

3101.2/RRB/83/04/18/0

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Mr. J. William Bennett  
 Director, Geologic Repository Division  
 Nuclear Waste Policy Act Project Office  
 U. S. Department of Energy  
 Washington, DC 20545

Dear Mr. Bennett:

This is in response to the March 4, 1983 Federal Register notice (48 FR 9332) which solicited comments on issues to be included in an Environmental Assessment supporting the nomination of a potentially acceptable repository site located near Richland, Washington on the Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford site. At the same time, 48 FR 9332 noted that DOE had prepared a draft of the Environmental Assessment for the Hanford site (DOE/EA-0210).

It is the understanding of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff (NRC) that the draft Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-210) is a preliminary draft and that the official draft environmental assessment for the Hanford site will not be published until after the final siting guidelines, required by Section 112 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (Act), are published. Based on our review of 48 FR 9333, it appears that the preliminary draft environmental assessment (DOE/EA-0210) was prepared for the purpose of facilitating participation by the public in providing comments and recommendations on issues to be addressed at the hearing which was held on March 25, 1983 in Richland, Washington. Accordingly, we do not plan to comment in detail on DOE/EA-0210.

Even though the draft environmental assessment (DOE/EA-0210) is only preliminary, we have noted that significant portions of the document are based on DOE's Site Characterization Report (SCR) for the Basalt Waste Isolation Project (DOE/RL 82-3) which was published in November, 1982. The NRC completed a detailed review of the SCR and published the results of that evaluation in the staff's Site Characterization Analysis (NUREG-0960). Many of the views and conclusions presented in NUREG-0960 are applicable to your preliminary draft environmental assessment (DOE/EA-0210). It is recommended that consideration be given to the NUREG-0960 analysis when DOE prepares the official version of the draft environmental assessment for the Hanford site.

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If you should have any questions or need clarification on the matters discussed in this letter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by  
Robert E. Browning  
Robert E. Browning, Acting Director  
Division of Waste Management

*No legal objection  
per J. Wolfe  
Telam*

OFC	: WMHL	RB	: WMHL	: WMH	for	: ELD	: WM	REF	:
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