, be it radioactive or chemical.

We need a comprehensive document. And this is not it. And I think that's one of the biggest points that I'd like to see everyone comment on and understand.

And also, I guess, one of the hardest things is that we don't know everything that's going on in this document. And collectively, we couldn't begin to describe it. Those of us that are up here. And probably won't be able to by the 27th.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Other panelists?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Just a quick response on that. On the line of analysis, we don't represent that as any kind of point of compliance.

We did it to try to compare alternatives from waste sources that are dispersed, not only with the inventory of -- different burials grounds are, but physical size of the burial grounds and the distances between burial grounds.

So it was an attempt, comparison, not a point of compliance.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What do --

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Well, what you do, what typically you do, there is a DOE requirement that says, "Down the road, you

Panel Discussion (contd)

will measure what the impacts are 100 meters down gradient, down the groundwater flow of a site. And you're supposed to do an analysis there.

That's a point of compliance that you have to meet. We didn't do a point of compliance analysis.

What we did was we went farther out, this kilometer that you've heard about before, in an effort to try to compare the different alternatives better, because once you get too close to a specific facility, the impacts are so dominated by that one facility that you don't get the impacts of everything else.

MR. GERRY POLLET: And what that means is that, the big picture, what that means is: You sure as heck can tell if the impact from any one of their massive new landfills will be unacceptable.

Bottom line: We didn't do an analysis to show what the impact is on groundwater. And will it violate all the groundwater protection standards from having a landfill of this size with those wastes in this place.

Panel Discussion (contd)

And they need to redo it and then come back out again, because they were told to do it right last time, and this is where they've got to do it right.

And we can't have them say "We'll do it right in the final EIS," because that's too late. Then they'll have chosen what landfills they're already going to go ahead with.

We need to know this information now or redo it. You've got to redo it, come back out. No two choices.

MR. DEE WILLIS: Mr. Owen Kenton?

MR. OWEN KENTON: Yes. I had a question on the water issue again. And ever since we've learned it takes --

MR. GERRY POLLET: Both of us?

MR. OWEN KENTON: For both of you, yeah, everybody up there.

It takes about a hundred years or more for water actually to get from there all the way into the water table, actually.

And then it takes even longer for that water table to clear out. So what are you going to do about the unlined waste that isn't

Panel Discussion (contd)

lined already, to clean out?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: I guess I'm not following you. Are you talking about waste that's already in the ground that was dumped there because --

MR. OWEN KENTON: Yeah. What are you going to do to prevent that from going further into the ground? Are you going to line that area also?

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS: Oh, no. I mean, that underground -- you can't line that. We're trying different strategies to pump out groundwater and treat it.

We have what's called a vapor extraction technology that we've taken out 70,000 some-odd pounds of carbon tetrachloride that's in what's called the vadose zone area between the site and the groundwater table.

There are some new alternative treatment technologies being used out by the river. I'm not super familiar with -- I'm not at all familiar with them. I know they exist. So there are efforts to clean up the groundwater right now.

There's also efforts, and actually

this effort ended in '95, for a long time liquid waste disposal was okay. It's no longer okay. We've stopped that.

MR. GERRY POLLET: It wasn't okay.

MR. DEE WILLIS: No interruptions.

Anybody else want to respond to that question.

MR. KEN NILES: Ken Niles. I just want to say one thing from the state's perspective on groundwater.

They have made some great strides in the past year in at least raising the issue of what they're going to do in the future to deal with groundwater. We don't think it's enough yet.

Let me say, and this is a little -- this is not fully involved with this Environmental Impact Statement. I'm talking groundwater issues and concerns as a whole at the Hanford site.

And let me just say one thing, before I say that, is the Department of Energy has made some great progress at Hanford in