



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 15, 2022  
CONTACT: Victoria Vreeland, Board Chair, 425-829-1633

## **Nikolas Peterson Named New Director of Hanford Challenge**

### ***Founder Tom Carpenter Will Serve as Senior Advisor***

Seattle, WA – The Hanford Challenge [Board of Directors](#) today announced Nikolas Peterson will become Executive Director of Hanford Challenge, effective April 1, 2022, when Founder and current Executive Director Tom Carpenter steps down to move into an advisory role.

Peterson is currently Deputy and Legal Director at Hanford Challenge and has worked alongside Carpenter for ten years. Carpenter will remain actively involved as Senior Advisor through the end of 2022 and will continue to support the mission of Hanford Challenge in the years ahead.

Hanford Challenge is a non-profit organization that works to protect Hanford workers and the public from Hanford Nuclear Site's chemical and radiological contamination.

Carpenter commented on the upcoming transition, "Nikolas has a passion for Hanford cleanup, an excellent track record of protecting whistleblowers, and the skill-set and competencies to ensure Hanford is held accountable and is transparent. I can't imagine a better person to lead Hanford Challenge in the continued work ahead for a safer, cleaner future for the Hanford Nuclear Site."

Hanford Challenge Board Chair Victoria Vreeland commented on the Board's announced change in leadership: "We join so many in our communities here in the Northwest and advocates across the country in expressing our deep gratitude for Tom's leadership in holding nuclear sites and government oversight agencies accountable to the public." The Board added, "We are delighted that Nikolas Peterson is taking the reins as Executive Director to carry forward the important work of Hanford Challenge, including supporting nuclear whistleblowers who bring serious problems to light and continuing the efforts to ensure a safe and effective cleanup of the most-contaminated and dangerous facility in the nation."

Nikolas Peterson is from Walla Walla and is a 4th-generation Washingtonian. After graduating with honors from Seattle University School of Law in 2012, Peterson started with Hanford Challenge where he has now spent his entire professional career representing nuclear whistleblowers and providing legal advocacy in worker health and environmental matters. In 2021, he became the organization's Deputy and Legal Director.

Peterson commented on his experience at Hanford Challenge, "I feel a great responsibility to everyone who calls the Pacific Northwest home to ensure a safe and effective cleanup of Hanford. I have learned so much from Tom, working side by side these past 10 years, and I'm fortunate to be able to rely on his guidance as I step into this new role."

Carpenter, an activist and attorney, founded Hanford Challenge in October 2007, after working with the D.C.-based Government Accountability Project (GAP) starting in 1985. While at GAP, Carpenter was the Manager of the Nuclear Oversight Campaign where he represented numerous nuclear whistleblowers across the nation in both commercial and military production nuclear sites. His work on nuclear issues

started in 1978 with the founding of the grassroots citizen group Cincinnati Alliance for Responsible Energy.

In 1992, in response to a growing number of serious disclosures about environmental and safety violations at the Hanford nuclear site, Carpenter established a West coast office of GAP where he continued working on nuclear cases nationwide, especially at Department of Energy nuclear production sites. Carpenter also developed relationships with Russian citizen groups, lawyers, and academics on Russian nuclear pollution, visiting Russia on many occasions to speak at conferences and conduct environmental sampling.

In his work with GAP, Carpenter also represented numerous Hanford whistleblowers and led campaigns to challenge ongoing safety and environmental violations, threats to worker health and safety, and fraud and abuse. Hanford Challenge was his vision and outgrowth from GAP with a focus on legal advocacy support to Hanford insiders with safety, environmental, and mismanagement concerns.

Those insider worker concerns were numerous and storied, including early whistleblowers like Casey Ruud and Ed Bricker, who blew the whistle on egregious violations of nuclear safety and environmental laws. And for that they were fired and blackballed. Other workers brought forth concerns about unreported tank leaks, the migration of waste from the tanks to the groundwater, explosion hazards from tank waste, and more.

Hanford Challenge worked alongside several key scientists and management officials to present the design flaws and defects in construction quality at the Waste Treatment Plant, including testimony to Congress resulting in corrective action. Some of those employees, including Walt Tamosaitis, Donna Busche, and Gary Brunson, also brought fraud and public policy retaliation claims against Hanford contractors, which were later settled for \$125 million. Most of that money was paid back to the federal government.

Hanford Challenge also waged a decades-long campaign to expose the health and safety effects of exposure to toxic vapors emanating from the high-level radioactive waste tanks. After a hard-fought court battle brought by Hanford Challenge, UA Local 598, and Attorney General Bob Ferguson, Hanford contractor management settled the case in 2018, agreeing to provide better protection to tank farm workers and to eventually install an engineered vapor reduction system.

Other campaigns led by Carpenter involve active opposition against government attempts to re-label high-level tank waste exposing safety issues with the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford (which was finally canceled in 1998), and numerous management corruption and malfeasance cases.

Carpenter helped found and participate in the Hanford Joint Council (1994), which later became the Hanford Concerns Council (2007-2018), which mediated and resolved over 120 employee-whistleblower cases from Hanford.

The Hanford Challenge Board of Directors, nearly half of whom were raised or continue to live and work in the Tri-Cities, has spent over a year in this succession and leadership transition process. It is dedicated to the mission and can assure all stakeholders that they can expect the same commitment and high level of trust, support, and performance for which the organization is well-known to continue under the leadership of Peterson.

For more information about Hanford Challenge, please visit <https://www.hanfordchallenge.org/>

###