

News from Around the Complex

June 16 – June 30, 2008

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

June 30, 2008

Toxic legacy: Scientists ponder task of labelling nuclear waste, *Agence France-Presse*

PARIS (AFP) — How will "DANGER!" be written 5,000 years from now? How will it be written in 50,000 years? Finding an answer to these questions may not seem like a Code Red emergency to most people. But for a growing cadre of scientists, figuring out how to alert our distant descendants to perilous nuclear waste entombed hundreds of metres (feet) below ground has become a fascinating task. After more than six decades, high-level nuclear detritus is piling up above ground, and governments are starting to spend billions on underground facilities intended to survive tens of thousands and hopefully hundreds of thousands of years. That means there is an emerging interest in choosing the right signs and language to warn people of a stockpile that could be deadly, as well as a potential source of military nuclear proliferation -- or even a source of fuel, if future technology can recycle it.

<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hxid4tFKMWpVvrhi2894wIvkVQ>

June 30, 2008

Barnwell County nuclear dump to stop accepting nation's waste, *Island Packet (South Carolina)*

SNELLING -- A page will turn Tuesday in Barnwell County, opening what could be a new chapter in South Carolina's decades-long relationship with nuclear waste. With the start of the state's July 1 fiscal year, the nuclear waste disposal facility in Barnwell County will no longer accept waste from across the country, as it has for nearly four decades. The Barnwell facility was the only one of its kind. Its closure leaves many states scrambling to determine how they will dispose of their low-level radioactive waste. It also leaves Barnwell scrambling to make its financial ends meet, while some residents hope -- against hope -- that high energy prices could revive nuclear energy and the waste facility here. The terms of a deal struck in 2000 -- and vigorously fought by political leaders in Barnwell ever since -- will restrict use of the facility to South Carolina, New Jersey and Connecticut after Tuesday. Environmentalists hail the agreement, saying it strikes a blow against the state's reputation as the nation's nuclear dumping ground. June 30, 2008

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/story/537557.html>

June 30, 2008

DOE Lacks Critical Information Needed to Assess Its Tank Management Strategy at Hanford, *GAO Report*

DOE lacks comprehensive information about the condition, contents, and long-term viability of Hanford's waste tanks. Although recent work indicates that the newer, double-shell tanks are generally sound structurally, the condition of the older, single-shell tanks is less certain. All the tanks contain a complex mix of radioactive elements and chemicals, making the proportions of constituents in any tank uncertain and emptying the tanks technically challenging. DOE officials acknowledged the lack of information about the condition of the single-shell tanks and are in early stages of a study to assess these tanks' structural integrity. The uncertainties over tank condition, especially as the time frames for emptying tanks

are extended and the tanks age, raise serious questions about the tanks' long-term viability.

Highlights: <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d08793high.pdf>

Report: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-08-793>

June 27, 2008

Radioactive waste could travel through Tenn. on way to N.M., *The Tennessean*

Special radioactive waste is proposed to be trucked from Oak Ridge across the country by way of interstates 75 and 24 through Chattanooga, and then through Birmingham, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The shipments could begin by the end of this year, if the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency permit them. About 60 to 120 truckloads a year of scrap, glass containers and other contaminated materials called "transuranic" waste would be hauled to a final destination near Carlsbad, N.M. The plan is to store the waste in underground salt caverns because of its long-term radioactivity. The waste will be in 55-gallon drums. In Oak Ridge, specially designed rooms called "hot cells" are being used to separate and repackage the materials using robotic arms.

<http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080627/NEWS02/806270423/1009/NEWS01>

Jun. 26, 2008

House OKs \$24 million more for Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

The U.S. House has approved a bill that would add \$24 million for Hanford cleanup to the amount requested by the Bush administration for fiscal 2009. That could partially make up for the \$58 million reduction from the current budget proposed by the administration. "By increasing funds for Hanford, this bill recognizes the serious failures of the president's budget request," Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said in a statement. The president's budget request would lead to Hanford layoffs that have been estimated at 300 to 500 workers. Hastings cautioned that there is widespread speculation Congress will fail to take action on the DOE appropriations bill that includes Hanford money until after the presidential election or even until after a new president takes office. With the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, that could leave the Hanford budget undetermined well into fiscal 2009.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/222517.html>

June 24, 2008

Agency poised for phase 3 of cleanup at INL, *The Olympian (Washington)*

The Idaho Cleanup Project is getting ready to enter its third phase, and this time crews are exploring how to deal with thousands of gallons of radioactive and hazardous waste stored for decades on the Idaho National Laboratory's southern boundary. The U.S. Department of Energy project proposes removing 2,200 cubic meters of waste from radioactive waste storage sites, repackaging it and sending it to the agency's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. An analysis released Monday by the agency and CH2M-WG, the contractor hired to do the work, offers two options for dealing with the waste, each with different costs and health and environmental benefits. The preferred option calls for exhuming thousands of boxes and drums loaded with contaminants. The other option, labeled the "No Action" alternative, calls for simple monitoring of the site. The report concludes no action would be cheaper, estimated at about \$2.5 million, and would lead to less public and worker exposure to hazardous wastes in the short term.

<http://www.theolympian.com/northwest/story/487721.html>

June 20, 2008

U.S. agencies to clean up uranium on Navajo land, *The Arizona Republic*

The U.S. government will spend tens of millions of dollars to assess and clean up uranium contamination across the vast Navajo Reservation, but the effort is unlikely to erase decades of frustration over what has been characterized as a slow and sporadic federal response. The new five-year plan is the first coordinated push to measure and fix the environmental damage that resulted from a Cold War hard-rock mining boom in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The exploration scarred the three-state Navajo Reservation's landscape and resulted in what tribal officials call a public-health tragedy on the reservation. The premature deaths of Navajo miners, cancer clusters and passed-on genetic defects are all thought to be the result of prolonged uranium exposure.

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2008/06/20/20080620uranium0620.html>

June 19, 2008

DOE Selects CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company for Plateau Remediation Contract at its Hanford Site, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company has been selected as the plateau remediation contractor for DOE's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. The contract is a cost-plus award-fee contract valued at approximately \$4.5 billion over ten years (a five-year base period with the option to extend it for another five years). CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company is a limited liability company formed by CH2M Hill Constructors, Inc. The team also includes AREVA Federal Services, LLC; East Tennessee Materials & Energy Corporation, Inc.; and Fluor Federal Services, Inc. as major subcontractors.

<http://energy.gov/news/6351.htm>

June 19, 2008

Simpson Scores Huge INL Increases In House Bill, *Idaho Examiner*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson, a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, today announced the inclusion of substantial increases in funding for the Idaho National Laboratory and the Idaho Cleanup Project as part of legislation funding the Department of Energy in Fiscal Year 2009. Simpson also announced the inclusion of \$4 million in funding for INL as part of the Fiscal Year 2009 Department of Homeland Security funding legislation.

<http://www.idahoexaminer.com/state/9549/simpson-scores-huge-inl-increases-in-house-bill>

June 18, 2008

US energy spending bill will kill funding for GNEP, *Platts Energy Services*

A US House of Representatives appropriations subcommittee unanimously approved a Department of Energy funding bill Tuesday that would fully fund a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, while eliminating funding for the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, the international spent fuel reprocessing program. The bill, which would fund DOE along with a variety of other federal agencies for the fiscal year beginning October 1, would provide \$495 million for the permanent nuclear waste repository 90 miles from Las Vegas, which would house waste from the nation's nuclear power reactors. This is the same amount requested by President George Bush in his fiscal 2009 budget.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/6906069.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

June 18, 2008

HANFORD: Nuclear waste pumping restarts after 10-month delay, *Tri-City Herald*

Work resumed today to empty Hanford's oldest tanks of radioactive waste more than 10 months after a spill of waste during pumping stopped most retrieval last summer. "Things are going well," Mark Brown, the Department of Energy director of tank farm operations, said this afternoon. Work is under way to pump waste out of Tank C-109, a 530,000-gallon underground tank holding waste left from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. DOE and its contractor CH2M Hill Hanford Group are emptying waste from 149 leak-prone single-shell tanks into 28 newer double-shell tanks to await treatment and disposal. Retrieval was stopped after a spill of about 85 gallons of radioactive waste during pumping at another tank, S-102 on July 27, after waste backed up and burst a water line not intended to contain radioactive material.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/215607.html>

June 12, 2008

Nuclear waste burial plan may smooth building of new plants, *The Guardian (UK)*

Ministers are due to publish controversial plans to bury Britain's massive nuclear waste stockpile, as part of a campaign to persuade investors to build new nuclear power stations. On Thursday, Hilary Benn, the environment secretary, is due to publish a long-awaited white paper for dealing with Britain's 'legacy' of radioactive waste by asking for volunteer communities to bury the waste in deep underground vaults in return for government spending on things like health screening and infrastructure. The announcement is seen as a key step in persuading investors to spend billions of pounds on new nuclear power stations ahead of a meeting on the same day with the energy secretary, John Hutton. He will tell that audience that the government hopes to have the first nuclear reactor operating in a decade. However the move was attacked by anti-nuclear campaigners, who claim new nuclear waste will be more radioactive and so harder to store, and that despite offering financial incentives the plans could still fail to get public support.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jun/11/nuclearburial>

June 6, 2008

Idaho company announces depleted uranium plant plans: Similar to Energy Department plants at Piketon, Paducah, *Chillicothe Gazette (Ohio)*

BOISE, Idaho - A tiny eastern Idaho company said Wednesday it plans to build a plant to make useful industrial gases out of waste from commercial uranium enrichment facilities like the one France's Areva NC Inc. plans to build near Idaho Falls. The plant proposed by International Isotopes Inc. of Idaho Falls won't necessarily be in Idaho. International Isotopes said its proposed plant, to employ 50, would turn depleted uranium hexafluoride, or UF₆, into more-easily disposable solid waste. In addition, it would extract high-value germanium fluoride gas needed to etch silicon for microelectronics. The facility could be located anywhere on transportation routes that would provide easy access to uranium enrichment plants proposed or being built in Idaho, Ohio and New Mexico, and radioactive waste disposal sites now located near Richland, Wash., and Clive, Utah. To equip it the new plant, the company plans to buy used equipment from a defunct Oklahoma site that's been shuttered since the early 1990s.

<http://www.chillicothe Gazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080606/NEWS01/806060308/1002>

June 6, 2008

Idaho, Navy strike nuclear agreement: INL to store spent Naval nuclear fuel beyond original deadline, *Idaho Mountain Express*

Some of Idaho's leading public officials on Wednesday joined representatives from the U.S. Navy to announce an agreement extending nuclear Navy waste management at the Idaho National Laboratory beyond 2035, the previous deadline for the Navy's nuclear waste to be removed from the state. A 1995 settlement between Idaho, the U.S. Department of Energy and the Navy established parameters for the nuclear Navy's presence in Idaho from 1995 through 2035 and provided for 65 metric tons of spent nuclear waste to be stored at the INL, which is east of Arco. The new agreement, said Kathleen Trever, who helped negotiate the 1995 agreement and is working for Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter as a contract consultant, allows for an additional 9.75 metric tons beyond 2035.

<http://www.mtexpress.com/index2.php?ID=2005121016>

June 6, 2008

DOE fines CH2M Hill \$302,500 for tank spill at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy is fining CH2M Hill Hanford Group \$302,500 for safety violations related to last summer's spill of radioactive waste at the Hanford tank farms. "It was only mere chance that prevented personnel from being directly contaminated by significant quantities of tank waste during the course of the event," said a letter sent Thursday to the DOE contractor from the DOE Office of Health, Safety and Security. On July 27, about 85 gallons of radioactive waste spilled onto the ground as workers were operating a pump to retrieve waste from Tank S-102 at the end of a night shift. The spill was not discovered for eight hours. DOE said it was concerned about the delay in detecting the spill and also "long-standing engineering lapses" that led to the spill. The pumping system lacked back flow equipment that would have prevented waste from backing up into and breaking a rubber hose not designed to contain radioactive waste.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/204796.html>

June 5, 2008

Radioactive Dredging, Digging Work to Start, *The Alameda Sun*

Clean-up of radioactive waste from the former Naval Air Station-Alameda will enter a more intensive phase in coming weeks as workers under the auspices of the U.S. Navy begin excavating and removing soil and storm drains contaminated by decades of sloppy disposal of cadmium, radium-226, PCBs and other toxic compounds. Clean-up of radioactive waste from the former Naval Air Station-Alameda will enter a more intensive phase in coming weeks as workers under the auspices of the U.S. Navy begin excavating and removing soil and storm drains contaminated by decades of sloppy disposal of cadmium, radium-226, PCBs and other toxic compounds. Work is expected to commence in mid June. The bulk of the contamination occurred from the 1940s until the 1970s. Some of the waste originated in the base's paint shops where glow-in-the-dark radium was painted on airplane instruments. Workers at the shop washed debris down ordinary sinks. The sinks emptied into storm drains, which dumped into Seaplane Lagoon near where the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet is currently moored. The area is still used by recreational fishermen, despite some signs obliquely warning of danger.

http://alamedasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3386&Itemid=10

June 5, 2008

County Approves Cleanup of Radioactive Material, *The Watch (Colorado)*

TELLURIDE – With plans for a uranium mine in Paradox Valley looming on the horizon, the San Miguel County Commissioners gave the go-ahead to the Cyprus Amax Minerals Company to perform voluntary remedial cleanup work of radioactive material at the former Newmire Vanadium Mill site on Highway 145 near Silver Pick Road. *** A total of 5.5 acres will be cleaned up with two of those acres resting south of the highway next to the San Miguel River. Crews are expected to remove 19,000 to 25,000 cubic yards of radioactive material from the site and transport it to a storage facility in the northeastern Colorado town of Deer Trail. The contaminated soil will be replaced with clean soil from a location that has yet to be determined. *** Computer modeling of the site contamination resulted in a total estimated radiation dose of 13 millirem per year to the recreational user. The model assumed that the recreational user spent about eight hours per week over a 24-week period each year, all of it outdoors.

http://www.telluridewatch.com/pages/full_story?page_label=news&id=81490-County-Approves-Cleanup-of-Radioactive-Material&widget=push&article-County-Approves-Cleanup-of-Radioactive-Material%20=&instance=secondary_stories_left_column&open=&

June 4, 2008

Dept. of Energy report: Don't toss ORNL uranium, *The Oak Ridger*

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. —Oak Ridge National Laboratory's stockpile of uranium could be used for research and medicine instead of being discarded, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Energy's inspector general. The majority of the department's uranium-233, left over from U.S. nuclear test programs that began six decades ago, are being stored at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Idaho National Laboratory in Scoville, Idaho. The report released Monday calls the stockpile a national resource and urges the department to reconsider its current plan to dispose of the material. The report says radioisotopes actinium-225 and bismuth-213, produced from the uranium, are widely used for cancer treatment. Oak Ridge's stockpile could be used to treat about 6,000 patients annually.

<http://www.oakridger.com/news/x43067727/Dept-of-Energy-report-Dont-toss-ORNL-uranium>

June 4, 2008

Uranium site to get upgrade, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Darrel Kohlhorst, general manager at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant, describes the plant's production hub as "old and tired." But, he said, there are plans to spend about \$190 million in years ahead to rehab the uranium operations until a replacement facility comes online. The plant's 9212 complex is a cluster of uranium shops that date back to the earliest days of the Cold War. Operations there have been beset with equipment failures and other problems, raising safety concerns and sometimes skewing production schedules. Kohlhorst said the Oak Ridge plant has started a Facility Risk Reduction Program to keep 9212 and other key facilities operating reliably and to "bridge the gap" until the arrival of the Uranium Processing Facility - a proposed multi-billion-dollar project tentatively set for operation around 2020.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/jun/04/uranium-site-to-get-upgrade/>

June 3, 2008

DOE Marks Milestone in Submitting Yucca Mountain License Application, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced submittal of a license application (LA) to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

(NRC) seeking authorization to construct America's first repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The 8,600 page application describes DOE's plan to safely isolate spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste in tunnels deep underground at Yucca Mountain, a remote ridge on federally controlled land in the Mojave Desert 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Currently, the waste is stored at 121 temporary locations in 39 states across the nation.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/6310.htm>

June 2, 2008

Barnwell Waste Disposal Site Shuts Door to Most States July 1, *Occupational Health and Safety Magazine*

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission said May 29 it has issued updated guidance to fuel cycle and materials licensees that they may need to store some low-level radioactive waste on site for an extended period after the Barnwell, S.C., disposal facility closes to most states on July 1. NRC sets safety requirements for the near-surface disposal of low-level waste, which is classified as Class A, B, or C depending on its hazard and physical characteristics, with about 96 percent of all commercial low-level waste generated in the United States being Class A, the least hazardous. The Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act makes states responsible for disposing of low-level radioactive waste and created a system of interstate compacts to create and manage disposal facilities. Three low-level waste disposal facilities exist: a Clive, Utah, facility accepts only Class A waste from licensees in all states; a facility, near Richland, Wash., accepts all classes of low-level waste from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico; and Barnwell has accepted all types of waste from the rest of the country but as of July 1 will accept it from only South Carolina, New Jersey, and Connecticut because of shrinking capacity.

<http://www.ohsonline.com/articles/63491/>

June 2, 2008

Last of contaminated Kuwaiti sand headed for Idaho by rail, *The Daily News (Longview, Washington)*

The last containers of 6,700 tons of Kuwaiti sand at the Port of Longview contaminated with low levels of depleted uranium have been loaded onto trains bound for Idaho, said Chad Hyslop, spokesman for the disposal company American Ecology. The final seven containers should be headed out of Longview this week, Hyslop said Friday. The Kuwaiti government is paying for the cost of the cleanup, according to the company and the Army. Late last month, the BBC Alabama arrived at the port with 306 containers full of sand contaminated by ammunition at a fire at the U.S. Army base Camp Doha in 1991 during the first Gulf War. Before the shipment came to port, Army officials discovered potentially hazardous levels of lead in three samples of the sand, delaying the arrival by a few days. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency then gave the green light to transport the hazardous waste into the country.

http://www.tdn.com/articles/2008/06/02/area_news/doc4843969e9445a584192829.txt