

**Department of Energy**

Washington, DC 20585

August 24, 2001

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DNF SAFETY BOARD

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Secretary asked me to respond to your July 30, 2001, letter regarding the selection of a preferred alternative for processing the high-level waste salt solutions and salt cake at the Savannah River Site.

We appreciate the Defense Board's perspective on the technologies and associated technical challenges as well as the available near-term opportunities for progress as discussed in your letter and its attached Staff Report. We view progress on the high-level waste solutions and salt cake as a key element of the Defense Board's Recommendation 2001-1 and the Department's upcoming Implementation Plan. We will continue to work closely with you and your staff to communicate the bases of our approach as well as our progress on assuring this important project proceeds safely and effectively.

The Department is now finalizing plans for the future high-level waste salt materials processing pilot plant activities and the associated acquisition strategy. Our plans also include assessments and actions to make the earliest possible progress to dispose of low-source-term salt materials within existing capabilities. Our approach is designed to help assure we make the best attainable progress with the highest expectation of technical, cost, and schedule success.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important project. If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Mark Frei of my staff at (202) 586-0370.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessie Hill Roberson".

Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management

