

Mr. David Lochbaum  
Nuclear Safety Engineer  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
1707 H Street NW, Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20006-3919

Dear Mr. Lochbaum:

I am responding to your letter to Chairman Meserve and the Commissioners dated December 20, 2000, concerning public participation in the efforts to revise the oversight program for nuclear fuel cycle facilities. Specifically, you raised concerns on the lack of confidence by public interest groups in the NRC and recommended that the Commission direct the staff to take actions to ensure meaningful public participation. You recommended that the NRC public meeting policy be revised to provide all attendees with the opportunity to ask a question or express a concern about the topic of the meetings, that the policy be consistently followed by the NRC staff, and that public stakeholders be provided with timely and complete responses to their questions and concerns. Further, you recommended that a series of public meetings be conducted to reach a common understanding of the problems in NRC's public interaction process and the status of actions taken to resolve the problems.

I agree on the importance of meaningful public participation, and our Strategic Plan recognizes that licensees and other stakeholders are key participants in the collective efforts necessary to achieve our program success. Building and maintaining public trust and confidence that the NRC is carrying out its mission is an important performance goal for the agency. This goal recognizes that although the public may not always agree with the NRC's actions, public confidence is enhanced when the agency listens to all interested parties and makes decisions in a thorough, disciplined, and timely manner. Accordingly, we are working diligently to implement our strategies and initiatives to increase public confidence. While we believe these activities are advancing our public confidence goal, we continue to look for opportunities to improve. As part of our efforts, we are examining the agency's policy and procedures on public meetings. This examination is considering the issues and resources related to a number of possible improvements.

The staff plans to convene a public forum to identify areas for improvement. Please be assured that we will consider input from this meeting as well as other stakeholder comments in the ongoing review of and any revisions to the public meeting policy and procedures.

Sincerely,

William D. Travers  
Executive Director  
for Operations

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Executive Director  
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