

News from Around the Complex

February 1 – February 15, 2010

February 15, 2010

South Carolina governor protests Yucca termination, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

WASHINGTON - South Carolina's governor is protesting the Obama administration's planned termination of the Yucca Mountain Project, including asking his state's attorney general to "pursue every legal action possible" to stop the shutdown. Gov. Mark Sanford is scheduled to hold a press conference Tuesday where he is expected to discuss his unhappiness with the administration's actions. "The governor will not be announcing any specific legal action tomorrow - at least as of right now," his spokesman Ben Fox said Monday. Sanford, whose state is home to seven commercial nuclear reactors plus thousands of tons of defense nuclear waste at the Savannah River complex, asked Attorney General Henry McMaster in a letter Thursday to begin researching possible options for the state to pursue.

http://www.lvrj.com/news/breaking_news/south-carolina-governor-protests-yucca-termination-84398837.html

See Related Article Below (February 1 Las Vegas Review Journal)

February 14, 2010

State holding DOE to Oak Ridge cleanup deal, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

OAK RIDGE - The state is pushing the U.S. Department of Energy to live up to its word on environmental cleanup in Oak Ridge and, based on correspondence in recent weeks, the parties are in a serious dispute over several issues. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation has denied multiple DOE requests to extend or modify scheduled milestones associated with the Federal Facilities Agreement. The FFA is the binding cleanup pact negotiated years ago by the state, DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Basically, the state is unhappy with DOE's cleanup funding for Oak Ridge, which is \$436 million this year, saying it isn't meeting the federal agency's commitment to accomplish long-term goals. While DOE's national budget for environmental management went up in Fiscal Year 2010, the amount coming to Oak Ridge actually declined, Roger Petrie, a TDEC official, said in a Jan. 26 letter to DOE. In a recent interview, Petrie said, "We're taking the position, at least at this point, that until told otherwise, we're not going to grant any more extensions," he said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/feb/14/state-holding-doe-oak-ridge-cleanup-deal/>

February 13, 2010

Hanford pumping stops again, *Tri-City Herald*

Pumping resumed on Hanford tank waste early Friday morning but quickly stopped as some workers again raised concerns about chemical vapors. Work to empty leak-prone Tank C-104, the only underground tank now being emptied, was stopped Feb. 2 because workers were smelling vapors vented from the tank and some developed symptoms that raised concerns. Washington River Protection Solutions, or WRPS, restarted retrieval Friday after increasing safety measures. But for the second time this month, a tank farm worker used the authority granted to Hanford employees to call a halt to work they believe could be unsafe. Friday morning officials from WRPS and the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council followed a Department of Energy process for responding to employee stop work orders and determined it was safe to resume work, said WRPS spokesman John Britton.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/900124.html

February 11, 2010

Stimulus funds help Hanford landfill grow, *Tri-City Herald*

RICHLAND — Hanford's super-sized landfill is getting two new "super cells." An excavator started digging up large shovelfuls of dirt Wednesday for the latest expansion of the Hanford landfill for low-level radioactive waste. With the infusion of nearly \$2 billion in economic stimulus money to speed up environmental cleanup at the Hanford nuclear reservation, the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility is being filled faster than ever. The contents of about 400 containers holding an average of 20 tons of

waste apiece are added to the site each day. "ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds are actually doing real work at Hanford," said Dave Einan, an engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, a Hanford regulator. "We are going to need the capacity."

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/897237.html

February 10, 2010

DOE alters bid policies for national labs, *Tri-City Herald*

RICHLAND — The Department of Energy no longer will automatically seek bids for management of national laboratories, including Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and may instead renew agreements with current contractors. In a new policy statement, Energy Secretary Steven Chu said that the practice common under the previous presidential administration of routinely opening the lab contracts to competition often did not have the expected benefits of saving money and improving efficiency. Under Chu's leadership, the decision on whether to open management contracts for competition will be decided case by case. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland has been operated by Battelle since 1964, but DOE decided to open the management of the lab to competition in 2007.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/895756.html

February 9, 2010

Plans call for second Utah radioactive waste site in Tooele County, *Deseret News*

SALT LAKE CITY — A would-be competitor to EnergySolutions wants to open a second radioactive waste facility in Tooele County, asserting EnergySolutions' Clive facility is running out of room and that another facility will store the material more efficiently, safely and with more financial benefit to the state. Charles Judd, president of Cedar Mountain Environmental, is slated to make a presentation on his proposal Tuesday before members of the state's Radiation Control Board. His company has been working with officials from the Utah State Institutional Trust Lands to develop a site north of I-80 in Tooele County. Judd in his letter to the board says such a partnership would generate millions of dollars for the fund which could then be funneled to Utah schools. Additionally, because his facility would use twice as much radon barrier to cover the site, it would be safer than the EnergySolutions' facility and tap into more efficient technology, the letter states.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700008320/Utah-to-consider-2nd-N-waste-dump.html>

February 8, 2010

Depleted uranium: Both sides sound off, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

The state's plans for stricter depleted uranium controls has sparked a war of words, with EnergySolutions Inc. calling the proposal a violation of state law and the company's critics saying Utah should close the gates to the stuff forever. "Please keep a rein on EnergySolutions and other pollutant companies who want to take advantage of Utah," wrote Carolyn Potter of Sandy. "This is *our state* not the world's dumping ground." Potter's was one of more than three dozen letters that arrived by the Feb. 2nd deadline at the Utah Division of Radiation Control on its pending DU regulation. The regulation, when finalized, would block more DU until EnergySolutions develops a technical report telling why its low-level radioactive waste site in Tooele County is suitable for large quantities and the state signs off on it.

http://www.sltrib.com/ci_14361707

See Related NFAC Article (January 26 Salt Lake Tribune): http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14275000

February 9, 2010

Despite billions spent on cleanup, Hanford won't be clean for thousands of years, *The Oregonian*

Some radioactive contaminants at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation will threaten the Columbia River for thousands of years, a new analysis projects, despite the multibillion-dollar cleanup efforts by the federal government. The U.S. Department of Energy projections come from a new analysis of how best to clean up leaking storage tanks and manage waste at Hanford, a former nuclear weapons production site on 586 square miles next to the Columbia in southeastern Washington. An open house and public hearing on the U.S. Department of Energy's draft environmental impact statement for cleaning up storage tanks and managing waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation will start at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Portland DoubleTree Hotel at Lloyd Center, 1000 N.E. Multnomah St. Oregon officials say the results, including

contamination projections for the next 10,000 years, indicate the federal government needs to clean up more of the waste that has already leaked and spilled at Hanford instead of capping and leaving it, a less-expensive alternative. "We think it should force a re-look at the long-term cleanup plan at Hanford," said Ken Niles, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Energy. "We don't want that level of contamination reaching the Columbia River."

http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/02/despite_billions_spent_on_clea.html

February 3, 2010

DOE needs credibility on stimulus job stats, *Knoxville News Sentinel Blog*

There was already plenty of skepticism about the results of the Obama administration's stimulus plan, phase one, so the last thing the Department of Energy needed to do was fan those flames of doubt. But that's what DOE did. As I noted the other day on my blog, Atomic City Underground, the Department of Energy is keeping two sets of stats for jobs created (and/or saved) by Recovery Act spending, and that alone is enough to make some folks think the federal agency is cooking the books. Of course, some folks would probably think that anyway, simply because of their ideological opposition to the stimulus program. Anyway, the apparent culprit is DOE's Environmental Management Program, which received huge sums of Recovery Act money to do cleanup projects at DOE sites - including Oak Ridge. EM leaders decided the traditional method (and the one favored by the Office of Management and Budget) of counting jobs by FTEs (full-time equivalents) wasn't good enough to adequately showcase the impact of stimulus spending.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/feb/03/doe-needs-credibility-on-stimulus-job-stats/>

February 1, 2010

Obama to withdraw nuclear repository license bid, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

That action, coupled with the announcement of a new White House budget that essentially zeroes out federal support for Yucca Mountain, suggested to some people that a controversial chapter in Nevada history is about to close. "I don't want to be premature in doing a eulogy but if this were to be true, this has been going on now for over 20 years, and it has been a Titanic battle," said retired state archivist Guy Rocha. The White House budget plan still needs to get through Congress, and judges at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission would need to sign off on the Energy Department's bid to pull the license application. Nevada officials who have managed political fights and legal campaigns against Yucca Mountain since the 1980s said they were keeping the corks in the bubbly for now. "We have been waiting for the day that the Yucca Mountain Project is called unsuitable to go forward," said Irene Navis, Clark County nuclear waste division planning manager. "We have our fingers crossed." Absent any surprises, "I think it's over," said former Democratic U.S. Sen. Richard Bryan.

http://www.lvrj.com/news/breaking_news/Obama-budget-proposes-to-zero-out-repository-budget--83253807.html

February 1, 2010

Spanish towns bid to host waste facility, *World Nuclear News*

At least a dozen Spanish towns, most with populations of 500 or less, have submitted bids to host the country's centralized interim high-level waste storage facility. However, regional authorities have said they will oppose many of the bids. By the 30 January deadline, bids had been received from three towns already hosting nuclear facilities: Ascó, home of the operating Ascó nuclear power plant near Tarragona; Yebra, near the decommissioned Zorita nuclear plant in Guadalajara province; and Zarra near Valencia.

Since 1983 Spain's policy has been for an open nuclear fuel cycle with no reprocessing and the plan for used fuel envisages initial on-site storage at each reactor for ten years. Some temporary storage for dry casks is also envisaged at Trillo up to 2010 and establishment of a longer-term centralized facility from then. Meanwhile, research will progress on deep geological disposal as well as transmutation, with a decision on disposal to be made after 2010. Granite, clay and salt formations are under consideration.

http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/WR-Spanish_towns_bid_to_host_waste_facility-0102105.html

February 25, 2010

Governor rebuts EnergySolutions' claim that waste will end up in Utah, *Salt Lake Tribune*

EnergySolutions Inc. assured its investors Thursday that trainloads of depleted uranium from a government cleanup in South Carolina will end up in Utah as originally planned -- but the assertion was quickly contradicted by Gov. Gary Herbert's office. Herbert's spokeswoman says a deal the governor struck Monday with the Department of Energy would keep the two trains of depleted uranium out of the state for good. "We take the Department of Energy at its word," said spokeswoman Angie Welling. She said the governor remains confident in the agreement "despite the rhetoric from EnergySolutions" that the waste is being detoured only temporarily to Texas.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14469538

See Related NFAC Article Below (February 23 KSL – Salt Lake City)

February 25, 2010

Triay says DOE will meet obligations on radioactive tank waste disposal, *Tri-City Herald*

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration is committed to keeping its promises on disposal of high-level radioactive waste from Hanford and other Department of Energy weapons cleanup sites, said Ines Triay, DOE assistant secretary for environmental cleanup. She spoke Wednesday at the first 2010 briefing for the bipartisan House Nuclear Cleanup Caucus organized by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., to provide information on DOE environmental cleanup to members of Congress and their staff. President Obama is terminating plans for the Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository, where Hanford's high-level radioactive waste and irradiated nuclear fuel was intended to go. Energy Secretary Steven Chu appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission to look at options for defense waste and used commercial nuclear power fuel that would have gone to Yucca Mountain for disposal. Triay said she was encouraged by the caliber of people appointed to the commission. "Those kind of powerful minds can come together to designate a path forward that is going to make a future for high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel more robust," she said.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/2010/02/25/14892/triay-says-doe-will-meet-obligations.html>

February 23, 2010

Spanish Town's Bid to Welcome Nuclear Waste Site Divides Region, *New York Times*

ASCÓ, SPAIN — Like any father, Jaime Ferrús, a lifetime resident of this isolated Medieval town in the Catalanian mountainside, is pleased that his daughter and young grandchildren recently moved back home. What is more unusual is that he says he is unconcerned that the town is lobbying to partake in what could well be a generation-long commitment to housing nuclear waste. Ascó, a town of 1,600 people that is already the site of two nuclear power plants, is now hoping to be selected as the location of a repository designed to hold 60 years' worth of waste produced in Spain's power plants, until at least 2075. While town leaders have already backed the proposal, it has divided the region and raised questions about whether the debate is really about safety or economics. Sitting in his home overlooking a plant and the adjacent parcel where the repository would be built, Mr. Ferrús said he was surprised that Ascó's candidacy had triggered controversy.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/24/world/europe/24iht-waste.html>

See Related NFAC Article (February 1, 2010): http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/WR-Spanish_towns_bid_to_host_waste_facility-0102105.html

http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/WR-Spanish_towns_bid_to_host_waste_facility-0102105.html

February 23, 2010

Does trainload of radioactive waste have legal right to be in Utah?, *KSL (Salt Lake City)*

TOOELE COUNTY -- State experts began sampling a trainload of radioactive waste Tuesday to make sure EnergySolutions had a legal right to accept it at the company's landfill in Tooele County. Monday, Gov. Gary Herbert persuaded federal officials to send two similar trainloads of waste somewhere else. Now the question is, does the first trainload delivered in December have a legal right to be here? From Chopper 5, it's an amazing site: more than 5,000 barrels of radioactive waste waiting to be buried. But not yet. Not until state experts in protective gear finish taking random samples from 171 of the barrels, and not until lab work is completed. Dane Finerfrock, director of the Utah Division of Radiation Control, said, "Governor Herbert asked that we do some sampling for ourselves. That we don't routinely do." The depleted uranium on the train came from a federal cleanup project in South Carolina. The sampling is to determine if the radioactive powder inside the barrels is contaminated with unacceptably high concentrations of an isotope called Technetium-99. If so, it would not meet legal requirements for the least dangerous category, Class A radioactive waste.

<http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=9791102>

See Related NFAC Article Immediately Below:

February 23, 2010

Herbert derails Utah-bound shipments of depleted uranium, *Deseret News*

SALT LAKE CITY — Planned shipments of depleted uranium from the U.S. Department of Energy's South Carolina's storage site will not be shipped to Utah under an agreement negotiated Monday by Gov. Gary Herbert. This is a monumental win for the state of Utah," Herbert said. "At one point, we were told these trains were all but on the tracks, making their way to Utah. The Department of Energy has now agreed, after we registered our concerns, that those trains will head elsewhere." In addition to derailing the two remaining shipments of 7,000 tons of the material, Herbert said federal regulators agreed to take back the depleted uranium that came in December if planned state changes to the disposal process fall through. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700011309/Herbert-derails-Utah-bound-shipments-of-depleted-uranium.html>

February 22, 2010

IG audit report details woes, uncertainties of U-233 project in Oak Ridge, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

DOE's Inspector General today released an audit report critical of the agency's handling of the U-233 down blending and disposition project in Oak Ridge. *** It's not too dissimilar from some of the problems outlined recently by John Eschenberg, DOE's new environmental management chief in Oak Ridge. The biggest difference is that Eschenberg blamed many of the problems on the contractor, Isotek, while the IG report tends to criticize DOE's Environmental Management program folks for letting the situation get in the shape that it's in. "Problems with Federal leadership of the project, at least in part, contributed to delays in completing design and establishing a viable cost baseline," the audit report said. "For example, after the direction to abandon thorium-229 extraction, EM had not ensured that the contract with Isotek was consistent with the new scope of work, a situation that impacted its ability to hold the contractor accountable.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2010/02/ig_audit_report_details_woes_u.html

Report available at: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0834.pdf>

February 21, 2010

Asphalt will cover tanks at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

Work has begun on putting an asphalt cap larger than a football field over a radioactively contaminated area of central Hanford. It's the second cap to be placed over a portion of the Hanford nuclear reservation, where underground tanks holding millions of gallons of radioactive and hazardous chemical waste have previously leaked into the soil. The caps are intended to prevent moisture from rain or snow runoff from seeping into the soil and driving contamination deeper or into the ground water. The Department of Energy and its regulators are discussing placing as many as six of the caps over portions of the tank farms, where an estimated 1 million gallons of tank waste has leaked into the soil. They're only a temporary measure, but their protection could be needed for decades. "It's the right thing to do to protect the environment," said Dan Parker, the Washington River Protection Solutions manager for the second cap.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/02/21/910390/asphalt-will-cover-tanks-at-hanford.html>

February 21, 2010

U.S. turns to Sweden as model in nuclear waste storage, *Los Angeles Times*

If the United States is at a loss over what to do about nuclear waste, it may be time to check out the Swedish model. A symposium at the annual meeting of the American Assn. for the Advancement of Science in San Diego last week highlighted the Swedish power industry in gaining public support for a geological repository for high-level radioactive waste. The Scandinavian success comes in stark contrast to efforts in the U.S., where spent nuclear fuel rods have remained for decades in temporary storage at power plants around the country. *** Like the U.S., Sweden, which gets 50% of its electricity from nuclear plants, has faced opposition in its three-decade quest to find a suitable long-term burial site. Protests halted studies at several sites. And the Swedes had a high barrier to overcome: Under Swedish law, any municipality can veto a repository within its borders.

The key, according to Claes Thegerstrom, chief executive of Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Co., was a methodical, deliberate process, with a dash of human psychological insight.

http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-na-nuclear-waste21-2010feb21_0_2950379.story

February 18, 2010

Legislators want nuclear waste payments halted, *Aiken Standard*

COLUMBIA -- South Carolina lawmakers said Thursday they have to do something about the Obama administration ditching plans to open the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste storage site in Nevada. State senators on Wednesday unanimously signed onto a bill that would require the state's electric utilities to put money earmarked for a national nuclear waste repository instead into a state fund until the federal site begins operating. The state would use interest from that to get its own long-term storage plan operating by 2012. The bill was introduced a day after Gov. Mark Sanford said the state may have to take legal action to keep the Yucca Mountain open as an option, claiming political deals were made and 25 years of promises were being broken after South Carolinians had put \$1.2 billion into the project. But poking the Department of Energy in the wallet creates problems. By Thursday, the state's utilities weighed in with warnings that they could lose federal nuclear power operating permits. And that's a big deal in a state where about half the power generated comes from nuclear plants and utilities are seeking permits for more reactors.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/State/m1062-BC-SC-XGR-SC-NuclearWas-2ndLd-Writethru-02-18-0604>

February 17, 2010

EPA to DOE: don't ignore pollution to dwell on demolitions in Oak Ridge, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

The Environmental Protection Agency is setting the stage for upcoming negotiations with a strong message to the Department of Energy: Don't let the focus on demolition of old buildings in Oak Ridge stall or deter efforts to reduce pollution in the environment.

"EPA is concerned that DOE...is placing too much emphasis on building demolition activities in lieu of contaminated environmental media cleanup," EPA's Franklin E. Hill wrote in a Feb. 9 letter to DOE's Oak Ridge office. "Significant levels of contamination in environmental media continue to migrate uncontrolled in groundwater and surface water, and in some cases beyond the boundaries of the ORR (Oak Ridge Reservation). This is viewed as a significant risk and should be addressed earlier than what DOE has recently indicated."

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2010/02/epa_to_doe_dont_ignore_polluti.html

February 17, 2010

SRS to use \$300M from pension plan for cleanup, job creation, *Aiken Standard*

More than \$300 million from the Savannah River Site's pension plan has been removed and will be used in job creation and environmental cleanup, the Department of Energy announced Wednesday. Following a thorough review of its contractor pension program, DOE said it has determined that more than \$300 million can be used for direct investment in cleanup efforts and job creation without having any impact on pension benefits for the vast majority of contractor employees. The plan is to use the money for additional cleanup efforts at SRS this fiscal year as a result of improved financial management of the Department's pension costs.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/Local/0218SRSPension>

February 17, 2010

Hanford tank waste pumping resumes, *Tri-City Herald*

Pumping of waste from Hanford's underground tanks resumed Tuesday four days after a worker called a stop to work because of concerns about chemical vapors. Washington River Protection Solutions had made several changes to better protect workers before the worker called a stop to pumping Friday and the contractor made no further changes before work was restarted Tuesday. Friday was the second time this month that a worker had used his authority to halt pumping because he and other workers believed vapors posed a safety concern. Both times contractor and organized labor officials followed Department of Energy procedures and investigated and then determined that it would be safe to resume pumping, according to WRPS.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/02/17/904681/hanford-tank-waste-pumping-resumes.html>

February 16, 2010

Study finds imported waste would increase contamination in Hanford ground water, *Tri-City Herald*

A new draft study shows importing radioactive waste for disposal at Hanford would significantly increase pollution in ground water beneath the nuclear reservation, according to the Washington State Department of Ecology. The state long has opposed the Department of Energy sending radioactive waste to Hanford for disposal. But the draft Hanford Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement that's open for public comment puts some numbers to that assertion. "We're cleaning up Hanford of some

of the constituents we care most about and then re-contaminating it with off-site waste to above the acceptable level from a cancer risk standpoint or a safe drinking water standpoint," said Suzanne Dahl, tank waste treatment section manager for the Department of Ecology.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/2010/02/16/14828/study-finds-imported-waste-would.html>