

Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments

City of Arvada City of Boulder Boulder County
City of Broomfield Jefferson County Town of Superior City of Westminster

January 9, 2001

Ms. Dyan Foss
Kaiser-Hill
Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site
10808 Highway 93, Unit B
Golden, CO 80403

Dear Ms. Foss:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments, I am submitting the following comments on the *771 Closure Project Decommissioning Operations Plan Modification 3 and Proposed Action Memorandum for Under Building Contamination Remediation*. The Coalition appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on this important document. We look forward to receiving your written reply.

The Coalition considers itself a partner with the Department of Energy and Kaiser-Hill in achieving the safe cleanup and closure of Rocky Flats. We understand this document is modification 3 to the original Building 771 closure project Decommission and Operations Plan, and also addresses under building contamination remediation for the facility. The Coalition's technical advisor, John Marler, as well as individual Coalition governments, have raised issues and forwarded comments that the Coalition Board requests be appropriately considered and addressed before the final document is issued.

While the Board believes the general approach is solid, there are specific issues that we believe must be more thoroughly addressed. These issues are as follows:

Explosives

The Coalition shares the Site's goal of conducting the remediation in the safest, most effective manner. One issue of concern to many Board members is the use of explosives, and in particular, the use of explosives to take down the 771 stack. We appreciate the Site's commitment to discuss with the Coalition and others the demolition plan that will detail how explosives will be used to demolish the stack.

In order for us to evaluate the use of explosives, we need the following additional information: (1) descriptions of situations in which explosives will be used, (2) reasons why explosives will be used instead of other methods, including the risks associated with all options, (3) explanation

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of whether explosives will be used solely on free release materials, (4) descriptions of use of explosives at other DOE sites with plutonium and americium contamination, and (5) description of the methodology that will be used to control emissions of airborne contamination and fugitive dust. The Board recommends Section 4.7.2, Demolition of the Stack, be expanded to better document this portion of the project. Similarly, the DOP should clearly state whether or not the use of explosives during the 771 project will be limited to the 771 stack.

Exception to the *RSOP for Recycling Concrete*

Since 1999, the Coalition has been interested in the Site's concrete recycling program. During the public comment period on the *RSOP for Recycling Concrete*, the Board requested additional monitoring be conducted to ensure the rubble meets the free release criteria. At the time, we also requested DOE take steps to prevent groundwater contamination.

Given the Coalition's interest in the Concrete Recycling RSOP, the Board feels that Section 5.5, Waste Minimization and Recycling, needs additional detail on the proposed exception to the RSOP. The Board therefore requests better documentation on how the procedure described on page 54 would benefit the closure project and why it is preferable to other alternatives. In addition, the Board requests more documentation on what the potential impacts of this new procedure on surface water, groundwater, and air quality may be and how these impacts will be mitigated.

Air Monitoring

The Coalition represents communities downwind of the Site and is concerned about the impacts of the closure project and residual contamination on air quality. The final document should contain more detail on any potential air quality impacts, including how such impacts will be mitigated or eliminated. In addition, given the history of the building and the extent of contamination, the Board requests project-specific air monitoring.

On this last point, the Executive Summary states project-specific air monitoring will occur, but this statement is not included in the DOP itself. Given the latitude provided in the Site's Integrated Monitoring Plan for project-specific air monitoring, please explain what specific air monitoring plans the Site anticipates implementing.

Water Quality

The Coalition places great emphasis on protecting water quality, particularly surface water quality, as the streams draining the Site flow through our communities. The current draft of the DOP contains insufficient detail on how water quality will be protected during the demolition and remediation project. For instance, the Board understands that portions of 771 are below the water table and additional excavation around the building may be required. Several other of the demolition and remediation activities described in this DOP have groundwater implications, such as the plans to use soils below Tier I action levels as backfill and to abandon the tunnels in place.

The final document should address all potential impacts on water quality, including a more thorough discussion of how D&D activities and environmental restoration activities will be integrated. In addition, the Board specifically requests additional information on whether the Site anticipates any potential impacts to groundwater flow as a result of propagation of fractures

in the subsurface from the use of explosives. Finally, as discussed more thoroughly below, the DOP must address the long-term stewardship needs necessary to protect water quality after closure.

Remediation of Under Building Contamination (UBC)

The Coalition is looking carefully at the amount of contamination that will remain at Rocky Flats after closure. Towards this end, within reasonable limits, the Board advocates for minimizing the residual contamination at the Site. For these and other reasons, the Board is particularly concerned about aspects of the DOP that relate to UBC. These concerns include both radionuclides and other contaminants such as volatile organic compounds.

The Board is concerned about the plan to only remove those soils that exceed current Tier I action levels. Our reasons are as follows: (1) the area has not yet been adequately characterized, (2) the impact to groundwater from residual contamination is uncertain, and (3) the RFCA parties are currently reviewing the Site's soil action levels and these action levels are expected to change from current values. In addition, the Coalition Board has not agreed it is the best alternative to leave foundations in place after closure. We believe this issue needs a more thorough public dialogue.

Finally, as this DOP makes clear, this area will not be cleaned to a level that would allow for unrestricted use. Despite this fact, the DOP makes no mention that long-term stewardship requirements were considered in making this decision.

Stewardship

The Coalition believes long-term stewardship needs and obligations must be integrated into the remedy selection process. Only by considering these needs will the Site ensure that the cleanup achieves our shared goal of reducing the near-term and long-term risks and uncertainties. Yet, while the DOP states one objective is to ensure long-term protection, there is no discussion of the steps that will have to be taken and controls implemented to achieve this goal.

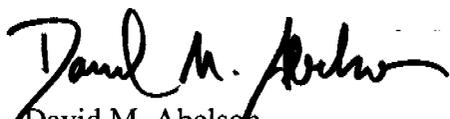
It is clear from reading the DOP that there will be long-term risks due to residual contamination that will require on-going management long after Rocky Flats is closed. Many specific long-term stewardship requirements, including maintenance of physical and institutional controls and records management, will flow directly from the cleanup actions that are defined by this DOP. These obligations in part include monitoring, maintaining and eventually replacing engineered barriers; developing and enforcing other physical controls to ensure no one digs up contaminated soils; monitoring water quality; and developing and maintaining institutional (legal) controls to ensure that contamination pathways are not created by human activity.

The Coalition believes long-term stewardship issues and obligations must be explicitly addressed when evaluating each remedial alternative and implementing a final remedy. DOE and EPA regulations and guidance demand such an integrated approach to remedy selection. The failure to adopt such an approach raises serious questions about the long-term effectiveness of a given remedy.

In addition, the alternatives analysis that underpins the plan's objectives is incomplete. The plan presumes there are only three options – D&D, no action, or reuse. However, under D&D there are various alternatives that the Site should consider. These options include removing all subsurface structures, conducting additional soil remediation, developing and implementing additional groundwater protections, excavating to more than three feet below grade, and cleaning up to a level and in a manner that would obviate the need for permanent access restrictions. The Coalition therefore requests the alternatives analysis be expanded to include other D&D options, and that each alternative include a thorough stewardship analysis.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. If you have any questions about the Coalition's comments, please call me at (303) 412-1200.

Sincerely,



David M. Abelson
Executive Director

cc: Hank Dalton, DOE
Joe Legare, DOE
Frazer Lockhart, DOE
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