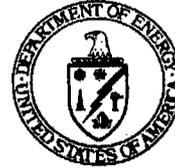




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APR 30 2004

Mr. James Bierer, Chair
Fernald Citizens Advisory Board
406 Marcia Ave.
Hamilton, Ohio 45013

DOE-0239-04

Dear Jim:

POST-CLOSURE GROUNDWATER REMEDIATION FACILITY AT THE FERNALD CLOSURE PROJECT

This is in response to your letter dated March 10, 2004 regarding the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board's (FCAB) position on a post-closure groundwater remediation facility at the Fernald site.

During the time period October, 2003 through March, 2004, DOE conducted a series of meetings with public stakeholders, the U.S. and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA), and the FCAB to identify a more cost effective water treatment facility that could serve as a long-term replacement for the existing 2,600 gallon-per-minute (gpm) advanced wastewater treatment (AWWT) facility. The intent behind the smaller replacement plant would be to sufficiently support aquifer restoration activities over the post-closure period beyond 2006 and to reduce the amount of impacted materials that may need off-site disposal.

The interactions have recently led to support for a plan to carve down the AWWT facility to permit the 1,800 gpm Phase III expansion system to remain as the long-term groundwater treatment facility. This would allow the dismantlement and disposal (D&D) of about 90 percent of the existing AWWT facility footprint. The subsequent placement of the affected D&D debris and underlying soils in the on-site disposal facility (OSDF) will be completed in time to meet the 2006 closure schedule, and result in a protective, more cost-effective long-term water treatment facility to complete aquifer restoration. This approach will also satisfy the outfall limits as defined in the Operable Unit 5 Record of Decision (ROD) during the post-closure period.

Your March 10, 2004 letter to DOE expressed support for an earlier, similar plan (but with a smaller stand-alone replacement capacity) along with a listing of recommendations and implementation factors the FCAB would like to see considered during the next phase of the effort. DOE decided to add the additional capacity and consolidate the AWWT facility to the 1,800 gpm Phase III system at the request of both the U.S. and Ohio EPA's, as a means to provide additional operational flexibility and further address long-term uncertainties in treatment needs to the satisfaction of the regulators. This improved plan still provides a means to get the majority of the facility dismantled and the underlying soils cleaned in time to permit placement of the materials in the OSDF as part of site closure.

DOE appreciates the FCAB's support for the plan and would like to discuss each of the specific recommendations listed in the March 10th letter during the next FCAB meeting. Of note, DOE is currently working through the technical, scheduling, and operational aspects of the improved plan's implementation with the U.S. and Ohio EPA's, which will ultimately result in an agency approval letter along with an accompanying list of conditions for follow-on field validation studies and facility operating constraints. As requested, DOE will furnish these items to the FCAB once they are approved by the regulatory agencies.

Internally, DOE Fernald has begun dialogue with the DOE Office of Legacy Management regarding long-term operations of the facility, to complete aquifer restoration during the post-closure period. As part of this planning, DOE acknowledges that the legal obligations and requirements for groundwater restoration under the Operable Unit 5 ROD remain in effect during the post-closure period, and these obligations require DOE to complete aquifer restoration to the satisfaction of the overseeing regulatory agencies regardless of which DOE sub-entity conducts the post-closure work.

Lastly, U.S. EPA has requested that the change to the smaller facility be formally recognized through the use of a Memorandum to the Post ROD Site File with an accompanying remedial design fact sheet for the public. This fact sheet would document the basis for the change consistent with all the recent meeting discussions. DOE plans to forward a first draft of the proposed fact sheet to both agencies by May 2004 for regulatory review and approval. Following approval, the fact sheet would be used to communicate the final regulatory decision to the public and local stakeholders, consistent with Fernald's longstanding public decision-making process.

Once again, DOE appreciates the FCAB's deliberations and input on the groundwater treatment decision, and looks forward to continued interactions with the FCAB as we move to closure.

If you have any immediate questions prior to the next FCAB meeting, please contact Johnny Reising at 648-3139.

Sincerely,


William J. Taylor
Director