

Bonnie McKinlay

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hanford Tri-Party Agencies Holistic Settlement Agreement.

I have concerns about the process of developing the Agreement.

Above all, the lack of consultation from Washington State Dept of Ecology, EPA, USDOE with the directly impacted Native People: the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe (The Nimiipuu) is unconscionable. I urge the Tri-Parties to correct this serious oversight by apologizing to the Tribes and suspending the Settlement process long enough to listen and work towards their demands.

Direct quotes from Ecology's page on "Environmental Justice at Hanford":

"Missed cleanup milestones and consistent underfunding at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington exponentially increase overall costs, delay cleanup completion, and exposes surrounding populations to environmental and health risks. Those most vulnerable to harmful impacts are overburdened and underserved communities, including people of color, low-income populations, Tribes, and indigenous people.

We must ensure that the rights of sovereign nations are upheld through cleanup, and that we align with federal and state environmental justice obligations to address and eliminate environmental and health disparities around Hanford. We need to demonstrate, through adequate funding and aggressive deadlines, our commitment to protect the Tribes, area residents, and communities who face the highest risks from Hanford contamination and persistent delays.

Communities At Risk

Hanford's plutonium production contaminated the area for 40 years before cleanup began in 1989. Consistent underfunding of the cleanup mission has caused legal deadlines to be missed, increased overall cleanup costs, and extended projected completion into the 2080s. Currently, there are two leaking underground tanks on site. Each additional year of cleanup means improperly stored waste or accidental releases could further contaminate the soil, air, aquifers, and Columbia River impacting communities in the surrounding area and down river. Cleanup delays mean prolonged threats to habitat and wildlife, and risks to the physical, cultural, and economic wellbeing of local Tribes and communities.

Tribal Impacts

There are three Tribal Governments in the area that the state partners with on environmental issues attributed to nuclear waste. These indigenous populations have reserved rights per their 1855 Treaty of Yakama and the Treaty of Walla Walla: the Confederate Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe. The Wanapum Tribe is one of the Bands of the Yakama Nation. They once inhabited year-round villages where Hanford is now before being forced off their ancestral territory. The Wanapum have not received any compensation for their loss of lands and Treaty territory. All of these indigenous populations have expressed significant interest in the oversight and thorough cleanup of polluted areas that once provided hunting, gathering and cultural resources for multiple sovereign Tribes and Nations.

Our Responsibility

We must ensure that the rights of sovereign nations are upheld through cleanup, and that we align with federal and state environmental justice obligations to address and eliminate environmental and

health disparities around Hanford. We need to demonstrate, through adequate funding and aggressive deadlines, our commitment to protect the Tribes, area residents, and communities who face the highest risks from Hanford contamination and persistent delays."

I share Oregon Governor Tina Kotek's concern about the transport of liquid high waste through our state. She commented, "The ongoing process for receiving and accounting for input from the State of Oregon, Tribal governments, and the public on substantive issues relating to the solidification and transport of liquid tank waste is insufficient and risks undercutting support for the accelerated reduction of radioactive waste at the Hanford site that is in everyone's interest."

I zoomed into the Richland and Olympia public hearings. I found the audio almost unintelligible. It was disturbing to see the public hearings limited to these three sites. The Hanford Holistic Settlement Agreement affects people throughout the region. Why were hearings not also held in Spokane, Portland and Bend?

Sincerely,
Bonnie McKinlay