



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

October 24, 2017

Mr. Keith Branter, Chair
Idaho Cleanup Project
Citizens Advisory Board
1425 Higham Street
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83402

Dear Mr. Branter:

Thank you for your August 14, 2017, letter requesting that the Department of Energy (DOE) take measures to ensure the timely removal of stored transuranic (TRU) waste at the Idaho Site. DOE and its contractors, in partnership with stakeholders, have made tremendous progress in removing stored legacy waste from the State of Idaho, with more than 51,000 cubic meters of waste being shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and other disposal facilities. In addition, we were pleased to celebrate the completion of TRU waste retrievals at the Transuranic Storage Area-Retrieval Enclosure with Idaho Site workers, state and local officials, and other stakeholders earlier this year.

We appreciate your concern over the impacts that the 2014 fire and unrelated radiological incidents at WIPP have had on regulatory milestones. Those incidents have resulted in comprehensive corrective measures for WIPP operations, the National TRU Program, and waste generator sites to prevent recurrence of similar incidents and ensure that WIPP remains available to serve the DOE complex as the nation's only geologic repository. Therefore, it is necessary for DOE to proceed prudently as it works to increase WIPP shipments from the current rate of 3 to 4 shipments per week, with worker safety being our top priority. We anticipate the shipment rate will increase to 5 to 6 shipments per week by the end of calendar year 2017, as the WIPP workforce gains proficiency with the new waste handling procedures, which is helping them increase the number of waste downloads they can safely do during a shift. Since off-site waste receipts at WIPP resumed in April 2017, the Idaho Site has contributed to approximately 60 percent of the shipments.

DOE and its workforce will continue to evaluate opportunities to increase the rate of shipments where feasible and without compromising worker safety until the new WIPP ventilation system is operational in the 2021 timeframe, which will enable the rate of waste shipments to return to historic levels. We look forward to continuing to share our progress in this effort with you and other stakeholders.

We value our relationship with the Idaho Cleanup Project Citizens Advisory Board and the Board's contributions in advancing the cleanup at the Idaho Site. DOE is committed to removing the TRU waste as expeditiously and efficiently as practical, and completing the other remaining environmental cleanup work at the Idaho Site in support of the Idaho



National Laboratory's nuclear energy, national security, science, and environmental missions.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Ms. Betsy Forinash, Director, Office of National TRU Program, at (202) 586-1467.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Gilbertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Gilbertson
Associate Principal Deputy Assistant
Secretary for Regulatory and Policy Affairs