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**Statement by Daniel Hirsch, President, Committee to Bridge the Gap  
Regarding Clinton Administration's Decision on Ward Valley Nuclear Waste Dump**

The Colorado River weeps today. The Administration has sold the Colorado River down the river.

Not since John Muir's heart was broken by the loss of Hetch Hetchy has California's environment lost such an important battle. But all that was lost at Hetch Hetchy was a gorgeous valley; here we may well have polluted, for half a million years to come, the main water source for most of the Southwest.

When will this Administration learn that it cannot expect people to stand by it when it won't stand by its own word? It had promised it wouldn't transfer the land until the state court litigation was resolved and an evidentiary hearing held. It has now abrogated those commitments.

The Clinton Administration has today done itself great damage in California and in the environmental community nationally. It can partially redeem itself only if it imposes genuine, rigorous, binding, and enforceable conditions on the Ward Valley transfer. If it doesn't, its representatives will find an extremely frosty reception whenever they try to set foot here, asking their natural allies for help.

Take the tritium measurements immediately. Don't transfer the land unless the site passes those safety tests. Restrict the individual radionuclides to the amount the public was told in the Environment Impact Statement would go to the dump. Only by these actions can the Administration partially redeem itself for its actions today in breaking its commitments on Ward Valley.

All eyes will now be on Babbitt and Wilson as they negotiate conditions for the transfer. ~ Wilson says the NAS report is the best thing since sliced bread, but he refuses to commit in a binding and enforceable fashion to carry out all its recommendations, Wilson says the Environmental Impact Report is accurate and no more waste will go to the dump than disclosed therein, yet he refuses to be bound to the limits in the EW for individual radionuclides such as plutonium and cesium. He says he is convinced the facility is safe, yet refuses to take the tritium

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measurements recommended by the NAS now, and refuses to agree to have the project not go forward if the site fails the tests. He promises to hold a hearing if he wants to increase the amount of wastes at the site, but he broke two previous promises to hold hearings, one to the State Senate and one to the Interior Department.

Interior's credibility has been severely strained as well. Secretary Babbitt promised he wouldn't transfer the land until there was an evidentiary hearing, with cross-examination and testimony by all sides. He broke that promise. He promised the land wouldn't transfer until the state litigation was over. He broke that promise too. People will be doubtless skeptical when he now says he will not transfer Ward Valley unless he receives binding, enforceable commitments to carry out the NAS committee's recommendations, including tritium testing, and cap the plutonium and other wastes in a binding, non-amendable fashion. We will be watching carefully to see if his word on this is any better than his word on the hearing and awaiting the court.

We will particularly watch closely to see if he requires the tritium testing be done now, before the transfer, and commits to not transfer the land if it fails that crucial safety test. And we will watch closely to see if he limits plutonium and other radionuclides such as cesium and strontium to the amounts in the EIR, and makes all conditions enforceable by the public and genuinely binding, not amendable later.

This nuclear dump will leak, as have all the other nuclear dumps operated by this company, US Ecology.

When that radioactive plume starts to migrate toward the Colorado--and migrate it will--it will have two names on it, Pete Wilson and Bruce Babbitt, with a single patron, the nuclear industry. Other Governors and Interior Secretaries have mountains named after them, to commemorate their conservation work. This leaking radioactive dump, and all the cancers it will produce, will be the perpetual memorial for the strange bedfellows Wilson and Babbitt, who put political expediency above moral obligation to future generations.

Either Interior and Wilson were lying when they said in the EIS that was how much would be dumped, in which case it should be redone; or if they were telling the truth, they should put their money where their mouths are and commit, in binding fashion to no more plutonium, cesium, strontium, or the other radionuclides than they said in the EIS. You can't have it both ways; either you lied in the EIS or you told the truth. If true, make it binding, unchangeable, and publicly enforceable.

Hundreds of generations to come will curse this day, and the men who put political convenience over moral obligation to the future.”

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**Environmental Groups Condemn Clinton Administration**  
**Breaking of Commitments on Ward Valley, California, Nuclear Waste Dump**

Statements by Public Citizen. Greenpeace. US PIRG. Sierra Club. & NRDC

“The Clinton Administration has broken a solemn promise to the American people. President Clinton, Vice-President Gore and Secretary Babbitt have all repeatedly committed that they would not transfer the land for a radioactive waste dump at Ward Valley until pending state court litigation was resolved and an evidentiary hearing was held. Transferring the land in violation of that promise puts the profits of the nuclear power industry ahead of citizens’ health, safety and public participation rights.”

Bill Magavern, Director of Public Citizen’s Critical Mass Energy Project  
(202) 546-4996

“The Clinton Administration cannot expect the environmental community to support them when they break their promises and endanger the public. When President Clinton, Vice President Gore, or Bruce Babbitt visit California, we will be there, dogging their feet, reminding them of their broken promises and their reckless endangerment of our environment. How dare they think they can break their word like this?”

Sherry Meddick, Radioactive Waste Campaign, Greenpeace  
(714) 629-2641

“Bruce Babbitt should be ashamed of himself. He has broken his word. The health and safety of over 20 million citizens should come before the profits of the nuclear industry.”

Anna Aurilio, Staff Scientist, U.S. Public Interest Research Group  
(202) 546-9707

“We are very disappointed that the Department of the Interior is transferring the Ward Valley site to Pete Wilson before addressing the remaining scientific issues. Even the National Academy of Sciences says that if previous measurements showing radiation migration through the soil at the site are accurate, the safety of the project is in serious doubt. We have no faith that Governor Wilson will act on the NAS recommendations. Wilson’s administration has served more as a cheerleader for the applicant than a protector of public safety.”

“This action by the Department of the Interior is especially troublesome since it breaks their promise that the land would not be transferred until legal challenges were resolved and adjudicatory hearings held on the remaining issues.”

Mike Paparian, Senior Representative, Sierra Club  
(916) 557-1100

“The Administration’s prior commitments put public health and safety first. This premature land transfer subordinates that public interest to political pressures from the nuclear industry. We are very disappointed.”

Joel Reynolds, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council, Los Angeles  
(213) 934-6900

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