

News from Around the Complex

July 1 – July 31, 2009

Available on-line at www.fftfcleanup.org

July 30, 2009

Senate passes bill to close Nevada's Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site, *Los Angeles Times*

Washington -- The Senate on Wednesday passed a \$34.3-billion energy spending bill that backs up President Obama's promise to close the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste facility in Nevada. The bill, passed by a 85-9 vote, also covers water transfers to help farmers in California and hundreds of water projects by the Army Corps of Engineers. The House passed a similar bill two weeks ago. Once the measures are reconciled, the bill will go to the president for his signature. The Yucca Mountain project, 90 miles from Las Vegas, was designed to hold 77,000 tons of waste but has been strongly opposed by the Nevada delegation.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-yucca30-2009jul30,0,2377820.story>

July 29, 2009

DOE: Stimulus money will save a year on TRU project, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

The Department of Energy said additional workers hired with Recovery Act money will allow DOE to complete the processing of some of Oak Ridge's hottest nuclear wastes a year ahead of schedule. DOE said it now expects to complete processing of all the contact- and remote-handled transuranic debris in the Oak Ridge inventory by the end of September 2011. The original date for that milestone was September 2012, a federal spokesman said. DOE cited the 83 workers hired earlier this year by EnergX, the contractor that operates the Transuranic Waste Processing Center in Oak Ridge. Those workers are undergoing three months of training on how to handle and characterize the transuranic wastes.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/07/doe_stimulus_money_will_save_a.htm
↓

July 28, 2009

US DOE to integrate nuclear power, waste programs: nominee, *Platts Energy Services*

US President Barack Obama's choice to head the Department of Energy's nuclear power programs told a Senate panel Tuesday that he would more closely integrate the development of new nuclear power and solving the problem of nuclear waste. "It is critical to take an integrated approach that considers the entire nuclear fuel cycle," Warren Miller told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee during his confirmation hearing. Miller has been nominated as both assistant secretary of nuclear energy and the director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. During the previous administration, DOE staffed the positions with separate officials. Combining the two offices under one official comes as the administration moves to kill the controversial Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, which has long been planned for Nevada.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/3032716.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

July 28, 2009

800 to 1000 New Jobs Coming to Piketon: Department of Energy to Accelerate Cleanup Work While USEC Further Develops ACP Technology, DOE Press Release

(Washington, D.C.) The Department of Energy announced today that it will further expand and accelerate cleanup efforts of cold-war era contamination at the Portsmouth site in Piketon, Ohio – an investment worth about \$150 to \$200 million per year for the next four years that is expected to create 800 to 1000 new jobs. At the same time, the Department has encouraged USEC to withdraw its application for loan guarantee funding for the American Centrifuge Plant in Piketon. This would allow USEC to work over the next 12-18 months to continue research, development, and testing to resolve the technology issues facing ACP without hurting the chances of USEC to secure approval for a loan guarantee in the future.

<http://www.energy.gov/news2009/7702.htm>

July 27, 2009

TRIDEC says no to mercury storage plan for Hanford, Tri-City Herald

The Hanford nuclear reservation should not be used for long-term storage of the nation's mercury, says Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council. The Department of Energy is considering Hanford as one of seven possible sites for storage of the nation's elemental mercury, it announced earlier this month. A public hearing is planned Tuesday in Richland to take comments on what should be included in an environmental study of the proposed sites. "Mercury is forever. It does not have a half-life," Petersen said. "I do not see any reason why they should bring more material out here and have it become a waste dump." The community is looking forward to having Hanford cleaned up and then moving on to other uses for the site, such as clean energy, he said.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/661361.html

July 27, 2009

RADIOACTIVE REMNANTS: Scientists monitoring groundwater from Nevada Test Site area for contamination, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Radioactive groundwater laced with remnants of Cold War nuclear weapons tests is inching its way beyond the Nevada Test Site boundary where scientists expect they will soon find it for the first time. The concentration of tritium is much higher than safe drinking water guidelines, but Department of Energy officials note it will be found within the surrounding Air Force range in an area not accessible by the public. The pad and sump, or pit, for what's labeled Well EC-11 are being completed, with the first samples to be collected as drilling proceeds in the next three months, the federal scientist in charge of the project said Friday.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/51776577.html>

July 23, 2009

Funds let UA study cleanup of reactor site, Arkansas Democrat Gazette

The federal government has given the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville the go-ahead to take the first step toward a possible cleanup of its defunct nuclear reactor near Strickler. The university received official word that it will get \$1.9 million from the U.S. Department of Energy for a study to determine what is required for decommissioning of the Southwest Experimental Fast Oxide Reactor, or SEFOR, UA officials announced Wednesday. UA's long-awaited good news means the funds will flow, said Katie Laning Niebaum, a spokesman for Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark. The measure has already gone through the authorization and appropriation stages.

Congress provided the \$1.9 million in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009, which passed in February.

<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/News/264992/>

July 23, 2009

\$35 million expansion of DOE nuclear landfill starts, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*
OAK RIDGE - A \$35 million expansion of the Department of Energy's nuclear landfill is under way, and at least three Knoxville firms will work on the yearlong project, which is being funded with federal money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. DOE announced Wednesday construction had started and named some of the subcontractors, who will report to Bechtel Jacobs Co., DOE's environmental manager in Oak Ridge. The landfill endeavor is part of dozens of projects funded with Oak Ridge's stimulus allotment of \$755 million for environmental activities. As previously announced, Avisco, a woman-owned small business based in Oak Ridge, will provide construction labor and equipment for earthwork for the landfill expansion under a contract valued at \$10.5 million.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/jul/23/35-million-expansion-of-doe-nuclear-landfill/>

July 23, 2009

Permanent Nuclear-Waste Site Isn't Urgent, U.S. Regulator Says, *Bloomberg News*

Finding a permanent site for spent nuclear fuel in the U.S. isn't "an urgent problem," the head of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said. Gregory Jaczko, who took over as chairman of the agency in May, said in an interview that the material can continue to be stored safely for the time being at nuclear power plants. "Certainly, in the short term it's not an urgent problem," Jaczko, 38, said in the interview yesterday at the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. "It is an issue we need to be aware of and be diligent about, but it's not a crisis by any means."

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aSGvvyjNN9pY#>

July 20, 2009

Stimulus is speeding tailings removal, *Deseret News*

A new report by the Department of Energy on the Moab tailings project says an average of 12,000 tons of contaminated dirt are being shipped to a nearby disposal site each week and by late June, more than 100,000 tons have been removed. Federal stimulus money and an extra allocation from the Omnibus Appropriation Act infused an additional \$118 million to the project to accelerate the timeline of the cleanup. Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Utah, said the funding boost is critical, given the severity of contamination at the former Atlas mine northwest of Moab.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705318098,00.html>

July 17, 2009

DOE raises more safety concerns at vit plant, *Tri-City Herald*

Two accidents at the Hanford vitrification plant construction project this month prompted the Department of Energy to send a second letter to its contractor outlining safety concerns. In one incident a worker fell 4 feet off a ladder and broke his arm and elbow. In the other, a worker needed 19 stitches after being cut with a saw. In early May, DOE told Bechtel National that it was concerned about an increase in accidents requiring medical attention and other safety-related incidents at the plant. Bechtel redoubled safety efforts then and succeeded in accumulating almost 900,000 employee work hours at the site without a worker accident that required medical attention.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/649748.html

July 16, 2009

Gov. Otter furious over federal proposal to store mercury at INL, *The Idaho Statesman*

Should the federal government store 17,000 tons of mercury at the Idaho National Laboratory? "The answer is no," said Gov. Butch Otter. In a telephone interview with the Idaho Statesman on Wednesday, Otter said he was angry with the Department of Energy for releasing - without briefing his staff - news that the INL was one of seven sites under consideration to store the highly toxic liquid metal. "The first time I heard about it was when I read it in the newspaper," Otter said. "I don't know whether it is arrogance or ignorance at its worst." Mercury exports were banned by the Mercury Export Ban Act of 2008, which also requires DOE to have facilities ready to manage and store mercury by 2013.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/IdahoPolitics/story/835230.html>

July 16, 2009

National Academy of Public Administration Panel Addresses Mission-Support Challenges and Opportunities at the Department of Energy, *NAPA Press Release*

Washington, D.C. – In a report released today, the National Academy of Public Administration called for the revitalization and integration of three of the Department of Energy's (DOE) "mission-support functions"—human resources, contracting, and financial management. Jennifer L. Dorn, President of the National Academy, noted that the challenge is not unique to DOE. "Across the federal government," she said, "the management imperative is clear: department-wide management support functions must work seamlessly together and with program offices to deliver on the mission." The National Academy project Panel stressed DOE's critical role in securing America's future.

Report available at:

http://www.napawash.org/pc_management_studies/DOE/Proc_HR_FM/DOE_Managing_Speed_Light_July2009.pdf

July 14, 2009

Regulators consider moratorium on depleted uranium in Utah, *Durango Herald*

SALT LAKE CITY - State regulators will consider whether federal rules for disposing of depleted uranium are adequate to protect health and safety in Utah or if the waste should be banned until more stringent procedures are put in place. The Utah Radiation Control Board will meet today to discuss a disposal moratorium sought by the Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah, an environmental watchdog group. "Utah is vulnerable," said Christopher Thomas, public policy director of the group. Depleted uranium is classified as the least dangerous type of low-level radioactive waste and has been disposed of for 18 years at the EnergySolutions Inc. facility in the Utah desert 70 miles west of Salt Lake City. However, the material is different than other low-level waste because it becomes more radioactive over time for hundreds of thousands of years.

http://www.durangoherald.com/sections/News/2009/07/14/Regulators_consider_moratorium_on_depleted_uranium_in_Utah/

July 14, 2009

Hanford workers to learn more about radioactive sludge, *Tri-City Herald*

Hanford workers have collected a first batch of samples of radioactive sludge from Hanford's K Basins to help design the system that will be used to get the sludge out of the basins and treat it. New contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. wants to know as much as possible about the sludge as it prepares to treat it, hoping to avoid the sort of false starts and technical problems that have plagued earlier work with the sludge for the Department of Energy. CH2M Hill has submitted a plan for treatment of the sludge to DOE, which assembled a team of technical experts to review the proposal. The team's report is now being reviewed by DOE officials in Washington, D.C., who have not released information on the proposed plan.
http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/646002.html

July 13, 2009

Yucca Mountain transit safety study to continue, Nevada Appeal

LAS VEGAS — Clark County officials are moving forward with a \$200,000 study evaluating risks for transporting nuclear waste to a repository that has yet to open and had its funding cut numerous times. Energy Secretary Steven Chu has declared that the Yucca Mountain project 90 miles from Las Vegas is no longer considered an option for radioactive waste storage, but county officials say they want to be armed with as much information as possible to keep the dump from ever opening. The study will examine rail and truck corridors that could be used to haul high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel to Yucca Mountain, which is the site legally designated to hold the nation's high-level radioactive waste. The repository is designed to hold 77,000 tons of waste that would be trucked and hauled in by rail. Many of those shipments would travel directly through Las Vegas.
<http://www.nevadaappeal.com/article/20090713/NEWS/907129987/1058/rss05>

July 10, 2009

Work to start on K reactors burial ground at Hanford, Tri-City Herald

Work should begin this month to dig up another Cold War burial ground at Hanford used to dispose of boron balls once employed to soak up radioactive neutrons. The boron balls were part of a backup emergency system at Hanford reactors starting in the 1950s to slow down or stop nuclear reactions. The burial ground, which holds assorted wastes from Hanford's K reactors, includes 16 unlined trenches and 11 silos. The silos contain the boron balls, radiation-contaminated reactor equipment and pieces, and ash from burning radiation-contaminated waste. Washington Closure announced Thursday that it has awarded a \$9 million subcontract to Dance Designs of Pocatello, Idaho, for the work. Watts Construction Inc. of Kennewick and Babcock Services Inc. of Richland are major subcontractors to Dance Designs, which also has offices in Richland.
<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/13623.html>

July 10, 2009

Keeping mercury near GJ sensible, Energy Department says, Grand Junction Sentinel

All of the federal government's stores of mercury could be stored in a relatively small building in the high desert south of Grand Junction, near the main office of the agency that would monitor it under any circumstances. Having mercury stored nearby makes sense because the Grand Junction office of the Energy Department has the technical expertise already on staff to make sure the element is stored safely, said Ray Plienness, director of the Office of Site Operations within the Energy Department's Office of Legacy Management. Legacy Management oversees long-term surveillance and maintenance activities at 86 sites in 26 states, including the

Grand Junction Disposal Site south of the Energy Department compound where Plieness and the environmental-management experts work.

http://www.gjsentinel.com/hp/content/news/stories/2009/07/10/071109_1a_mercury_follo.html

July 10, 2009

House subcommittee OKs \$10 million for WIPP, Carlsbad Current-Argus

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Harry Teague, D-N.M., announced recently that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development approved his request for an additional \$10 million in funding for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad. The additional \$10 million in funding was supported by local leaders and represents an increase from the president's 2009 budget request of \$220 million. WIPP has been successfully disposing of nuclear waste for 10 years. The funding will go toward job preservation, improved environmental cleanup and infrastructure improvement. "As a long time advocate of the WIPP, I know how vital it is to the economy of Carlsbad. That is why securing funds to support WIPP and the jobs it provides has been a top priority for me in Congress," said Teague, D-N.M. "I will continue to work with the local community to support WIPP and its nuclear waste cleanup mission."

http://www.currentargus.com/ci_12814503

July 10, 2009

Utilities Seek to Halt Nuclear Waste Fee, New York Times Blog

The nuclear industry is contemplating something akin to a rent strike. Since the early 1980s, utilities have been paying the Energy Department a fee of one tenth of a cent per kilowatt-hour generated in reactors, to pay for a nuclear waste repository. In exchange for the payments, the department signed contracts promising to take the wastes beginning in 1997. That, however, has not happened, and the goal is getting further away, with the Obama administration having declaring that it won't use the Yucca Mountain facility — the planned destination for the waste. Now the power-generation industry wants to stop paying the fee — which would amount to about \$769 million for 2009. Some \$29.6 billion has already been paid though the end of last year, according to a Bloomberg report.

<http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/10/utilities-seek-to-halt-nuclear-waste-fee/>

Letter available here: <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/blogs/greeninc/nei.pdf>

July 9, 2009

\$3.2b Piketon D&D May Take 10 Years: Decontamination, Decommission Will Remove Older Buildings; Use For Some Still Possible, Portsmouth Daily Times

As announced at the beginning of the month the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant Decontamination and Decommissioning (D&D) Project at a price tag of up to \$3.2 billion. Now, a DOE official has responded to specific questions posed by the Portsmouth Daily Times concerning the details of the project including the involvement of the immediate community surrounding the Piketon reservation. Would the D&D project mean the dismantling of all buildings and facilities under the project title? Or just cleaning those properties up? "The Portsmouth Decontamination and Decommissioning project and this new contract have been planned with the assumption that the buildings will be demolished and that the contaminated soils and groundwater under and around the buildings will be cleaned up," Ted Theopolos,

Public Affairs Specialist with the U.S. Department of Energy Portsmouth/Paducah project office in Lexington, said.

http://portsmouth-dailytimes.com/pages/full_story/

July 9, 2009

Experts Call For Local And Regional Control Of Sites For Radioactive Waste, *Science Daily*

The withdrawal of Nevada's Yucca Mountain as a potential nuclear waste repository has reopened the debate over how and where to dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste. In an article in the July 10 issue of *Science*, University of Michigan geologist Rodney Ewing and Princeton University nuclear physicist Frank von Hippel argue that, although federal agencies should set standards and issue licenses for the approval of nuclear facilities, local communities and states should have the final approval on the siting of these facilities. The authors propose the development of multiple sites that would service the regions where nuclear reactors are located.*** Ewing and von Hippel also analyze the reasons why Yucca Mountain, selected by Congress in 1987 as the only site to be investigated for long-term nuclear waste disposal, finally was shelved after more than three decades of often contentious debate. The reasons include the site's geology, management problems, important changes in the Environmental Protection Agency's standard, unreliable funding and the failure to involve local communities in the decision-making process.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090709140813.htm>

July 9, 2009

Nuclear waste shipments leave Nevada for Idaho, *The Sacramento Bee*
NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. -- The Nevada Test Site says the last of 65 truckloads of repackaged radioactive waste has been shipped to Idaho, pending final disposal at the federal Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M. National Nuclear Security Administration spokeswoman Kelly Snyder said Thursday the transuranic waste is due to arrive Friday for inspection at the Idaho National Laboratory outside Idaho Falls.

http://www.sacbee.com/state_wire/story/2014160.html

July 8, 2009

DOE Idaho Sends First Offsite Waste to New Mexico, *Local News 8 (Idaho)*

Five months ahead of schedule, Idaho sent the first shipment of offsite radioactive transuranic waste received from the U.S. Department of Energy's Nevada Test Site for permanent disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico. The Nevada waste was characterized and validated at the Department's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project, located at its Idaho site. "This first shipment of offsite transuranic waste shows how waste from other locations can be safely, compliantly, and cost effectively handled and prepared," said DOE Idaho Operations Office Deputy Manager Rick Provencher. "It's a testament to the versatility of AMWTP, which continues to be a genuine success story for the Department."

http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=10662744&nav=menu554_2

July 8, 2009

Using Software to Model the Risks of DOE Nuclear Waste Cleanup, *PR Newswire*

ISSAQUAH, Wash., July 8 /PRNewswire/ -- Risk modeling software created by GoldSim Technology Group is at the core of a new Department of Energy program to better manage the risks of its nuclear waste site cleanup programs nationwide, and improve communication with stakeholders. The DOE's PRISM model ("Prioritization

Risk Integration Simulation Model"), which is being developed by Predicus LLC, utilizes the GoldSim software to allow DOE managers to not only track and quantify technical risks, but also gauge the relevance of budget concerns, legal and other issues. In its first deployment at Hanford, Washington -- one of 80 nuclear cleanup sites nationwide -- officials will utilize PRISM to evaluate how best to proceed with the remediation and environmental clean-up of the nuclear waste site.

<http://sev.prnewswire.com/computer-software/20090708/PH4301208072009-1.html>