



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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May 22, 2026

The Honorable Timothy J. Walsh
Office of Environmental Management, Assistant Secretary
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Assistant Secretary Walsh:

This letter is a follow-up to our meeting on April 13, 2026, and subsequent conversations between our staff regarding the Department of Energy's (Energy) interest in pursuing an additional treatment pathway for tank waste retrieved from the 200 Area East tank farms.

As you know, the 200 Area East tank farms are subject to the Holistic Agreement, which was executed between Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Washington (Ecology) in January 2025 after several years of negotiations. Under the Holistic Agreement, waste retrieved from the 200 Area East tank farms is to be vitrified through the permitted treatment pathway at the Direct Feed Low-Activity Waste Treatment Plant (DFLAW).

Last fall, the Secretary of Energy, you, and I witnessed firsthand the vitrification of low-activity waste, and just last week DFLAW announced it has now treated 100,000 gallons of tank waste. This is yet another monumental achievement in the long history of the Hanford site.

Energy is now proposing a new initiative to divert pretreated tank waste away from DFLAW to an alternative, unpermitted treatment pathway that would result in low-activity tank waste from the 200 Area East tank farms being grouted rather than vitrified.

Energy has suggested that this alternative treatment pathway will "accelerate" the cleanup mission at Hanford. Ecology does not agree. Instead, this proposal would divert taxpayer and staff resources away from other priority work and would not result in any additional tank waste being treated.

There have been some public suggestions that Ecology does not support the use of grout as a treatment pathway. In fact, Ecology has worked extensively with Energy to advance grouting of low-activity waste at Hanford. The Holistic Agreement itself includes a new treatment pathway for waste retrieved from 22 tanks located in the 200 Area West tank farms that would allow that

material to be grouted and shipped out-of-state. In support of that effort, Ecology recently extended — at Energy's request — from December 2025 to July 1, 2026, the deadline for Energy to determine where this waste will be grouted, how it will be transported, and where it ultimately will be stored long-term. With the July 1 deadline now approaching, we hope Energy will reach that decision soon.

In addition, earlier this year, Energy proposed grouting an additional waste stream: Effluent Management Facility bottoms (EMF bottoms), a byproduct of the vitrification process, originally slated to be recycled through DFLAW, that would instead be shipped off-site for grouting and out-of-state disposal. Ecology supported that proposal because it creates greater efficiencies at DFLAW, enabling more pretreated waste to be vitrified. Ecology reassigned staff to prioritize that permit modification process, which is now nearing completion.

Ecology believes it is important to ensure the success of both DFLAW and the grouting efforts already agreed to and underway. DFLAW is projected to treat 500,000 gallons of tank waste by the end of this calendar year and 1.5 million gallons by the end of 2027. Major permitting actions and decision points remain pending for the grouting of tank waste from the 200 Area West tank farms and the new EMF bottoms initiative.

To be clear, Ecology is not foreclosing future discussions on this issue. However, Ecology believes the appropriate course at this time is to remain focused on implementing the agreements and initiatives already underway at Hanford.

Ecology remains committed to working with Energy in a transparent and constructive manner to advance cleanup progress where it is technically sound, operationally achievable, and protective of human health and the environment.

If there are any questions, please contact Stephanie Schleif, Nuclear Waste Program Manager, at Stephanie.Schleif@ecy.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Casey D. Sixkiller", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Casey D. Sixkiller
Director

