

News from Around the Complex

March 2007

March 29, 2007

Legislators slam door to nuclear waste site: Panel's 16-0 vote effectively kills bill to keep Barnwell landfill open longer, *The State*

A Utah company's push to dump more nuclear waste in Barnwell County suffered a crippling defeat Wednesday that some legislators called historic in its message to the nation: South Carolina wants out of the nuclear waste disposal business after three decades of owning a landfill for the country's radioactive garbage. Wednesday's surprising 16-0 House committee vote effectively kills legislation to keep the landfill open to the country after 2008, although the landfill's operator could try other legislative means to accomplish its goal. Energy Solutions of Utah, a rapidly expanding nuclear services company, could get help from lawmakers who could attach an amendment to another bill. The company, which has hired 10 lobbyists through its Barnwell division, is expected to push similar legislation next year. But lawmakers who voted against the landfill said the nation needs to find another place to bury low-level nuclear waste. The overwhelming vote by the House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee underscores that belief, some said. South Carolina has been taken for granted as a disposal site by other states, said Rep. David Umphlett, R-Berkeley.

<http://www.thestate.com/426/story/21132.html>

March 28, 2007

Delays may hit DOE in wallet, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The Department of Energy apparently won't have the money to complete some of its Oak Ridge cleanup projects on time, which means fines and penalties could be on the way. "We're not prepared to renegotiate milestones," John Owsley, who heads the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Oak Ridge oversight office, said Tuesday. Owsley said DOE hasn't asked the state to alter the existing cleanup agreements - yet. However, he's seen the requested budget amount for fiscal 2008 and read comments from DOE officials that suggest the agency wants to renegotiate the terms. "We have concerns that DOE has acknowledged they have not requested sufficient funds to meet compliance in 2008," he said. The proposed environmental management budget for Oak Ridge next year is about \$444 million. DOE spokesman John Shewairy confirmed Tuesday there won't be enough money to do all of the 2008 work that's committed under the legally binding Federal Facilities Agreement. The agreement is with the state of Tennessee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5447023,00.html

March 28, 2007

Energy Department Fined \$1 Million, *Washington Post*

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) - The Environmental Protection Agency on Tuesday fined the federal Energy Department \$1.1 million over violations of an agreement to clean up the Hanford nuclear reservation, the nation's most polluted nuclear site. The fine involved operations at a landfill that is the primary repository for contaminated soils, debris and other hazardous and radioactive waste from cleanup operations across the site. After first shutting down operations upon discovery of the failures, the EPA has permitted the landfill to resume operations under strict oversight. The EPA pointed out problems in a letter to the Energy Department on Tuesday, saying that

workers did not perform weekly inspections that would reduce the risk of leaks in landfill liners and that operations did not comply with tests on compacted waste for structural stability.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/28/AR2007032800009_pf.html

March 27, 2007

Managers Blamed in Yucca Controversy, *Washington Post*

WASHINGTON (AP) - Evidence of paperwork fraud by scientists working on the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump in Nevada was the fault of senior managers who failed to hold subordinates accountable, according to a final report by the Energy Department. Tuesday's report, two years after the controversy came to light, said the problem was limited to a few disgruntled U.S. Geological Survey scientists who no longer work on the project. The project has a new senior management team that has made a number of changes and promised more. At issue were e-mails exchanged among USGS hydrologists between 1998 and 2004 that indicated they falsified documentation of their work by making up dates and keeping two different sets of papers _ one for themselves and another for quality-assurance officials.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/27/AR2007032701553_pf.html

http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info_library/newsroom/documents/corrective_Action_0307_Final.pdf

March 27, 2007

U.S. Department of Energy Commits \$15 million to its Idaho National Lab for Post-Irradiation Examination Equipment, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Dennis Spurgeon today announced \$15 million in funding is being provided to DOE's Idaho National Laboratory (INL) for new post-irradiation examination (PIE) equipment for advanced fuels development. State-of-the-art PIE equipment is pivotal in the development strategy for the President's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) transmutation fuels and will help address complex technical issues. This investment demonstrates DOE's commitment to furthering the GNEP process, and will bring INL in line with other world-class research and development laboratories with the new equipment.

<http://energy.gov/news/4898.htm>

March 23, 2007

DOE to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Proposed Surplus Plutonium Disposition at the Savannah River Site, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) this week sent to the Federal Register a notice announcing that it will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of proposed plutonium disposition capabilities at the Savannah River Site (SRS) near Aiken, South Carolina. DOE has previously studied alternative technologies for stabilizing plutonium at SRS and will prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that identifies a plutonium vitrification facility and use of H-Canyon as the preferred alternatives. "The Department is committed to preparing our surplus plutonium, that is currently stored at the Savannah River site, for disposal in a safe and environmentally responsible manner," Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management James Rispoli said.

<http://energy.gov/news/4893.htm>

March 21, 2007

NNSA chief quizzed on nuke waste policy, *United Press International*

WASHINGTON, March 21 (UPI) -- The acting head of the U.S. National Nuclear Safety Administration was quizzed Tuesday about his agency's nuclear waste policy. Rep. Terry Everett, R-Ala., the ranking Republican on the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, said in a statement at Tuesday's hearing on the Department of Energy's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request for atomic energy defense activities that he wanted to question Tom D'Agostino, the NNSA's acting administrator, on "progress in the consolidation and disposition of nuclear material, including the status of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Facility (MOX) project and the impact of the Continuing Resolution-- not just on MOX but the larger security and financial costs of not consolidating nuclear materials in the near-term." Everett also told Jim Rispoli, assistant secretary for environmental management at the U.S. Department of Energy, that he wanted to explore "progress in the disposition of special nuclear materials and radioactive tank waste."

http://www.upi.com/SecurityTerrorism/nnsa_chief_quizzed_on_nuke_waste_policy/20070321-101715-8811r/

March 21, 2007

Y-12 finishes dismantling nuclear weapons systems, *The Oak Ridger*

(AP) — The Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge has completed dismantling uranium components from two major warhead and bomb systems, federal officials said Tuesday. The National Nuclear Security Administration said Y-12 had finished work on W56 warheads, deployed on the Minuteman II intercontinental ballistic missiles during the Cold War, and two types of B61 strategic nuclear bombs. NNSA, a quasi-independent agency overseeing nuclear weapons for the Department of Energy, did not say how many warheads were involved. But the agency characterized the work as part of President Bush's commitment in 2004 to reduce the size of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile by nearly 50 percent by 2012 — the smallest level since the Eisenhower administration.

http://www.oakridger.com/stories/032107/new_157618621.shtml

March 17, 2007

Congress OKs extra \$33 million for Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

Hanford will receive more money than expected this year under a Department of Energy spending plan released Friday. Hanford projects would receive an additional \$33 million in the current fiscal year that began in October. Congress failed to pass a detailed budget for the Department of Energy for the current fiscal year, instead approving an overall appropriation. The operating plan describes for Congress how DOE plans to use the money. Hanford leaders had been expecting to receive the amounts proposed in the Bush administration's budget request made in February 2006. The additional money will be used for "priority cleanup areas," said Karen Lutz, spokeswoman for DOE's Hanford Richland Operations Office. "Full funding keeps us on track to complete substantial cleanup work this year," she said. About \$12 million will be added to money to protect ground water from radioactive and chemical contamination at the nuclear reservation, bringing ground water spending this year to about \$87 million. Work to retrieve, package and certify transuranic waste -- typically debris contaminated with plutonium -- for disposal at a national repository in New Mexico would receive an additional \$15 million. Some of the waste temporarily was buried in drums and boxes until the nation had a repository for it.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8715381p-8617381c.html>

March 16, 2007

Department of Energy Submits \$23.6 Billion Spending Plan to Congress for FY'07, DOE Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today submitted the Department's \$23.598 billion spending plan to Congress for Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, a \$45 million (0.2%) increase over the FY'07 request, as a result of the FY'07 Continuing Resolution. The spending plan will allow DOE to continue making marked progress in achieving President Bush's goal of bringing more clean energy sources to market to help cut dependence on fossil fuels, increasing our energy and economic security and boosting competitiveness. The Continuing Resolution, signed by President Bush on February 15, required that a spending plan be submitted to Congress within 30 days of enactment...The Office of Environmental Management will receive a \$358 million increase to further DOE's commitment to safe cleanup of our Cold War-era nuclear facilities. Over half of this funding is for the long-term stewardship of DOE sites safely closed in FY'06 including Rocky Flats, Fernald, Columbus and Ashtabula sites. This plan will further DOE's progress in cleaning up liquid tank waste, solid waste, and special nuclear material, and in remediating soil and groundwater contamination across the DOE complex.

<http://energy.gov/news/4884.html>

Link to FY'07 DOE operating plan:

<http://www.doe.gov/media/FY2007OperatingPlanForDOE.pdf>

March 16, 2007

Feds: \$26.9 Billion for Yucca Mountain, The Guardian UK

WASHINGTON (AP) - It will cost \$26.9 billion to build and operate the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump through 2023, the Energy Department said Friday in a new cost calculation. The department did not release a new figure for the total life-cycle cost of the Nevada project, estimated several years ago at \$58 billion. The department plans to recalculate that figure in May and it almost certainly will rise, said Edward F. "Ward" Sproat, director of the Energy Department's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. The \$26.9 billion figure, about in line with recent estimates, assumes that the department meets its goal of opening the repository in March 2017, Sproat told reporters on a conference call. "It is our best estimate at this stage of the game as to what the total program's going to cost. We think it's an accurate projection," he said. That 2017 opening date is a best-case scenario and Sproat cautioned it will slip if the department does not get the money it needs each year for the dump.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uslatest/story/0,,-6486990,00.html>

March 14, 2007

Ohio plant lost small amount of radioactive material recently, Louisville Courier-Journal

Federal Department of Energy officials acknowledged yesterday they have been looking for some missing radioactive material from a closed uranium enrichment facility in southern Ohio. Laura Schachter, an Energy Department spokeswoman based in Lexington, Ky., described the material as a medical capsule-sized amount of radium-226 that poses no security risk and is not likely to be a threat to anyone's health or the environment. Nevertheless, she said the department had recently brought in a team of experts to the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant at Piketon, Ohio, which is about 20 miles north of the Ohio River, to search for the material. The department was also investigating how contractors could have misplaced the material, Schachter said.

<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070314/NEWS01/703141383/1008/NEWS01>

March 9, 2007

DOE proposes \$1.9 billion for Hanford work, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy is proposing a \$1.9 billion budget for the Hanford nuclear reservation in fiscal year 2009. That figure, which does not include administration costs, is down \$42 million from the Bush administration budget request for fiscal year 2009. But it's up \$15 million from what Hanford officials expect to have to spend this year. The \$1.9 billion figure includes a proposed second year of full funding for construction of Hanford's massive vitrification plant. However, for the third year in a row, funding would be at a reduced level at Hanford's tank farms.

*** The 2009 budget target figures were released Thursday at a Hanford Advisory Board committee meeting. Each spring DOE headquarters sends Hanford officials target budget numbers for the fiscal year two years ahead. *** This is a particularly confusing budget period because budgets for fiscal years 2007, 2008 and 2009 are being worked on at the same time, after Congress failed to pass a fiscal year 2007 budget for the Department of Energy before the start of the fiscal year last October.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8696191p-8594880c.html>

March 8, 2007

Energy Praises the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Approval of the First United States Nuclear Plant Site in Over 30 Years, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today commended the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's decision to approve the first-ever Early Site Permit (ESP) for the Exelon Generation Company's Clinton site, in central Illinois. This decision marks a major milestone in the President's plan to expand the use of safe and clean nuclear power. As part of President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative - which seeks to change the way we power this nation – nuclear power will play an increasingly important role as the demand for electricity grows worldwide.

<http://energy.gov/news/4854.htm>

March 8, 2007

LANL cleanup delayed by gap between money, commitments, *Santa Fe New Mexican*

(AP) - The U.S. Department of Energy has steadily reduced money for environmental cleanup, adding billions of dollars to the final cost of cleaning up contaminated sites - including \$660 million more at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Sen. Pete Domenici said Thursday. The department is setting cleanup priorities based on risk to fit its budget constraints, but "the erosion of funding is undermining the department's existing cleanup obligations and will push back completion dates," the New Mexico Republican said. The DOE "needs to set budget baselines that match our cleanup goals and then deliver on these commitments year after year," said Domenici, ranking Republican on the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations subcommittee. The subcommittee on Wednesday reviewed next year's budget requests for the DOE Office of Environmental Management and Office of Civilian Nuclear Waste, which oversee environmental cleanup and run such programs as the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant at Carlsbad.

<http://www.freewmexican.com/news/58195.html#>

March 7, 2007

DOE: Funds for Yucca Nuclear Waste Site Insufficient, *Dow Jones Newswire*

WASHINGTON - Current funding levels from the U.S. Congress are insufficient to meet the mounting costs of building the planned Yucca Mountain nuclear waste depository in Nevada, a senior Department of Energy official told a Senate panel Wednesday. "Funding at current levels in future years will not be adequate to support design and the necessary concurrent capital purchases for repository construction, the transportation infrastructure, and the transportation and disposal casks," Director for Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Edward Sproat told the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water. "Sustained funding well above the current and historic levels will be required if the repository is to be built," Sproat said. Congress approved \$444.5 million for fiscal year 2007, \$100 million less than the DOE requested.

<http://www.nasdaq.com/aspxcontent/NewsStory.aspx?cpath=20070307%5cACQDJON200703071944DOWJONESDJONLINE001196.htm&>

March 7, 2007

Federal lawmakers reintroduce legislation to compensate nuclear workers, *Empire State News*

A number of federal lawmakers including Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, and House Members Thomas Reynolds, Louise Slaughter and Brian Higgins, Tuesday re-introduced legislation to reform the compensation program for nuclear workers at Bethlehem Steel and other former New York atomic weapons production facilities. The bill would enable employees to be added to a "special exposure cohort" and receive compensation under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program if exposure records do not enable case-by-case decisions to be made. Congress passed the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act in 2000 to compensate workers who contracted radioactive cancer, beryllium disease or chronic silicosis after working at sites that performed nuclear weapons work during World War II and the Cold War.

<http://www.empirestatenews.net/News/20070307-7.html>

March 7, 2007

U.S. to Owe Billions for Delays in Nuclear Dump, Official Says, *New York Times*

WASHINGTON, March 6 — The federal government will owe \$7 billion in damages for delays in opening a nuclear waste dump if the repository opens in 2017 — the earliest date now possible — and any further delay will raise the price half a billion dollars a year, the head of the radioactive waste program said Tuesday. The money would reimburse current and former nuclear plant operators who signed contracts under which the federal government agreed to begin accepting their wastes in 1998. The official, Edward F. Sproat III, director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, said progress toward opening a waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev., near Las Vegas, had been slowed by lack of money, despite a \$19.5 billion fund financed by a fee on each kilowatt-hour of electricity generated by reactors. He said the administration would ask Congress on Wednesday for easier access to the money.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/07/business/07energy.html>

March 6, 2007

Reid statement on the DOE's plan to revive Yucca Mountain, *Senate Press Release*

Washington, D.C. - U.S Senator Harry Reid of Nevada released the following statement in response to the Energy Department's announcement that it will introduce legislation to revive the proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain.

"The proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain is dying and the Energy Department knows it. This is just the Department's latest attempt to breathe life into this dying beast and it will fail. As Senate Majority Leader I will continue to leverage my leadership position to prevent the dump from ever being built. "While Nevada is always my top priority, this is more than a Nevada issue, it is a national issue. The Energy Department cites a 'moral obligation' to build the dump, but it is highly immoral to put millions of people at risk by hauling more than 70,000 tons of the most dangerous substance known to man past America's schools, hospitals and businesses."

<http://reid.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=270157&>

March 5, 2007

Department of Energy Awards \$5.6 Million to U.S. Universities for Nuclear Research, DOE Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC. – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced it will award \$5.6 million over three years (FY'07-'09), subject to appropriation from Congress, to U.S. universities in 12 cooperative research projects, under the Nuclear Energy Research Initiative (NERI). These awards will further engage U.S. university professors and their students in advanced nuclear fuel cycle research and development (R&D), supporting President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and his American Competitiveness Initiative.

<http://energy.gov/news/4833.htm>

March 5, 2007

EPA official: Realism needed at Hanford, Tri City Herald

Hanford leaders and regulators need to take a realistic look at what needs to be accomplished at the nuclear reservation and what can be done, the Environmental Protection Agency's new regional administrator said. Elin Miller made her first visit to Hanford on Wednesday after being appointed regional administrator for the Pacific Northwest and Alaska in October. She toured the site and met with Department of Energy leaders, cleanup contractors and tribal leaders. The magnitude of federal dollars spent at Hanford -- around \$2 billion annually -- and continuing issues at the site made a visit a priority, she said. "We need to make sure we're getting the most from the investment from a human health and environment standpoint," she said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8679587p-8574780c.html>

March 5, 2007

DOE Plans New Nuclear Bomb, Chemical & Engineering News

The Departments of Energy and Defense have selected Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to move ahead on a design for the nation's first new nuclear warhead in almost two decades. Called the reliable replacement warhead (RRW), it is intended to replace or add to the current nuclear stockpile. The design will utilize technology not available during the Cold War, says Thomas D'Agostino, acting administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the part of DOE responsible for nuclear weapons. "This will permit significant upgrades in safety and security features in the replacement warhead that will keep the same explosive yields and other military characteristics as the current weapons," he continues.

<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/news/85/i11/8511news2.html>

March 3, 2007

Wamp: Oak Ridge doesn't need more nuclear waste, Knoxville News Sentinel

OAK RIDGE - U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., said Friday that he's opposed to any proposals that would bring the nation's spent nuclear fuel to Oak Ridge for

processing. "I want waste leaving here, not coming here," Wamp said during a brief meeting with the news media at the Y-12 National Security Complex. Oak Ridge is a candidate site for three proposed facilities as part of the Bush administration's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership. Two of those facilities - a reprocessing plant and a reactor that burns reprocessed fuel - would involve tons of highly radioactive nuclear fuel. The third would be a research center for the nuclear programs, and Wamp said he doesn't have a problem with that one.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5391311,00.html

March 1, 2007

Nuclear plan powers debate, *Ruidoso News*

ROSWELL - A plan to store nuclear waste on lands owned by the Mescalero Apache Tribe opposed and aborted in 1995 resurfaced this week in Roswell under the standard of President George Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Tuesday, some 250 residents of Roswell and neighboring communities gathered to voice their opinion of the government's nuclear management plan, currently funded in its research phase at \$405 million. If approved, Triassic Park, a 480-acre privately run hazardous waste facility located east of Roswell, stands to not only store spent fuel from nuclear plants but reprocess that fuel for secondary use in this country and in others.

http://www.ruidosonews.com/news/ci_5336509

March 1, 2007

YUCCA MOUNTAIN: Nuclear waste dump still alive, *Las Vegas Review Journal*

CARSON CITY -- A Nevada panel fighting a proposed Yucca Mountain repository for nuclear waste was told Wednesday that project backers face big obstacles but are still seeking approval of the facility and of rail shipping routes, including one through downtown Reno and Sparks. The warning to the Nevada Commission on Nuclear Projects prompted its chairman, Richard Bryan, a former state governor and U.S. senator, to say, "This is no time to sit back and assume everything will unfold ... in our favor." Bob Halstead, a transportation adviser to the commission, said rail shipments through the Reno-Sparks area would have a huge impact on commercial and residential properties near the route, possibly lowering their combined value by well over \$1 billion.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2007/Mar-01-Thu-2007/news/12885021.html