

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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Subject West Lake Landfill Comment

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To the West Lake Landfill EPA Project Manager and Community Involvement Coordinator:

I am deeply alarmed at the apparent lack of comprehension and action on the part of the EPA staff and administration regarding the West Lake Landfill and proposed measures to allow radioactive uranium waste to remain there. After an examination of details and history of the matter, an intelligent observer is left to conclude one of the following regarding the EPA's decision: The EPA does not have the acumen or training to understand the evidence before them; the EPA fails to appreciate its responsibility as a servant to the public welfare; or the EPA will not act due to political pressure. Any of these impediments to action are reprehensible and must be corrected in a timely manner. The EPA is a tool for assisting the citizenry in solving deep, burdensome problems such as West Lake. It has the authority and theoretical ability to do so; if it cannot, this must be addressed.

The EPA staff are surely, essentially, intelligent people who not only can understand the science of radioactive substances and how those elements can cause cancer, mutations, and genetic defects for several thousands of years, but how risky it is to base any plan on the critical, necessary assumption that the EPA will always be here to enforce plans enacted. And, as perhaps the EPA staff can appreciate, it will be something of a miracle if the United States is here, in the responsible, politically stable form of which we think of it today, in two or three hundred years. The EPA knows that a thousand is ten times greater than a hundred, and even a single, thousand year period is much longer than the existence of most civilizations. There are some on the staff who must realize that the mighty Roman Republic, which our political, legal, and social order often seeks to emulate in reputation if not in deed, only lasted about 500 years. What other edifices have humans retained in continual, nurturing concern and maintained with

unbroken, technical ability as we are asked to believe this radioactive waste will be remembered and maintained by the EPA? A responsible citizen of today's United States, of today's St. Louis region, feels something for the generations to follow us, no matter by what name they are called, no matter if they are our particular, direct genetic descendants. Surely the EPA staff has some of the same moral compunction? If answers can be made to these statements in the affirmative, then the difficulties with the EPA cannot be in the first two concerns I mention in my initial paragraph. The final concern must remain.

Please keep in your minds, for I know I do in mine, that a *sincere promise* of retaining the waste in a manner currently proposed by the EPA is neither: It is sincerity of manner based on either delusion or falsehood, and a promise of vigilance that the EPA does not have the perpetual strength or capacity to maintain.

Continuing to consider our abilities to hold this waste in a fragile shell in the path of one of the continent's most powerful rivers, the Missouri, is wasteful squabbling and an obvious diversion. What will be gained from not dealing with this problem now? Will covering the site with rock, clay, and a membrane make it less likely that this radioactive waste will be spread by a flood or human disaster? Our defense would be nothing but hope, for we know that the power of nature will eventually overwhelm all dams and levies. Such an occurrence will not likely be by design, on a schedule and according to a plan; it will be deplored and regretted, and the genie will be out of the bottle. We must act together to prevent this from happening, to preserve the waters and lives of millions living downstream. When we act together, as citizenry and government, to remediate the site and remove this hazard from a floodplain, we do the right thing.

Respectfully submitted,

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