



THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES
OF
THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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October 4, 1996

Lieutenant Colonel Donald L. Curtis, Jr.
District Engineer
Walla Walla District, Corps of Engineers
201 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Re: Discovery of human remains at Columbia Park

Dear Col. Curtis:

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation has had considerable experience with providing for the protection of burials in reservoirs. A number of burials have been protected in the Wells Reservoir. These burials are regularly monitored and the methods used to protect the burials appear to be working. The methods used in the Wells Reservoir were developed after careful engineering studies and include the use of fabric. We do not want to have the Corps make any mistakes in designing protection for the burials at Kennewick. It is understood that there is pressure to do something immediately, but this perceived need for haste must be tempered by the design of protective measures that will last for the life of the project, and beyond. It appears that your current plan may have been designed in haste.

Furthermore, the recommendation that the remains be returned to the place where they were found made by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation continues to be our position. From Indian tradition, returning the remains to where they were originally buried is best. It is our feeling that the remains should be returned to where they were found and be protected by adequate armoring at those locations. There is always a concern about missing elements of the remains when they are moved and this is especially true in the case of the most ancient burial where the bones are in fragments. There is no need to change the locations, the graves can be protected in place. The suggestions of removing the remains to a cemetery near Richland or combining the remains at one location are not considered to be appropriate for this situation. The remains can be returned to where they were found and be protected by the construction of impenetrable armoring which could include reinforced concrete vaults. The vaults, and/or other protective armoring could then be included in the embankment protection designed to prevent further erosion of the bank. The reinterment at the original locations would also be desirable for long-term law enforcement patrol. Columbia Park is regularly patrolled by law enforcement agencies.

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