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Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

OCT 19 1999

Mr. William R. Augustine
Deputy Chief
Programs Management Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Department of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

Dear Mr. Augustine:

I am writing to you as a follow-up to discussions our staffs have had regarding two former Department of the Army facilities in the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) program where the former Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) also conducted activities. These sites are the former Marion Engineer Depot and the former Scioto Ordnance Plant, both just outside of Marion, Ohio. The Department of Energy (DOE) has records relating to both of these facilities. Since there has been public concern regarding the possibility of residual radioactivity at the sites, I am writing to you to provide a brief description of the information and records that DOE possesses.

Marion Engineer Depot:

Our records indicate that the former AEC performed radiation monitoring for the Army at the Marion Engineer Depot in 1947 and 1949. This monitoring was conducted in a storage area for some early night vision devices, known as "metascopes" or "sniper scopes." This Army equipment used radioactive sources as part of their mechanism. The measured radiation exposures in the metascopes storage area were rather high. The Department has transmitted this information to the Army for its use in the conduct of its cleanup programs in letters dated 1982, 1987, and 1990.

Scioto Ordnance Plant:

The Scioto Ordnance Plant produced various military products during World War II. In 1948, the AEC constructed a facility known as the Scioto Laboratory on part of the land of the Scioto Ordnance Plant. According to historical accounts, the Scioto Laboratory provided the AEC with a contingency production capacity for polonium-beryllium neutron sources, if the production line at the Mound Laboratory in Dayton, Ohio, were not available (i.e., fire, sabotage, military attack, etc.). Since the half-life

of polonium is 138 days, the neutron sources were a perishable component in atomic weapons, and the loss of production capability for the neutron sources would adversely affect the availability of atomic weapons. An initial review of the facility by DOE Mound staff in 1997 indicated that the Scioto Laboratory had never operated. The Scioto Laboratory was placed on standby almost as soon as construction was completed, and it was closed permanently in 1954. Consequently, the facility may not have ever operated at all, and our recent review of available documentation appears to confirm that conclusion.

State Concerns:

The State of Ohio has contacted DOE regarding concerns about radioactivity at these sites. The Scioto Laboratory is a DOE-predecessor facility. The contaminants of concern from AEC activities might include industrial chemicals (metals, beryllium, solvents, fuel oil, acids, bases, etc.) and radioactive substances (e.g., Po-210 and trace radioactivity in polonium sources).

Section III.D.1. of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOE and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the program administration and execution of the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) provides that the Department:

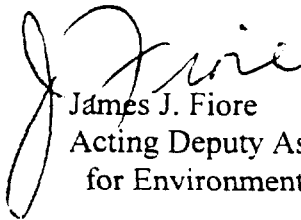
- Shall perform historical research and provide a FUSRAP eligibility determination, with historical references, as to whether a site was used for activities which supported the Nation's early atomic energy program;
- Shall provide the Corps with the determination, a description of the type of processes involved in the historical activities at the site, the geographic boundaries of those activities (as reflected by documentation available to DOE), and the potential radioactive and/or chemical contaminants at the site; and
- Shall maintain records of determination of eligibility and other files, documents and records associated with the site.

In accordance with the MOU, DOE has performed historical research regarding the former Scioto Laboratory, which is located just outside of Marion, Ohio, and has concluded that this site was used for activities which supported the Nation's early atomic energy program. Historical references supporting this conclusion are enclosed. In addition, for your convenience, we are enclosing similar historical material for the Marion Engineer Depot. I understand that the FUDS project manager in the Louisville District has additional information.

Accordingly, the Scioto Laboratory would be eligible for inclusion in the FUSRAP if the Corps determines, under Section III.D.2 of the MOU, that the response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act is required to address FUSRAP-related contamination at the site. We understand that there is a high level of public concern relating to these sites, and we are confident that the Corps will take whatever action is appropriate.

Please call me if you would like to discuss this issue or if you would like further information related to the sites.

Sincerely,



James J. Fiore
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Environmental Restoration

11 Enclosures

cc: S. Miller, DOE/Office of General Counsel, GC-51
G. Mitchell, OH/U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
O. Vincent, OH