

News from Around the Complex

April 1 – April 30, 2008

Available on-line at <http://www.fffcleanupnews.org/news.htm>

April 28, 2008

Decision on nuclear waste disposal delayed, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy will need an extra year to prepare a report on long-term disposal options for commercial and nonweapons radioactive waste, some of which could be sent to Hanford. The schedule has slipped as DOE has greatly expanded the potential amount of waste to be studied, said Christine Gelles, director of DOE's environmental management office of disposal operations, during a visit to Richland last week. A draft environmental study on the waste now is expected in early 2009 with a final study finished in early 2010. Then DOE is required to report to Congress before making a formal decision on what to do with the waste. The waste, called Greater Than Class C waste, initially included an estimated 7,280 cubic yards of radioactive metal from decommissioning commercial nuclear power plants and waste from other industrial uses, such as sterilizing medical equipment, treating cancer and testing welds. But since work began on an environmental study on the waste, an additional 39,000 cubic yards have been added to the study for potential disposal. Much of that would be produced under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, which is proposing building an Advanced Fuel Cycle Facility to develop ways to reuse nuclear power fuel.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/168558.html>

April 24, 2008

DOE says transport of radioactive materials 'safe', *North Platte Telegraph*

On Monday Lincoln County Emergency Management Director Jim Nitz announced there would be an increase of transporting radioactive materials through the Lincoln County area. The subsequent increase in transportation has prompted the Department of Energy to schedule an emergency response exercise in late August. The details of the type of materials or means of transportation were not released during the quarterly emergency management report to the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners. However, Joann Waldrip from DOE's Office of Public Affairs, in Washington, D.C. confirmed that the transportation of radioactive materials from the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois would increase to approximately twice a week for a period of four months beginning this summer.

http://www.nptelegraph.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19512979&BRD=377&PAG=461&dept_id=601696&rfi=6

April 24, 2008

Cleanup chief Rispoli lists top Hanford priorities, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy plans to focus on cleanup projects that reduce risk while meeting as many legal requirements as possible with limited money next year, Jim Rispoli, assistant secretary for environmental management, said Wednesday. Rispoli, who heads DOE's program for cleanup of Hanford and other nuclear weapon sites, spoke to the Environmental Management Site Specific Advisory Board at its meeting in Richland on Wednesday and plans a tour of Hanford today. The advisory board is made up of the leaders of advisory boards for DOE sites across the nation, including the Hanford Advisory Board. DOE has acknowledged the Bush administration's budget request for cleanup in fiscal year 2009 will not meet all legal deadlines, Rispoli said. At Hanford, DOE could miss 18 Tri-Party Agreement deadlines over the

next two years. DOE will give top priority to projects that treat radioactive liquid waste, including the 53 million gallons of radioactive waste held in Hanford's underground tanks, Rispoli said.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/11393.html>

April 23, 2008

Munger: Is uranium in Bear Creek Valley a resource, a hazard or both?,
Knoxville News-Sentinel

Uranium mining in Oak Ridge's Bear Creek Valley? That is an idea floating around as folks begin to ponder the cleanup of the Bear Creek Burial Grounds, a 350-acre swath of federal property historically used for waste disposal at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. There's an estimated 41 million pounds of uranium buried in the Cold War landfills. A recent story in the Courier-Journal (Louisville, Ky.) noted that thousands of containers of depleted uranium left over from the Department of Energy's uranium-enrichment program could now be worth billions of dollars because of the high price of uranium in today's market. Those containers of uranium, some of which originated in Oak Ridge, are stored at sites in Paducah, Ky., and Portsmouth, Ohio. The uranium "tails" had been targeted for eventual disposal as waste, but there is renewed interest in possibly reprocessing the depleted uranium to recover the remaining quantities of the fissile U-235 and use it to fuel nuclear reactors, the Courier-Journal reported.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/apr/23/munger-uranium-bear-creek-valley-resource-hazard-o/>

April 21, 2008

DOE looks at options for treating tank waste at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

Plans to treat low-activity radioactive tank waste at Hanford could take a new direction as early as June after an independent panel commissioned by the Department of Energy completes its report. The panel is looking at multiple options for treating an estimated 50 percent of Hanford's low-activity tank waste that the Hanford vitrification plant will be unprepared to handle as it currently is designed. The results could mean canceling plans for a pilot plant at Hanford that was planned to allow an early start on treating waste while testing the process. But even without a pilot plant, bulk vitrification could remain an option. DOE has been focused on adding a supplemental treatment system with the most likely options being to add a bulk vitrification plant or to build a second treatment facility at the main vitrification plant for low-activity waste. But changes at the main vitrification plant are driving a new look at treatment options. Plans being considered include increasing the capacity of the one low-activity waste treatment facility that already is under construction or starting it years earlier than portions of the plant that will handle high-level radioactive waste.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/162157.html>

April 18, 2008

House panel wants cost of Hanford work delays, *Tri-City Herald*

The chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee is calling for an assessment of the cost of halting work because of safety problems at Hanford's vitrification plant and tank farms. "The committee is assessing whether DOE's contractors should be held financially accountable for the costs of any schedule delays and cost overruns due to their failure to adhere to nuclear safety and other requirements," said a letter signed by Chairman John Dingell and four other committee members, including Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash. The letter to the Government Accountability Office asks for its help in understanding the cost

implications of work stoppages caused by inadequate worker safety protections and weaknesses in nuclear safety, design, oversight and management at the Department of Energy's vitrification plant and tank farms.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/160073.html>

April 18, 2008

IG says Los Alamos not meeting cleanup schedule, *Las Cruces Sun-News*

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—It's unlikely Los Alamos National Laboratory will meet deadlines to clean up waste under a consent order with the state, increasing the risk of the public and lab workers being exposed to contaminants, according to the Department of Energy's Inspector General. Not enough money has been put into the work to meet long-term timetables set for the nuclear weapons lab in the March 2005 consent decree with the state Environment Department, said the audit, dated April 11 and released Tuesday. Projected shortfalls will peak at a cumulative \$236 million in 2010, the report said. It said that does not include an additional \$947 million in what it termed "unfunded contingencies."

http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci_8935159?source=most_email

April 17, 2008

Directors Say National Labs Are Underfunded, *The Washington Post*

The directors of the nation's three national nuclear weapons laboratories say that budget cuts by Congress and the Bush administration have reduced their ability to carry out scientific research needed to ensure the reliability of the nation's nuclear arsenal in future years. Citing growing financial demands, George H. Miller, director of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, said that "science is being squeezed out" during a meeting yesterday with Washington Post editors and reporters. He said the labs in total had experienced a shortfall of several hundred million dollars in needed funds. Miller, Los Alamos National Laboratory Director Michael R. Anastasio and Sandia National Laboratories Director Thomas O. Hunter also jointly conveyed that warning at a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing yesterday. The Bush administration is already pursuing a costly restructuring of the U.S. nuclear complex, including many buildings that date from the Manhattan Project of the 1940s. It is also funding the refurbishment of a reduced number of the Cold War-era warheads and bombs and buying costly equipment that can ensure that the weapons work without underground testing.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/16/AR2008041603123.html>

April 17, 2008

DOE Seeks to Invest up to \$15 Million in Funding for Nuclear Fuel Cycle Technology Research and Development, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC –The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today issued a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) inviting universities, national laboratories, and industry to compete for up to \$15 million to advance nuclear technologies closing the nuclear fuel cycle. These projects will provide necessary data and analyses to further U.S. nuclear fuel cycle technology development, as part of the Department's Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative (AFCI), the domestic technology R&D component of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Studies resulting from this FOA will include computing and simulation of spent fuel technology, advanced fuel systems analyses and properties of future waste forms. This announcement builds on over \$328 million that DOE has provided to universities, national labs and industry since GNEP was announced in February 2006.

<http://energy.gov/news/6160.htm>

April 14, 2008

Used uranium worth billions, Cincinnati Enquirer

About 40,000 canisters of depleted uranium are spread out in rows at the Paducah, Ky., Gaseous Diffusion Plant. An additional 20,000 are stored at a sister facility in Piketon, Ohio, about 95 miles east of Cincinnati. For years, the canisters and their contents have been considered worthless waste. Not anymore. With worldwide uranium supplies tight and prices soaring, those canisters in Kentucky and Ohio are getting a new look as a potential moneymaker for the federal government. In 2000, uranium was selling for about \$7 per pound. By last summer it was at \$140 per pound. Prices have dropped back now, to about \$73 per pound. But that still means the uranium that could be recovered from the waste could be worth about \$7.6 billion, according to the federal Government Accountability Office.

<http://news.enquirer.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080414/BIZ/304140003/1076>

April 12, 2008

Towns: Plants should pay for storing nuclear waste, Manitowoc Herald (Wisconsin)

TWO CREEKS — Town residents and officials living near two nuclear power plants told their elected representatives they don't want to be a "dumping ground" for radioactive waste. But if the plants must store their waste on site, then towns should be compensated, residents said. "When this plant was being built, they promised us that there would be no storage out there," said Kenneth Duveneck, town of Two Creeks chairman, referring to the nearby Point Beach Nuclear Plant.

<http://www.htrnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080412/MAN0101/804120422>

April 11, 2008

DOMENICI BOWS OUT: Yucca loses more ground, Pahump Valley Times

WASHINGTON -- Political support for the Yucca Mountain nuclear repository eroded further on Wednesday when a leading Senate advocate of nuclear power said it has become "foolhardy" to continue plans to store radioactive used power plant fuel at the Nevada site. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said the strategy to place spent nuclear fuel underground has become badly outdated in light of advances in waste reprocessing that could wring more energy from the assemblies. Even after nuclear fuel has been recycled, the resulting waste products may not need to be placed in the Nevada volcanic ridge, he said. At that point, the waste would be less toxic and could be stored safely in salt formations in New Mexico or elsewhere. "The current strategy of limiting our options to a permanent repository for the disposal of spent fuel is deeply flawed," Domenici said. He said he was writing a bill that would alter the "Yucca only" approach. "I'm talking about a bill that will start over and draft new law that puts America on a new path for commercial waste," he said after a Senate Energy and Water Subcommittee hearing on the Yucca Mountain budget. The senator's comments are reflective of a shift among key lawmakers frustrated by a decade-long delay in developing the Yucca Mountain repository, and who now are more amenable to alternatives they say are becoming more viable.

<http://www.pahumpvalleytimes.com/2008/Apr-11-Fri-2008/news/20878330.html>

April 10, 2008

Hanford ships 1,000 pounds of plutonium to New Mexico, Tri-City Herald

The Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford have shipped more than 1,000 pounds of plutonium from Hanford to a national repository in New Mexico. On Wednesday

they announced the 400th shipment of waste -- including materials such as building debris and laboratory equipment contaminated with more than 1,000 pounds of plutonium -- had left the site. That's enough waste to fill 13,500 drums. "The key is it is permanent disposal off the site, out of the state," said Mark French, DOE project director. But far more waste still must be shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. "This is a marathon, not a sprint," French said. "We are going to be doing it for a long time."

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/152614.html>

April 10, 2008

Sen. Murray rebukes DOE over Hanford budget, *Tri-City Herald*

The federal government is playing with fire by underfunding the Hanford budget for next year, an annoyed Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said at a congressional hearing Wednesday. "Are you proud of this budget?" she asked twice as James Rispoli, the Department of Energy's assistant secretary for environmental management, fielded questions at a hearing of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee. The Bush administration has acknowledged its fiscal year 2009 budget proposal would cause up to 23 legal deadlines to be missed at DOE cleanup sites, and up to 600 people could be laid off, Rispoli said. If all of the deadlines are missed, DOE and its contractors could be liable for up to \$10 million in penalties, he said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/152339.html>

April 9, 2008

Senator rebukes proposed WIPP budget cut, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*

CARLSBAD — A proposed 10 percent budget cut for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant has drawn additional complaints from a New Mexico senator, who chastised top Department of Energy officials at a hearing Wednesday. WIPP, a nuclear repository, is located about 27 miles east of Carlsbad. "Your budget cuts the number of waste shipments, reduces investment in groundwater monitoring upgrades and results in the layoff of as many as 70 employees," Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., told Department of Energy Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management James A. Rispoli. "Given the limited progress in waste management efforts in the complex, the department should be looking for ways to expand successful efforts like WIPP, not cut them back."

http://www.currentargus.com/ci_8870285

April 8, 2008

Ore. senator raises questions about Hanford plant construction, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

YAKIMA, Wash. - About 1,800 sections of pipe for a massive waste treatment plant at the nation's most contaminated nuclear site were not subjected to required quality inspections, and a U.S. senator called for a full explanation Tuesday by the government agency overseeing the project. None of the pipe was permanently installed in the Hanford nuclear reservation plant under construction in south-central Washington. Bechtel National Inc., the company hired to build it, also said its workers identified the problem themselves and are taking steps to prevent a recurrence. The controversy involving procurement of construction materials for the so-called vitrification plant isn't new. The plant is being built to encase millions of gallons of radioactive and toxic waste, the remnants of Cold War-era plutonium production for the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal, in glasslike logs for permanent disposal underground.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap_wa_hanford_waste_plant.html

April 8, 2008

Ansto & Battelle sign radioactive waste technology deal, *Environmental Expert*

The Australian Nuclear Science & Technology Organization's Synroc technology is to be demonstrated as a way to clean up radioactive waste at the United States (US) Idaho National Laboratory. Dr George Collins, ANSTO's Chief of Research, said a US\$1.4 million deal was signed between ANSTO Inc (ANSTO's US arm) and Battelle Energy Alliance - the management and operating contractor for the Idaho National Laboratory - to demonstrate the benefits of Synroc technology in treating waste stored at the site. 'ANSTO will provide a demonstration of how to immobilize a range of legacy wastes, using hot isostatic pressing (HIP), a technology which ANSTO applies to the cleanup of radioactive waste,' said Dr Collins. One waste of particular interest is referred to as calcine. The Idaho National Laboratory has around 4,400 cubic meters of radioactive calcine material arising from the reprocessing of spent naval fuel, which is in a powder form not unlike laundry detergent.

<http://www.environmental-expert.com/resultEachPressRelease.aspx?cid=28660&codi=29884&idproducttype=8&level=0>

April 7, 2008

Hanford Advisory Board calls for more cleanup money, *Tri-City Herald*

PORTLAND -- More money is needed for Hanford cleanup in fiscal 2009 and 2010 than proposed in budget documents if the Columbia River and public health are to be adequately protected, according to the Hanford Advisory Board. At a meeting Thursday and Friday, the board added its voice to those of Hanford regulators and Washington's congressional delegation in calling for more cleanup money for Hanford. Congress is considering a proposal from the Bush administration for the 2009 budget, and Hanford Department of Energy officials are preparing to submit a 2010 budget request to DOE headquarters this month, an early step in the budget process. For 2009, the Hanford Advisory Board wants \$200 million added to the budget request proposed by the Bush administration to bring it slightly above \$2 billion. The administration request would cut spending at Hanford by \$58 million from this year's spending. Particularly troubling is the history of Hanford budget shortfalls from 2005 through 2008, according to advice sent by the board Friday to Jim Rispoli, DOE assistant secretary for environmental management. The administration request for 2009 is \$250 million less than the 2005 budget level, the board said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/149045.html>

April 4, 2008

Hanford negotiations avert possible lawsuit, *Tri-City Herald*

A lawsuit to force the Department of Energy to clean up Hanford is not likely, said Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire on Thursday. Her comments, made in a telephone call to the Herald, came after progress was made at a high-level negotiating session Wednesday in Seattle to discuss new cleanup deadlines under the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement. The Department of Energy and its regulators, the state of Washington and the Environmental Protection Agency, produced an outline for an agreement at the meeting, Gregoire said. Progress on the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant being built to treat radioactive waste is central to the agreement, she said. It needs to start operating to begin treating 53 million gallons of waste now held in underground tanks.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/146680.html>

April 4, 2008

Members Sought For DOE Site-Specific Advisory Board, *Community Common (Ohio)*

The United State Department of Energy (DOE) is taking applicants for membership for a Site-Specific Advisory Board for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon. The group would make some recommendations to the DOE on the environmental management program of the Gaseous Diffusion Plant. This is not the first Site-Specific Advisory Board for the Department of Energy, with the creation of the Piketon advisory board it will be DOE's eighth. The board seeks to involve interested persons more directly with the decisions involved in DOE cleanup of the site.

<http://communitycommon.com/articles/2008/04/06/news/news05.txt>

April 3, 2008

Citizens group prevails in FOIA fight with nuclear agency

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A federal judge has ruled in favor of an activist group in its battle to obtain documents on nuclear waste sites, monitoring and 10-year plans for future activities at Sandia National Laboratories. "In light of the Kafkaesque review process adopted by defendant (the National Nuclear Security Administration), it is not surprising that the delay in this case stretched many months beyond the statutorily prescribed time frame" under the Freedom of Information Act, U.S. District Judge Robert Brack of Las Cruces wrote in his March 31 decision. Citizen Action sued in August 2006 under FOIA to compel the NNSA and the Department of Energy to release the records. Under the act, federal agencies must make a determination on a request within 20 working days. An agency can seek a brief extension, but can continue to withhold documents only if they fall under exceptions to the law.

<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=19871>

April 1, 2008

Hanford workers finish filling radioactive basin, *Tri-City Herald*

Hanford workers finished filling the K East Basin with sand over the weekend after the last of the radioactive water was drained from the basin two weeks ago. Over the past two weeks, 514 trucks hauled 5,100 cubic yards of sand mixed with a thin slurry of grout to the basin, according to Fluor Hanford. The grout allowed the sand to be piped into the basin. The sand, which has a consistency similar to that in a child's sandbox, will provide a platform for heavy machinery that will demolish the building above the basin this summer. The sand also will provide shielding to protect workers from radiation in the concrete walls of the basin as they remove some items from the building before it is demolished.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/143684.html>

April 1, 2008

State reaches settlement with DOE over WIPP violation, *Las Cruces Sun-News*
CARLSBAD, N.M.—The state Environment Department said Tuesday it has reached a \$110,700 settlement with the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad field office over an errant waste drum sent to the DOE's nuclear waste repository near Carlsbad. The department announced in November that it was taking action for violations of the DOE's permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The notice included the proposed fine for the DOE accepting the drum from Idaho National Laboratory for disposal at WIPP in June although the drum contained liquid. The permit prohibits WIPP from accepting liquid waste because of the risks of leaks or potentially explosive materials. The state ordered the drum removed; it was returned to Idaho in mid-August.

http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci_8771999