

La Grande Transcripts (TLG)

Public Hearing May 12, 2003 – La Grande, Oregon

DOE meetings/hearings to acquire comments on the Revised Draft Hanford Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Management Program Environmental Impact Statement were conducted in a combination of forums to allow full participation of the audience and commenters. The overall forum consisted of periods for introductions, presentations, informal question and answer sections, panel discussions, and formal comment periods. The identification of comments from the transcripts of these meetings required close reading and interpretation. The results are shown in the identification of formal comment speakers, numbering of comments related to the revised HSW EIS, and bar-coding of copies of the transcripts contained in Volume IV of the HSW EIS. Information in the transcripts related to those informal portions of the meetings are not numbered or bar-coded and do not constitute formal comments. Formal responses to this information were not prepared.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REVISED DRAFT HANFORD SITE SOLID
(RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS)
WASTE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(HSW EIS)

PUBLIC MEETING

MAY 12, 2003
7:00 P.M.
BEST WESTERN
1711 21ST STREET
LA GRANDE, OREGON

BRIDGES & ASSOCIATES
Certified Shorthand Reporters
P.O. Box 223
Pendleton, Oregon 97801
(541) 276-9491 - (800) 358-2345

Introductions

1 MS. SHELLEY CIMON: Well, I
2 want to take a moment to welcome everyone here.
3 I appreciate your coming out on a Monday night.

4 My name is Shelley Cimon, and I live
5 here in La Grande. And I chair the Oregon
6 Hanford Waste Board, which is a
7 Governor-appointed state board that is focused
8 on protection of Oregonians in relation to
9 the cleanup of Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

10 So we focus on protection of the
11 Columbia River, the air that comes into Oregon
12 from the Hanford site and also transportative
13 nuclear waste through our state.

14 We're here tonight to take a look
15 at, hear about, and hopefully comment on the
16 Revised Draft Hanford Site Solid Waste
17 Environmental Impact Statement, which includes
18 radioactive and hazardous waste -- so mixed
19 waste.

20 (Ms. Cimon made formal introductions
21 of various people).

22 MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks, Shelley.
23 I'm glad to be here tonight. And thank you for
24 coming. Thank you very much for taking time
25 out of your lives to be here and talk to the

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Introductions (contd)

1 government.

2 My job is to make sure you have an
3 opportunity to say what you have to say
4 tonight. That's my job.

5 As Shelley said, this is the third
6 of six public meetings on the Department of
7 Energy's revised Hanford Solid Waste
8 Environmental Impact Statement. And it's a
9 revised statement because of work you did last
10 year talking to the Department of Energy.

11 These public meetings, the public
12 meetings we had last year, and some of you were
13 here last year, are living proof of the fact
14 that you can affect what government does.

15 This is a Revised Draft based on the
16 comments you gave them on the initial draft of
17 this Environmental Impact Statement last year.

18 The main purpose of this meeting is
19 to get your comments on the Revised Draft.
20 We'll do some other things, but the main
21 purpose is to get your comments.

22 The comments we get from you
23 tonight, along with responses from DOE, will be
24 addressed as part of the final Environmental
25 Impact Statement that comes out later.

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Introductions (contd)

1 There's several ways to offer
2 comments on this Revised Draft: One, is to
3 talk tonight; second, is written, there's some
4 written forms back there where you can just
5 fill in your name and address and say what you
6 have to say.

7 Give those forms to Yvonne Sherman
8 back there in the corner, if you want to write,
9 if you're an introvert and don't like public
10 speaking.

11 There is a fact sheet, I usually
12 bring it out with me but I forgot. Would
13 somebody raise -- thank you, ma'am. That's the
14 fact sheet right there, it's in the back.

15 It has all the addresses, e-mail
16 addresses, DOE street address, that you might
17 need to communicate with DOE about this.

18 We're going to record your comments
19 tonight verbatim, using a court reporter.
20 We're also going to record your comments audio,
21 using all this equipment over here.

22 So when you talk, we're going to ask
23 you to use a mike. Even though it's a small
24 room, everybody can hear us, we're going to ask
25 you to use the mike so we can record you. And

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Introductions (contd)

1 I'll ask you to give us your name as well.

2 There's a lot of relevant
3 information on the back, on the back counter
4 back there. Help yourselves when you have a
5 chance.

6 You're going to get a postcard later
7 from DOE asking you how much more information
8 you want.

9 Agenda. After I talk, there's going
10 to be a short DOE presentation given by Mike.
11 After that, Dennis Faulk is going to give us
12 the Environmental Protection Agency's comments
13 on this Revised Draft of the EIS.

14 After that, Heart of America, Gerry
15 Pollet, is going to give you his perspectives
16 on the EIS. And then after that, you're going
17 to get a chance to give us public comments.

18 I found through experience that the
19 best way to deal with comments -- let me back
20 up a minute. I have found through experience
21 that what you come to these meetings for is to
22 listen and talk, to have a discussion with the
23 DOE people and the other people participating.
24 We're going to get to that.

25 First, DOE wants to hear some

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Introductions (contd); Presentations

1 comments, some formal comments. They find
2 those useful. We're going to do a few of
3 those, and then go to open, more informal
4 discussion where you can find out what you want
5 to know.

6 Then we'll go back to formal
7 comment. We'll get it all done. Any questions
8 before I turn it over to Mike Collins, DOE?
9 Okay, thanks.

10
11 (Mr. Collins gave a presentation on behalf of
12 the Department of Energy, followed
13 by a presentation by Dennis Faulk on
14 behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency.)

15
16 MR. DEE WILLIS: Thanks,
17 Dennis. Now we're going to hear from Gerry
18 Pollet briefly. And then after that we're
19 going to take comments directly from you.

20 MR. GERRY POLLET: Thank you
21 all. (Slide presentation). Heart of America
22 Northwest, for those of you who don't know, is
23 a region-wide citizens group. We're a quality
24 of life organization -- work on economic and
25 quality of life issues.

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Presentations (contd)

1 And that biggest issue affecting the
2 quality of life that we focus on is the cleanup
3 of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, which is
4 not only America's but the western hemisphere's
5 most contaminated site.

6 The Columbia River is being
7 contaminated. And the reason we're here
8 tonight is that the Department of Energy wants
9 to double the amount of nuclear waste at
10 Hanford.

11 Kind of in a nutshell, what is this
12 about? The Department of Energy is talking
13 about doubling the waste at Hanford.

14 And another quick overview of the
15 types of radioactive wastes we're talking
16 about, there are four major types of
17 radioactive waste at Hanford.

18 Transuranic waste is
19 plutonium-bearing waste. And this is the focus
20 of a lot of controversy about trucks coming
21 right through this community.

22 High-level waste, liquid high-level
23 waste, and spent nuclear fuel rods, low-level
24 waste is anything that isn't the other two.
25 And it can be as radioactive or more so than

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Presentations (contd)

1 the other two. And mixed low-level waste is
2 mixed with hazardous wastes. Okay.

3 Now, we're talking about massive
4 amount of import of radioactive waste from the
5 rest to the weapons complex through the year
6 2046.

7 Hanford is supposed to be cleaned up
8 by the year 2018. All of its soil is supposed
9 to be cleaned up by 2018. Hanford is the most
10 contaminated site in America.

11 So the other USDOE sites are
12 supposed to be cleaned up years before 2018.
13 So it is not about helping clean up the other
14 sites that would be using Hanford as a national
15 radioactive waste dump, it is about new
16 generation of wastes as well.

17 And here's where it comes home: We
18 are talking at minimum in their upper-bound
19 volume, 70,000 truckloads of radioactive waste
20 coming through Oregon. 70,000. That is about
21 five a day, through 2046.

22 Now, are they dangerous? Even if
23 the transuranic waste shipments have no
24 accidents, they give off extremely high levels
25 of radiation.

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Presentations (contd)

1 And if you're stuck in traffic next
2 to one or one parks during a snow emergency
3 near you and you're a meter away for an hour,
4 you get the equivalent of a full body x-ray.

5 Now, without a single accident,
6 these shipments of transuranic wastes will
7 cause fatal cancers in people exposed to them.

8 As they cross the country to
9 Hanford, before they are stored here, DOE says
10 just temporarily, maybe 20 years, maybe 30,
11 temporarily.

12 And if it ever leaves, it will truck
13 again to a site in New Mexico. So we're
14 talking about doubling the amount of
15 transportation of these wastes.

16 In a 1997 study, USDOE said there
17 would be approximately four fatal cancers
18 caused from exposure to these shipments without
19 a single accident being calculated.

20 And without something else being
21 calculated, that we're going to talk about
22 tonight, which is -- this new EIS does not
23 actually consider anything specific to
24 transportation along I-84, or I-5 on the other
25 side of the state, to Hanford.

Presentations (contd)

1 Instead, this document claims to say
2 we're showing Washington and Oregon specific
3 transportation impacts. It doesn't.

4 All they did is they took a national
5 study, extrapolated the number of miles to
6 Oregon, passed it in and made it very
7 incomprehensible for you to read.

8 In fact, there's nothing in the
9 analysis about what the real risk of an
10 accident is on this road, say, from mid-October
11 through mid-April.

12 Secondly, there's nothing in here
13 about the actual state of I-84 and I-5 in the
14 state of Oregon.

15 Now, earlier this year -- let's talk
16 about how hot some of this is. There are two
17 types of transuranic waste. One type is called
18 contact handled, as you see here (indicating).

19 And the other which they're trying
20 to import right now is called remote-handled
21 transuranic waste with radiation levels hotter
22 than spent nuclear fuel and more than -- at the
23 surface of the cast, 20 chest or full body
24 x-rays in an hour.

25 And this waste will be shipped on

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Presentations (contd)

1 these routes, according to the EIS. I-84 as
2 you see and up to Hanford. I-5 from California
3 up the Gorge to Hanford.

4 DOE asserts that it will keep these
5 shipments on interstate highways. The state of
6 Oregon, Department of Transportation has just
7 issued a study identifying 221 critical problem
8 bridges in the state on I-5 and I-84.

9 What is the impact of that for these
10 transuranic waste shipments? ODOT has
11 concluded that bridges are cracked, restricted
12 in terms of weight.

13 And here is the ODOT map of -- this
14 little star shows all the bridges that are
15 restricted. The overweight shipments, for
16 instance, of remote-handled transuranic waste
17 would have to leave the interstate highway for
18 up to 120 miles in detours through our
19 communities, on secondary roads going directly
20 past schools, directly past churches, five a
21 day, through downtowns, or they would have to
22 go through downtown Spokane on Interstate 90,
23 which has never been considered either.

24 Now, you can see for yourself how
25 many bridges we're talking about, and we're

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Presentations (contd)

1 talking about right here (indicating). And you
2 will not find analysis in this EIS of I-84
3 winter conditions or the Gorge winter
4 conditions or the Sisku Mountains winter
5 conditions.

6 You will not find any analysis of
7 what the real impacts may be on children
8 exposed along the routes. All the data they
9 use are unfortunately modeled only for latent
10 cancer fatalities in adults. Children are five
11 to ten times more susceptible to getting a
12 cancer from the same radiation dose than an
13 adult is.

14 Now, as I said, without waiting for
15 this EIS, USDOE illegally started to ship waste
16 from two sites, one in Ohio and one in
17 California in December, December 20th. In
18 other words, not exactly waiting for the best
19 weather.

20 And as you can see here from Ken
21 Niles, who is here today, based on the permits
22 granted, the truck shipments from -- is the
23 site in California, this one, Ohio, were
24 directed to use secondary roads and detour off
25 the interstate highway through our communities.

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Presentations (contd)

1 There's no consideration of the
2 potential impacts of this in any USDOE study
3 ever.

4 MR. DEE WILLIS: Please finish
5 up.

6 MR. GERRY POLLET: Okay.
7 Neither the USDOE nor the contractor fully
8 considered the overweight status of the truck
9 shipments and the routes that would be used.

10 We're talking about additional
11 detours that may be necessary, and for bridge
12 construction, not just due to the weight
13 restrictions.

14 We're talking about as many as 1,800
15 detoured trucks, damage to the streets,
16 impacting local commerce. You don't want to be
17 stuck in traffic alongside of these and you
18 don't want one safe harboring in a winter storm
19 near anyone.

20 The detours could be 1- to 200-miles
21 long. Parking could be restricted, school
22 buses could be rerouted, and DOE has never
23 considered this.

24 And the last time the Washington
25 State Patrol tabulated the inspection results

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Presentations (contd)

1 at the state border for the commercial
2 low-level radioactive waste haulers going to
3 the Hanford site, it found for the same company
4 that DOE is now contracting with, Tri-state
5 Motor Transit, that at the state border, 55 out
6 of 314 of their trucks had safety problems so
7 egregious that they were arrested and held at
8 the state border for safety defects, in that
9 year. That's the same contractor.

10 Those site-specific, routes-specific
11 impacts have never been considered here. It is
12 our community, our families that are at risk.
13 And it is vital that we do something about it.

14 Now, citizen groups in the state of
15 Washington sued to stop these shipments. And
16 I'm proud to say that as of this afternoon,
17 Judge Allen McDonald, the federal district
18 court in Eastern Washington, has issued an
19 injunction against the shipments of the
20 transuranic waste.

21 DOE is clearly intent, though, to
22 try to rush ahead with this inadequate analysis
23 that doesn't look at the real impacts to try to
24 then say "Now we've considered it."

25 And it's up to you to make sure that

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Presentations (contd); Informal Question and Answer Section

1 on August 1st, the injunction isn't lifted, by
2 demanding that they look at the real impacts on
3 our health, the risk of an accident, and the
4 risk of fatal cancers even without accidents.
5 The risks of accidents are incredibly
6 significant as well.

7 The current EIS shows that there
8 will be 25 accidents from these shipments of
9 waste through Oregon and Washington.

10 It erroneously and falsely portrays
11 that there will be no fatal cancers from the
12 shipments of waste due to accidents because it
13 takes the probability of an accident, not done
14 on site-specific conditions, and multiplies it
15 by the number of fatalities.

16 You are owed an answer to how many
17 fatalities the worst possible accident would
18 cause, not some figure multiplied by
19 probabilities trying to make it look
20 minusculely small. Thank you.

21 MR. DEE WILLIS: Thank you,
22 Gerry.

23 This is what I would like to do:
24 There are ten of you signed up to give formal
25 comment for the record. I'd like to invite

15

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Informal Question and Answer Section (contd)

1 maybe half of you to come up and give comment
2 now and stop that comment in a more formal kind
3 of communication.

4 Bring the speakers up. And a couple
5 of more people, perhaps, and have you ask them
6 questions, get more information from them. And
7 then go back into a more formal comment period.

8 The way I want to start off the
9 comment is I'm going to invite you to come up
10 and speak in two ways: First, those of you who
11 have pressing obligations at home, you come
12 first. I leave you on your honor to identify
13 yourselves.

14 After that, I'm going to invite you
15 in the order that you signed up to give
16 comment. Okay.

17 When you come up to give comment,
18 please speak into this mike, this mike here
19 (indicating). Give us your name. Try to speak
20 no longer than five minutes. If you need more
21 than that, take it, but I think five minutes is
22 probably enough for most.

23 We're going to stay here as long as
24 we have to to take all of your comments.
25 Please, and this is for my Portland and Seattle

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