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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

September 6, 2011

The Honorable Peter S. Winokur
Chairman, Defense Nuclear
Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

GAO is beginning a review of the Department of Energy's (DOE) management of the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP). GAO is beginning this work on the initiative of the Comptroller General. GAO initiated this work after receiving a request from Representative Henry Waxman and Representative Diana DeGette. Although we have not yet finalized our reporting objectives, we initially plan to focus our work on the following topics:

- Reliability of current projected cost and schedule for completing the WTP, including how these compare to prior projections;
- Primary design and technical challenges facing the project and what plans DOE has to resolve them;
- The effectiveness of DOE's approach to conduct construction operations simultaneously with design efforts;
- Cost control challenges and proposed resolutions; and
- Effects of any recent modifications to the Tri-Party Agreement on cost, schedule, safety, and quality of the WTP project.

Our work will be performed by GAO's Natural Resources and Environment team and will be staffed from our Richland, Washington office. We anticipate that our review will touch on issues of concern to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. To assist us with our understanding of these issues, we would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you or your representatives in the near future.

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If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 512-3841 (aloisee@gao.gov), Ryan Coles, Assistant Director at (202) 512-6888 (colesr@gao.gov), or Peter Ruedel, Analyst in Charge for this engagement at (509) 376-1088 (ruedelp@gao.gov).

Sincerely,



Gene Aloise
Director, Natural Resources
and Environment