

Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments

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December 6, 2004

Mr. Mike Owen
Director, Office of Legacy Management
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Director Owen,

The Board of Directors of the Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments has reviewed the Department of Energy's draft report to Congress assessing the feasibility of building a museum to commemorate the legacy of Rocky Flats in the Cold War. On behalf of the Board we offer the following comments.

We are pleased to learn that DOE has concluded a museum is feasible and that a number of options exist to develop such a facility. This report confirms the findings of an August 2003 report commissioned by the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum. DOE's report, like the prior report, identifies a number of options, which serve to reaffirm our belief that not only is a museum viable, but there is great latitude to design a museum to meet a myriad of DOE and community needs.

DOE's report, however, contains some troubling policy statements which contravene the "The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act of 2001" and sets us on a course that, if followed, would prematurely and unnecessarily signal the end to this effort. We ask that these sections be retracted or significantly modified.

As noted in DOE's draft report, DOE has an established track record of funding museums and visitor centers at a number of its facilities. These facilities meet a myriad of interests, and, in the case of Weldon Spring, serve as a critical component in ensuring DOE meets its post-closure legacy management responsibilities. According to DOE's report, the Weldon Spring center was initially funded using cleanup dollars. Ongoing support is provided through DOE's Office of Legacy Management, which, we believe, highlights the value this facility brings to DOE and to the community.

DOE's decision therefore to include language in the draft report to Congress specifying that no federal dollars, including DOE funds, should be used to fund a museum at Rocky Flats is logically inconsistent, unacceptable, and premature. The challenges DOE will face at Rocky Flats after completion of active remediation will be far broader and more challenging than the relatively narrow scope of work at Weldon Spring. To exclude at this time the option of utilizing a museum and/or visitor center at Rocky Flats limits DOE at a time when the agency should be thinking creatively and expansively of how best to meet a number of overlapping requirements and obligations.

More specifically, despite years of requesting that DOE clearly define how it will meet its post-closure stewardship requirements, numerous questions remain. Before DOE begins excluding an option that has proven successful at other, less complicated sites, DOE should focus on how it will meet its long-term obligations. Museums can play a key role so DOE should consider this option at Rocky Flats.

Further, the Senate Armed Services Committee in its report accompanying S. 2400, "The National Defense Authorization Act of 2005" states "[p]ending the outcome of the DOE report on the museum and consideration of the museum board of directors feasibility study, the committee strongly encourages the Secretary of Energy to include funding for the museum in the President's fiscal year 2006 budget request for DOE." We now have two reports that conclude a museum, configured a number of different ways, is feasible. So, instead of positing that DOE shall provide no funds for the museum, DOE should be focused on complying with this directive.

Similarly, DOE notes in its report that without some federal funding museums cannot survive. Therefore, DOE's position of not providing federal funds would likely be the death knell for an otherwise promising option.

Finally, Congress clearly directed DOE to work with local governments, among others, in developing its report. Having your consultant meet once with community members and then providing community members a mere 18 days to review the draft report is unacceptable. DOE had three years to complete its report, and even though your office provided an additional 17 days for us to comment on the report, this approach sends a troubling signal that Legacy Management does not value the importance of working with the community that Environmental Management has exhibited.

In closing, we are pleased that DOE has concluded a museum is feasible. We are however greatly concerned that DOE is actively working to eliminate a feasible option at this time. We would respectfully request that DOE take seriously its obligations to work with the Coalition and other community members on this key issue and delete the provisions in the draft report declaring the agency's policy of not providing funding for a museum.

Sincerely,

/s/
Karen Imbierowicz
Chair

/s/
David M. Abelson
Executive Director

Cc: Senator Wayne Allard
Senator-elect Ken Salazar
Representative Mark Udall
Representative Bob Beauprez
Representative Joel Hefley
Representative Diana DeGette
Representative Tom Tancredo
Representative Marilyn Musgrave
Representative-elect John Salazar
Joshua Bolten, Director, OMB