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Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP)

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# ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

for  
Niagara Falls Storage Site

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U.S. Department of Energy

**Department of Energy**

Washington, DC 20585

MAR 17 1994

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Dr. Robert J. Budnitz, Chair  
National Academy of Sciences  
Committee on Remediation of Buried and Tank Waste  
Future Resources Associates, Incorporated  
2000 Center Street, Suite 418  
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Dr. Budnitz:

The purpose of this letter is to document the Department of Energy's (DOE's) request to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Committee on Remediation of Buried and Tank Waste (the Committee) regarding the storage of high activity materials at the Niagara Falls Storage Site (NFSS).

First, I appreciate your support in establishing the Niagara Falls Subcommittee and particularly appreciate the members of that Subcommittee taking their time to meet with members of my staff and program on the challenges facing us at the NFSS.

As the discussions during our meetings of February 22-24, 1994, indicated, DOE is struggling with defining the appropriate standards to safely manage and dispose of radioactive materials. The lack of national consensus on what standards ought to apply, coupled with stakeholder perception of the risks posed by the materials, has severely challenged DOE's management of the materials at Niagara Falls and other sites. In addition, DOE is further challenged by our desire to minimize risks to today's workers and inhabitants of the site and along any transportation routes, as well as provide value to the taxpayers for the activities performed within the Environmental Restoration Program. These issues are not new to you as they are the same as those your committee was established to address. As I stated during our discussions at the meeting, I am pleased that you plan to use the NFSS issue as a "case study" which will enable the Committee to address more global issues such as those identified in my letter of January 10, 1994.

Regarding the NFSS activity, DOE requests that the NAS review DOE's documentation supporting the proposed waste containment structure at the NFSS and independently advise if it will provide appropriate protection to the surrounding population and environment. Secondly, if the proposed structure is not considered adequate, DOE asks the NAS to independently evaluate the risk data associated with alternatives in the Environmental Impact Statement for the long-term management of these materials, considering worker and public risks, current and future human health and environmental safety, and the overall cost/benefit of alternative management strategies.

Pending our mutual agreement on the scope of this review, it is premature to suggest a completion date at this time. However, as we discussed at the meetings in February, having at least preliminary information in a letter report by September 1994, with back-up information to follow at a later date, would best meet the Department's requirement to plan future program activities and identify funding needs.

My staff will work with the NAS Staff Officer and the Niagara Falls Subcommittee to provide the documentation necessary to meet the goals of this study on the proposed schedule. For the planned NFSS tour May 2-3, 1994, we are prepared to provide a tour of the storage site, as well as providing a meeting facility. However, as was agreed at our February meetings, we defer the distribution of invitations to the tour and meetings to the NAS. My staff will be pleased to assist you with the appropriate mailings and any public notifications. As the NFSS is within Congressman John J. LaFalce's district, the Congressman has maintained a keen interest in site activities and is anxious to take an active role in the proposed study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (202) 586-6331. Members of the Committee or Subcommittee or the NAS Staff Officer may continue to coordinate with Julie D'Ambrosia at (301) 762-9364 or with John Patterson at (301) 903-7408 on project specific data.

I am pleased that you have agreed to perform a review of the data and options for long-term management of the material at the NFSS. I look forward to the successful completion of this project and the integration of your conclusions into the other NAS/DOE activities.

Sincerely,



R. P. Whitfield  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Environmental Restoration

CC:  
R. Andrews, NAS