



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

AUG 23 2004

Ms. Jean Sulc, Chair
Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
24 Harbor River Circle
St. Helena Island, South Carolina 29920

Dear Ms. Sulc:

SUBJECT: Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 196 -Plutonium Shipments and Disposition (Your letter, 07/28/2004)

Thank you for your Recommendation concerning plutonium shipments and disposition. Management of plutonium at the Savannah River Site (SRS) has and will continue to be conducted in a safe manner, with a focus on developing a prudent disposition strategy for all surplus plutonium throughout the Department of Energy (DOE).

My responses to your specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Ensure that an exit strategy exists before commitments are made to receive surplus plutonium at SRS.

SRS is not currently receiving any additional surplus plutonium. DOE is currently evaluating disposition options for plutonium at SRS. As stated in *The First Report to Congress On Actions Taken by the Department of Energy In Response to the Proposals in the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board's December 2003 Report to Congress on Plutonium Storage at the Savannah River Site* (June 2004), DOE is conducting a preliminary investigation into a potential vitrification process that could be used at SRS to prepare surplus plutonium that cannot be fabricated into Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel for potential disposal in a deep geologic repository. This evaluation is factoring large amounts of public input from previous efforts. We expect the results of this feasibility study to be provided to the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management within the next few months. As DOE proceeds with development of a viable plutonium disposition strategy, we welcome your valued input.

2. Present the preferred proposed plutonium disposition strategy, its implementation, and schedule to the SRS CAB by September 26, 2004.

We will be able to provide you any updates to the July 27, 2004, CAB presentation regarding the plutonium disposition strategy by September 26, 2004.

3. Make available to the CAB and the public any studies to support this plutonium disposition option.

DOE studies related to plutonium storage and disposition will be made available to the public after they have been reviewed and approved for release.

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4. Ensure a public forum and comment period on the plutonium disposition option is included in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Any plutonium disposition option, including vitrification, would be established by implementing a project in accordance with DOE Order 413.3, "Program and Project Management for Acquisition of Capital Assets." This Order establishes the process that DOE uses for managing capital projects. We will keep you informed on the progress toward establishing a disposition strategy, and any required NEPA actions.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact George Klipa at (803) 208-3996.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey M. Allison".

Jeffrey M. Allison
Manager

FC-04-106

cc: D. Haygood, WSRC (CAB Files)