understand that it’s so we can get your comments on the record.

Okay. I think we’re ready now to begin the formal comment portion of this evening’s proceeding. I want to stress that this is a formal hearing and a recorded proceeding and a full transcript is being prepared.

And, finally, I want to take the time to thank you for attending the hearing and indulging me in the little rules we’ve got to help this thing proceed in an orderly fashion.

Our first speaker is Georgia Dixon.

And Ms. Dixon will be followed by Susan Hobbs.

MS. GEORGIA DIXON: My name is Georgia Dixon, G-E-O-R-G-I-A, D-I-X-O-N. I am the district assistant for United States Senator Larry Craig.

And I would like to read just a brief statement from Senator Craig. He is also -- he also serves on the Energy Committee of the United States Senate and will have other opportunity to speak further to this issue.

The Department of Energy in Idaho has managed dry granular calcined mixed high-level
waste in above-ground storage tanks and liquid mixed transuranic waste in tanks below the ground according to regulatory requirements for many years. With the agreement made between the State of Idaho and the Department of Energy, this waste will be treated for transportation in the highest and most safely effective way possible.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement analyzes five waste treatment alternatives that span the years between the years 2000 and 2035. It also analyzes six facilities disposition alternatives. I am very impressed with the reliability and the readability of this document. It is unusual for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be a document that is user-friendly. I must congratulate the project staff for their efforts to provide scientific information in a manner that the general public can understand.

It is important to know that the decisions made from this document and the public input will determine how DOE will treat the great amount of radioactive and hazardous material for shipment out of Idaho. I encourage all Idahoans to review this DEIS and send their comments to the DOE by the deadline of March 20, 2000.

Thank you.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you for your comments, Ms. Dixon. Thank you.

Just briefly, before Ms. Hobbs comes up -- after Ms. Hobbs will be Laurel Hall -- I have a couple housekeeping items.

As the hearing officer, I introduced as Exhibit No. 1 in this evening’s proceeding the Federal Register Notice, notifying the public of the meeting.

I have also introduced, as Exhibit No. 2, the talking points from Mr. Wichmann. And those are Exhibits 1 and 2.

Exhibit 3 will be a one-page letter from Senator Larry Craig dated February 7.

Sorry for the interruption. Please proceed.

MS. SUZANNE HOBBS: My name is Suzanne Hobbs, S-U-Z-A-N-N-E, H-O-B-B-S. I’m the regional director for United States Senator Mike Crapo here in Idaho Falls. Mailing address is 490 Memorial Drive, Suite 102.

Mike Crapo wrote: I appreciate the
opportunity to provide input on the Idaho
High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Draft
Environmental Impact Statement and regret that I
could not be here in person.

As a lifelong Idahoan, I am a strong
supporter of the people and programs at the
INEEL. The INEEL has served the nation and
contributed to the enhancement of Idaho for more
than 50 years, and continues to do so today and
will continue to do so in the future.

Although the INEEL has been and
continues to be an asset to the nation and Idaho,
the environmental legacy of Cold War weapons
production in the INEEL missions has left 4,200
cubic meters of mixed high-level waste calcine
and 1.4 million gallons of liquid mixed
transuranic sodium-bearing waste. This
high-level waste must be safely disposed of so
that future generations are not burdened by this
legacy.

The process established by the National
Environmental Policy Act includes an
environmental impact statement as the method of
ensuring that federal decisions that could
significantly affect the quality of the

environment are made considering all the facts.
Paramount in this process are considerations of
the environment and public and worker health and
safety.

This public comment period allows input
to the decision-making process prior to
initiation of major federal actions. As a step
forward in cleaning up the waste in Idaho, the
1995 Settlement Agreement between the State of
Idaho and the Departments of Energy and Navy
identifies milestones that must be met for
treatments and removal of the waste from Idaho.

I am a strong supporter of the 1995
Settlement Agreement and will do all that I can
to ensure that the Department of Energy continues
to meet its obligations to clean up the Cold War
legacy at the INEEL. To date, all portions of
the agreement have been met.

This Draft EIS discusses actions that
feed directly into meeting the milestones to
complete calcine-issued sodium-bearing and liquid
high-level waste by December 31, 2012, and to
complete the treatments of all high-level waste
so it is ready to be moved out of Idaho by
December 31, 2035.
Some of the waste processing alternatives, if chosen, would not meet all aspects of the Settlement Agreement. The Draft EIS states that two of the alternatives will not meet the 2035 milestone for having high-level waste ready for shipment out of Idaho.

One of these two is the no-action alternative, which is required to be investigated to provide a baseline for the NEPA process. In addition, the Draft EIS states that it may be difficult to have all of the waste out of the underground storage tanks and cease using them by 2012 for seven of the alternatives.

I am a supporter of the Settlement Agreement and encourage the State and the Department of Energy to choose an alternative that meets the milestones in the court-enforceable agreement.

I also want to encourage all Idahoans to review the Draft EIS and participate in the public comment period. Public comment is an important part of the federal agency’s decision-making process and is one of the factors that will be considered when choosing a course of action.

Sincerely, Michael D. Crapo, United States Senator.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you for your comments.

Ms. Hall.

Exhibit 4 will be a two-page document, letter from Senator Mike Crapo.


Statement by Representative Mike Simpson: The U.S. Department of Energy has some important decisions to make regarding management of high-level waste and mixed transuranic waste now stored at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory.

High-level waste management is a complex, technical subject, and it is important for Idahoans to understand that these decisions will determine how DOE will treat large amounts of radioactive and hazardous material stored over the Snake River Plain aquifer and how DOE will close contaminated facilities when they are no longer needed.
The Idaho High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Draft Environmental Impact Statement is critical for public review and comment. It provides scientific information about potential impacts to the environment and management alternatives being considered by the DOE.

The document gives Idahoans the opportunity to study these environmental issues, compare impacts of different actions, and have their voices heard under the National Environmental Policy Act. The DOE project staff have worked hard to convey technical information in a manner that all can understand. I encourage all Idaho citizens to review the EIS and send their comments to the Department of Energy.

Public comment is a very important process that provides input. It is very important that we, as Idahoans, give our public comments, and that they should help the DOE in determining and considering their choice of action.

Thank you.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you for your comments.

Mr. Siemer is next, Darryl Siemer, followed by Joe Hartenstein.

If I've got the last name pronounced wrong, forgive me.

MR. DARRYL SIEMER: Name is Darryl Siemer, D-A-R-R-Y-L. Address, 12 North 3167 East, Idaho Falls.

Three minutes. I'm a technical guy. I've worked in high-level waste. I've worked in reprocessing. I've worked in quite a number of areas at the site for quite a long time.

THE FACILITATOR: Mr. Siemer --

MR. DARRYL SIEMER: Yes?

THE FACILITATOR: -- if you stray too far from the microphone, we can't hear you.

MR. DARRYL SIEMER: Our mission is very simple. The State quite wisely asked and got DOE to agree to do two things. One is to finish calcining the liquid waste and convert it to a dry powder, add it to the other calcines, and then to convert all of these calcines into road-ready
waste forms. That's our mission, very simple and straightforward. The basic reason for this is that INEL is a loopy repository site. This is not the place we should be leaving large amounts of waste, whether it's radioactive or toxic. And we do need to close the loop on the nuclear fuel cycle. We can do that here.

This EIS is a document that is supposed to explain what the alternatives are and to be a document that guides decision-makers in making decisions. How should we be doing this mission that we've been given?

One is, of course, we should obey the law. And the law is really pretty straightforward. Now, the law is different than the assumptions that are generally used when people make decisions in the DOE complex. Decisions are made based on DOE policy, not so much on the law. And, of course, we should do it efficiently, because one of the impacts that we have is to the taxpayer, and we have tremendous impacts to the taxpayer.

How can we do this more efficiently? Well, we can follow the example that Great Britain did. Great Britain faced the same problem we did and solved the same problem we did. And now, if you're familiar with BNFL -- big company -- it's over here taking jobs from us.

How did it solve its historic reprocessing waste problem? With cements. That's how it did it. Very successfully. Now it's over here. Why do we have all of these options up here to do something as simple as turn a pile of sand into rock?

Well, it's because there are certain assumptions under the way that we approach problems like this. One -- One minute. Technical. One minute. One is that vitrification is the only way that high-level waste can be treated. That's not true. Another is that volume is the characteristic of waste that is most difficult to deal with. And that is not true either. Those options make both of those assumptions -- both of those assumptions are wrong.
I guess my time is about up, so I will give you these.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you, Mr. Siemer. You still have a few moments, if you want to take them.

I would remind folks that written comments can be as long as you want. So, we're not limiting in any way your ability to put in the record your comments and concerns, we're just limiting the oral comment period here.

Joe Marantette is next -- and I have a question mark by Joe's name, suggesting he may or may not want to comment -- followed by Lowell Jobe.

MR. LOWELL JOBE: Jobe.

THE FACILITATOR: Jobe.

While Mr. Jobe's coming up, I will identify for the record Exhibit 5, statement by Representative Simpson's staff.

And then I have Exhibit 6, which is several multi-page documents entitled, "Comments on Draft INEEL HLW-EIS, Idaho High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition, to Tom Wichmann and Ann Dold from Darryl Siemer." And that will be Exhibit 6.
Council Committee on INEEL with the sufficient
data for them to arrive at a more definitive
evaluation of all these different alternatives
for handling this high-level waste.]

To meet the Idaho Settlement’s deadline,
it is easy to postpone decisions and actions
while waiting for better information, such as the
NRC requested, but such postponement does not get
things done. And it does sound as though DOE is
trying here to expedite those.]

Third,[we support the State of Idaho’s
view that DOE’s current method of calculating the
metric tons of heavy metal should be changed to
either of the State’s proposed methods to allow
the DOE high-level waste to be within the
proposed repository’s space allotment.]

Fourth,[DOE should freeze the Waste
Acceptance Criteria without waiting for details
of the repositories. This would allow expediting
a decision on INEEL waste handling by eliminating
any bureaucratic procrastination.]

And, fifth,[greater DOE emphasis on
public comment, input, should really be given to;
recommendations and comments from the Citizen’s
Advisory Board, who are selected to represent a
real cross-section of the public and who
intensively study the issues before making
consensus recommendations. Those of the public
who make comments have an obligation to really
study the issues and facts first, and base their
comments on those, rather than any emotions].

And so, with that, I’ll just say that
this is only the preliminary comments, and we
will have further ones in writing.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you for your
comments.

MR. LOWELL JOBE: And I’ll leave you
this.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you, sir. All
right.

Well, as Exhibit No. 6, a one-page
document from Coalition 21 letterhead.

John Tanner is next, followed by Don
Beckman.

Did I say Exhibit 6? I meant Exhibit 7.

MR. JOHN TANNER: John Tanner, J-O-H-N,
T-A-N-N-E-R, from Idaho Falls, retired INEL
employee.

I accept the statements made earlier
that any of the methods chosen to deal with our
high-level waste should not have significant
environmental effects, with exception, of course,
of the no-action alternative, where it would be
very sloppy, to say the least, to leave the
liquid waste in the tank until they finally,
someday, leak. And, also, having worked at the
INEL, I believe there would be no more risk to
workers from any of the methods than from any of
the better industries around the country.

[But I would like to give added
encouragement to reasonable -- to calculating
metric tons of heavy metal based on amount of
radioactivity, rather than on waste volume. And
the reason that this is more sensible is that
its amount of radioactivity that determines heat
load, and heat load, in turn, limits -- is the
limiting factor for packing density inside the
repository.]

[And the practical importance of this is
that some important methods are, more or less,
being ruled out on the basis of disposal costs
because of -- they entail a higher volume, waste
volume. And I’m talking specifically about the
suggestion to grout the calcine instead of doing
a separations method or instead of vitrifying

The cost document only was just released
today, and they don’t actually give the
calculations for the cost, except by reference to
other documents with which I’m not familiar.

But I strongly suspect that the
enormously higher disposal costs attributed to
grouting the calcine is simply due to counting
metric tons of heavy metal as calculated on waste
volume, rather than radioactivity and, therefore,
assuming that they will be packed in the
repository a certain waste -- by a certain waste
volume fraction instead of the maximum density
that the radioactive heat load would permit.]

Thank you.

THE FACILITATOR: Thank you for your
comments.

I would remind you, if you want to
comment this evening, to register at the
registration table just outside the door, and
then I will get your name and call your name.
And, also, there’s a variety of ways, in addition
to commenting verbally, that are available. And
all those are identified and the items for doing
so are available at the registration table.
THE FACILITATOR: No, sir. We're allowing one opportunity for all commenters this evening. And the purpose for that is to give everyone equal opportunity to comment. We're not always sure we're going to have fewer commentors than time allotted. And, in terms of fairness, I think it's -- we'll restrict you to one shot this evening.

You do have plenty of additional shots, though, however, by filing written comments or through the other avenues that are available to you.

So, we'll be off the record subject to call of the hearing officer.

(A recess was taken.)

THE FACILITATOR: Okay. We'll be back on the record.

This is a continuation of the United States Department of Energy's Idaho High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Draft Environmental Impact Statement being held on February 7 in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

After our break, we're back on the record at 9:30. I note for the record that no additional commentors have registered to comment.
this evening and would remind all the folks in the audience that, if you would like to comment, you can do so by March 20, 2000, by submitting written comments, fax comments, Internet comments, or by attending one of the other public meetings being held throughout the region.

We did have one commenter who I called earlier this evening who wasn’t in the room when I called him. We’ll see if he’s departed or if he’s here.

Joe Marantette.

I will note for the record that Mr. Marantette is not here, and ask if there’s anyone else in the audience who has not yet had an opportunity to do so but would like to comment this evening on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

I will note for the record that no one has so indicated.

With that, we will close this evening’s hearing, and we’ll resume tomorrow in Pocatello at the Quality Inn --

MS. CAROL COLE: No. At Idaho State University.

THE FACILITATOR: -- at Idaho State