

**REMARKS BY  
THOMAS P. GRUMBLY  
UNDER SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
TO THE  
ST. LOUIS REMEDIATION TASK FORCE**

**CLAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI  
DECEMBER 5, 1996**

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to each and every member of the St. Louis Site Remediation Task Force upon the completion of your work. You are to be congratulated for tackling a tough assignment on behalf of your community. Your efforts have helped move us forward to resolving the 50-year Cold War legacy in the St. Louis area, and I am confident that we can soon begin large-scale cleanup to protect public health and the environment at these sites.

More than two years ago, I announced that the Department of Energy (DOE) would pull back from its plan at that time to build a bunker to store radioactive waste at the St. Louis Airport site. From the very strong, virtually unanimous community response, it was clearly the right decision. That decision still stands.

I cannot tell you what exactly will happen for the long-term remedy; that is something that must now be worked out between DOE, EPA and the state, with community involvement. I can tell you that we will not be constructing a bunker at the site, as had been proposed here when I first traveled here in 1993. I can also tell you that our primary approach will instead be to remove soil to an out-of-state disposal facility, and to remove as much soil as necessary to protect public health and the environment.

That decision in 1993, I think it is fair to say, was a historic turning point in the history of radioactive waste cleanup in the St. Louis area. We are now poised to take another historic step - one that I hope we can all be equally as proud of, when we are judged by future generations. This next set of decisions will be much more difficult. I do believe not that neither you nor I shrink from this challenge. We may not welcome it, but I think that, working together, we will at least be equal to this challenge.

As we consider the challenges before us, it is useful to take stock of what we have accomplished together in the past two years, because it is clear that we have not simply stood still.

First, we have done cleanup. Thanks to the input of the Task Force, we have completed the cleanup of more than 19 contaminated vicinity properties in the last two years. This has involved the removal of more than 13,000 cubic meters of contaminated soil which would be enough to fill this meeting room 13 times. In FY 1996, we also completed the cleanup of Plant 10 at the Downtown Site industrial property - basically an entire city block of land area. This removed an additional 14,000 cubic meters. We also completed cleanup of the Riverfront Trail area for

recreational use, which entailed removing an additional 850 cubic meters. So, the total amount of contaminated material removed in the last two years was nearly 28,000 cubic meters, which would fill this room nearly 30 times.

Second, we have dramatically increased the funding dedicated to the cleanup of the site. In 1993 when I first started working at DOE, the annual budget for the St. Louis site was \$8 million. For this fiscal year, the annual budget is now more than \$23 million - more than double the budget just three years ago.

Third, and perhaps most importantly for the long run, we have changed the way we do business. By establishing the St. Louis Task Force, we began the process of bringing the community into the decision making process. You all deserve an incredible amount of credit for this. I know that virtually all of this work has been done on a volunteer basis; that all of you have spent countless hours reviewing documents and attending meetings, and writing an extensive report. I can assure you that your report is being taken absolutely seriously, and being given the very best consideration possible.

I must tell you that the work is not yet complete. The bad news is that many of you have not reviewed your last document, nor attended your last meeting. The good news is that the expertise you have developed, the patterns of communication you put in place, and the progress you have made so far are certainly not in vain, and are exactly the building blocks for how we are going to work through the remaining issues.

We know that because the St. Louis site is on EPA's National Priorities List, we need to work with EPA and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to develop specific cleanup approaches for each area. We know that whatever remedy we put in place needs the support of the community if it is going to be successful, and so we need to continue to involve the public in this process.

Today, because of the solid record that all of us have established, we begin crossing the watershed into the next historic phase of the cleanup of the St. Louis sites. None of us knows exactly what all of the answers before us are going to be. I would submit to you that one thing is clear: the only way to get there is by continuing to work together.

I would like to begin our discussion today by offering some things on the table - the most important of which, and the most valuable to me, is my *word*. I have been very careful to meet every commitment I make to you, and to avoid making commitments that I can not make.

There are three levels of issues that I would like to discuss with you today: general commitments, commitments in response to your Task Force report recommendations, and commitments in response to issues that have been raised by state and local officials as well as the community.

First, as a government agency, we must always keep in mind two fundamental obligations:

1. We remain committed to protecting human health and the environment, and will take whatever action is necessary to provide this protection.
2. We commit to undertaking continued cleanup of the St. Louis site in a manner that not only protects human health and the environment, but also facilitates economic development, in coordination with communities, by ensuring that the timing and extent of cleanup allows for expected land uses.

Next, your Task Force Report included six specific recommendations. Frankly, some of these recommendations go further than we are able to respond fully at this time. A complete response will require working together today and in the future. But, I think I owe you some initial response.

1. Funding. Your report recommended that the Department "commit sufficient funding to continue and accelerate the cleanup...". The Department of Energy is taking steps to significantly increase the funds for the St. Louis sites to make available up to \$23 million in FY 1997, the current fiscal year. For the next fiscal year, FY 1998, we have proposed a substantial increase in the budget account that funds sites like this one. I cannot tell you the exact FY 1998 funding level yet because it is still subject to deliberations at the White House Office of Management and the Budget. I can assure you, however, that we expect it to be a substantial increase, and that it is being received favorably so far.

These additional funds will be allocated using the same method we have been using for the past couple of years: by coordinating with the community as well as the EPA and State Regulators on what specific tasks should be performed with available funding. Our suggestion will be to use the funds to accelerate and expand the cleanup of the Haul Routes and the Downtown Site in consideration of the Task Force recommendations and community concerns, as well as our own sense of the risk priorities and prudent management.

Moreover, we remain committed to requesting adequate funds from Congress to cleanup of the St. Louis sites, in accordance with the final decision on the remedy, and to achieve cleanup as swiftly as possible. We must all realize that the pressures to reduce the federal budget deficit are enormous and they are real. We must all work together to ensure that the dollars are spent as efficiently as possible and that any cleanup is adequately justified if we are to succeed in obtaining approval for the increased funding necessary.

2. Remove soil according to standards recommended in report. Your report recommended very specific cleanup standards for specific areas. We are prepared to accept the public health and technical basis for most of these specific sites, such as the haul routes and vicinity properties being cleaned up to residential standards. We are also prepared to move ahead with cleaning up the

Downtown site to "commercial, industrial and recreational use" standards.

We must all acknowledge, however, that the issue of what to do about the airport site (known as "SLAPPS") and the Latty Avenue storage site, and how to fund them, is not an easy one. We recognize that the task force recommended cleanup for these sites to "unrestricted use" levels, principally to protect the groundwater. What we need to work out is what level of protection is appropriate, and how to achieve it. We acknowledge this as an issue, and we need to work out ways to move forward.

We understand that the Task Force expressed serious concerns about the potential threats to groundwater. The result of the expert panel indicates the need for more data in order to draw firm conclusions. We commit to work in collaboration with stakeholders to develop a more complete hydrogeologic assessment. This assessment should include the deep groundwater system and a more comprehensive analysis of contaminated sources at the airport site and the Latty Avenue site, including the impact of Coldwater Creek. This will provide a more thorough assessment of potential off-site contamination and validate results of the groundwater monitoring.

3. Airport Site First - Your report recommended that the airport site be cleaned up first. As we understand this recommendation, this reflects a concern that unless it is cleaned up first, that cleanup of the airport site would lag behind, and possibly be forgotten. We have been working with you successfully in allocating funds to the cleanup projects that you believe are the highest priorities. This has meant that the haul routes and vicinity properties have been cleaned up first during the last couple of years. We propose to continue this process of involving the community in the priority setting. As for the concern about leaving the airport site behind, I can commit to you that whatever cleanup decision is made for the airport site, it will not occur as a result of simply coming last, and it will meet our overall commitment of protecting public health and the environment.

4. On-site Office - We commit to establishing and providing on-site federal staffing for a St. Louis cleanup office for the duration of the project. The Department of Energy will take immediate steps to increase its presence in St. Louis. The Department will staff an on-site office at the St. Louis sites at a level to match the growth in scope of the cleanup work here. We will have at least one full-time federal manager on site by February 1, 1997. Additional staffing will be completed incrementally as the execution of an agreed-upon remedy is taking place.

5. Use Recommended New Technologies - We appreciate the attention paid by the Task Force subcommittee to new technologies. In particular, we strongly agree with the overall conclusion that there is a potential for new technologies to improve the effectiveness and reduce the cost of the cleanup over traditional remedies. We commit to examining the development and use of new technologies, including those that were identified by the Task Force. Specifically, we propose to sponsor a technology review workshop, here in the St. Louis area, to allow vendors to present their ideas on possible technologies to the community and to each other.

Site descriptions and a list of site challenges would be sent to interested companies. Vendors and cleanup firms who have viable cleanup approaches will have an opportunity to present their performance and cost data for actual site cleanups for mutual consideration. After the workshop, we will work with the Task Force, in collaboration with the EPA and State Regulators, on pricing out various options for each site in consideration of the Task Force recommendations, regulatory framework and land use.

These are the recommendations of the Task Force as we understand them. Obviously there is more work to do, but I think that there is an incredible amount of progress that we can make immediately in response to the Task Force recommendations.

In addition, there are a number of commitments I am prepared to make today, on behalf of the Department, in response to concerns expressed from local officials, your Congressional delegation and others in the community. These are all vital issues for moving this process ahead in the near term.

1. We commit to continued support for the St. Louis Remediation Task Force, including assistance in converting to a Site Specific Advisory Board, if that is what the community chooses to facilitate effective communication, assist in priority setting, and oversee implementation of the cleanup.
2. The Department is also changing the way it hires and manages contractors. We are going to be smarter and more demanding consumers. And in the process, we are going to get faster and more cost-effective clean-ups. We commit to continuing our contract reform process at the St. Louis site that has been underway at other sites. The bottom line for everyone is to ensure that the funding is spent as efficiently as possible through a combination of performance-based contracts and competitive fixed priced contracts. In addition, we are working to increase accountability for how taxpayers' money is spent, especially in the area of contractor overhead and support costs.
3. The Department is also in the process of redesigning the entire clean-up program with the goal of completing work at most sites except for the largest nuclear weapons sites within 10 years.

These are formidable challenges. We will need to work together to accomplish them.

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Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP)

# ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

for the St. Louis Site, Missouri



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