



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I**
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1415

February 15, 2012

The Honorable Pearlie S. Reed
Assistant Secretary for Administration
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0103

Dear Mr. Reed:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to your letter of January 6, 2012, which requests assistance to facilitate the cleanup of the low level radioactive waste burial site at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in Beltsville, Maryland.

I share your concerns that the BARC site be remediated in a safe and timely manner. I also appreciate that the USDA shares the NRC's commitment to protecting people and the environment. The NRC has been actively engaged in reviewing the Decommissioning Plan and the subsequent revisions submitted by your Agency. As I'm sure you are aware, due to the complex nature of the buried radioactive waste at the BARC site, the NRC staff has identified a number of technical issues that need to be resolved to support final approval of the Decommissioning Plan. The NRC appreciates the efforts that your staff has provided towards developing solutions to these multiple challenging technical issues.

On January 20, 2012, your staff submitted a third revision to the Decommissioning Plan. The NRC staff is currently reviewing this recent submittal. Based upon initial review, it appears many of the issues have been addressed. However, the NRC needs to complete its final review to ensure the previously identified technical concerns are resolved and confirm that it meets the necessary regulatory requirements.

We will continue to actively communicate with your staff on the status of our review and required actions to be completed prior to making a final determination on the acceptability of the Decommissioning Plan for the BARC site. Be assured we are working diligently to achieve our common objective of ensuring the safe decommissioning of the BARC site.

If you have questions or would like to discuss your concerns further, please contact me at (610) 337-5299 or Raymond Lorson, Director, Division of Nuclear Materials Safety, at (610) 337-5281.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William M. Dean
Regional Administrator

cc:
J. Jensen, USDA
State of Maryland

If you have questions or would like to discuss your concerns further, please contact me at (610) 337-5299 or Raymond Lorson, Director, Division of Nuclear Materials Safety, at (610) 337-5281.

Sincerely,

/RA/

William M. Dean
Regional Administrator

cc:
J. Jensen, USDA
State of Maryland

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