

News from Around the Complex

May 1 – May 31, 2010

Available on-line at www.fffcleanup.org

May 28, 2010

Audit finds savings in Hanford waste shipments to Idaho - Mid-Columbia News, Tri-City Herald
HANFORD — Not shipping certain Hanford radioactive waste to Idaho for processing as earlier planned is costing the nation \$25 million in increased costs, according to an audit by the Department of Energy Office of Inspector General. The Department of Energy questions that, saying that the long-term costs of dealing with that waste at Hanford will be reduced by at least \$135 million because the project has been accelerated with federal economic stimulus money. Similar long-term savings could be achieved by sending the waste to Idaho for processing, the audit countered. At issue is transuranic waste -- typically debris contaminated with plutonium -- that temporarily was buried at Hanford when Congress ordered a national repository for transuranic waste created in 1970. The waste was buried in drums and boxes until the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, in New Mexico opened as a repository.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/05/28/1031922/doe-audit-finds-sending-more-hanford.html#ixzz0pFd4UIRp>

Report available at: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-RA-10-10.pdf>

May 27, 2010

Obama's panel on nuclear waste to visit Hanford, Tacoma News Tribune

The Blue Ribbon Commission making recommendations on what to do with the nation's high-level radioactive waste will visit Hanford and the Tri-Cities July 14-15.

"The commission chose Richland because traveling to the Hanford reservation provides a unique opportunity for the commission to hear firsthand how diverse state and local constituencies are impacted directly by hosting a large nuclear facility," said John Kotek, the commission staff director. President Obama ordered the commission formed as his administration moved to terminate the Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository, and the commission has been told not to consider the Nevada site.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2010/05/27/1202668/blue-ribbon-commission-on-nuclear.html#ixzz0p97fDPPg>

May 26, 2010

Equipment fire interrupts waste exhumation activities at DOE's Idaho Site, Idaho State Journal

Idaho Cleanup Project officials are continuing to investigate the cause of a fire that was confined to the engine compartment of a vehicle called a telehandler, Tuesday at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex of the Department of Energy's Idaho Site.*** CH2M-WG Idaho (CWI), contractor for the Idaho Cleanup Project, has been excavating "targeted" radioactive and hazardous waste since 2005 under a program called the Accelerated Retrieval Project. Targeted waste includes filters and graphite molds contaminated with plutonium and americium, solidified sludge and uranium oxide. All material was generated during nuclear weapons production work at the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado and was shipped and buried in Idaho in pits and trenches during the 1950s and 1960s.

http://www.idahostatejournal.com/news/local/article_9737bd14-691a-11df-a671-001cc4c03286.html

May 26, 2010

Hanford needs more funding from DOE to meet obligations, Ecology reports, Tri-City Herald

RICHLAND — The Hanford nuclear reservation will need an estimated \$471 million more in fiscal 2012 to meet legal requirements than the Department of Energy has projected in its five-year spending plan, according to Washington State Department of Ecology calculations. The public got an initial look Tuesday at Department of Energy planning for the fiscal 2012 budget in a daylong workshop in Richland. "We knew 2012 was going to be an important year," said Dennis Faulk, Hanford program manager for the Environmental Protection Agency, a Hanford regulator. It's the first year since fiscal 2009 that DOE won't have economic stimulus money to bolster its annual environmental cleanup budget at Hanford. The \$1.96 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money Hanford is expected to receive should be spent by the start of fiscal 2012 to meet promises to the Obama administration. DOE Hanford offices have prepared budget requests to submit to DOE headquarters that project a need for almost \$2.8 billion in fiscal 2012, up from the previously estimated available funding of \$2.3 billion.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/2010/05/26/15392/hanford-needs-more-funding-from.html>

May 25, 2010

Ex-SC nuke plant demolishes reactor cooling tower, *WBTV (South Carolina)*

AIKEN, S.C. (AP) - A former nuclear weapons complex in South Carolina has demolished a cooling tower. The U.S. Department of Energy says the massive K reactor cooling tower was blown up on Tuesday as part of the Savannah River Site's stimulus-funded cleanup efforts. Explosives were loaded into thousands of holes drilled in the 450 foot-tall, 345 foot-wide tower. It only took several seconds for the tower to fall.
<http://www.wbvtv.com/Global/story.asp?S=12541615>

May 23, 2010

Protesters call for cleanup at radioactive waste dump, *The Buffalo News*

About 50 people gathered outside a World War II radioactive waste dump in the Town of Lewiston on Saturday morning as part of an ongoing protest against the federal government's failure to clean up the site. Organized by the Niagara Watershed Alliance, the protesters rallied at the Niagara Falls Storage site, which began as the Army's 7,500-acre Lake Ontario Ordnance Works and was the site of Manhattan Project research during World War II. The idea was to call attention to the lack of action by the federal government and to call on authorities to seek local input on an eventual cleanup plan, said Vincent Agnello, Alliance secretary. "Our ultimate goal is to have a clean community," Agnello said. "This stuff should not be sitting on the shores of Lake Ontario." The Niagara Falls Storage Site is a 191-acre parcel in the Town of Lewiston owned by the Department of Energy. It contains a 10-acre "interim waste containment structure" where some radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project is buried.
<http://www.buffalonews.com/2010/05/23/1059194/protesters-call-for-cleanup-at.html>

May 22, 2010

Texas may get nuclear waste from dozens of states, *Dallas Morning News*

Texas was all set to be part of an agreement with Vermont to dump nuclear waste in a remote region of the Lone Star state, and for the most part people living near the site were OK with it. Now, though, that compact could mushroom to include waste from 36 other states, reinvigorating those who oppose the project to fight harder. Environmentalists, geologists, the Texas League of Women Voters and others say the huge dumping ground will pollute groundwater and otherwise wreak havoc with the environment. The company that runs the site contends it'll be safe and many local residents applaud any expansion as a way to bring more jobs and prosperity to the West Texas scrubland.
<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/APStories/stories/D9FRMA0G1.html>

May 20, 2010

Department of Energy to Conduct Technical Reviews of the Environmental Management Tank Waste Cleanup Program, *DOE EM Press Release*

Washington, DC - The Department of Energy's Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, Dr. Inés Triay, today announced the establishment of a technical review panel to increase the effectiveness of tank waste cleanup projects across the country. The new panel will be composed of independent experts who will review the Department of Energy's tank waste cleanup programs at Hanford, the Savannah River Site, and the Idaho National Laboratory.
Tank Waste Subcommittee Workplan Available at:
<http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/Tank%20Waste%20Subcommittee%20Work%20Plan.FINAL.pdf>

May 20, 2010

DOE approves \$2 billion loan for Areva's nuclear facility in Idaho Falls, *The Idaho Reporter*

The U.S. Department of Energy Thursday approved a \$2 billion loan guarantee for the French company Areva to build a nuclear power facility near Idaho Falls. The proposed \$3.3 billion facility, called the Eagle Rock Uranium Enrichment Plant, could lead to 400 permanent jobs and up to 1,000 jobs to build the plant, and bolster the state's nuclear energy efforts.
<http://www.idahoreporter.com/2010/doe-approves-2-billion-loan-for-areva%E2%80%99s-nuclear-facility-in-idaho-falls/>

May 18, 2010

Nevada and counties split over ending Yucca, *Las Vegas Review Journal*

WASHINGTON -- The state of Nevada and Clark County say the Department of Energy has the power to terminate the Yucca Mountain Project. A half dozen rural counties in the state say it does not. Legal documents filed this week with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission provide a fresh picture of a split within

Nevada over the nuclear waste plan that the Obama administration wants to end. The commission has scheduled legal hearings for June 3 and 4 in Las Vegas over an Energy Department motion to withdraw a pending application to build a waste repository at the Yucca site, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The legal briefs provide a preview of arguments that will be fielded by a three-judge administrative panel.
<http://www.lvrj.com/news/nevada-and-counties-split-over-ending-yucca-94211039.html>

May 16, 2010

DOE planning for end to Hanford stimulus spending, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy is considering options for the transition to the end of economic stimulus spending at nuclear weapons sites, including Hanford, said Ines Triay, the DOE assistant secretary for environmental management. "We are working in partnership with communities to make sure to transition the work force in a way to benefit the community," she said during a visit to the Tri-Cities Thursday and Friday. One of the possibilities that may be considered is early retirement incentives. The Hanford nuclear reservation has received \$1.96 billion to accelerate environmental cleanup through September 2011. The money has been used to create the equivalent of 1,538 full-time jobs for DOE and its prime contractor employees. But with much of the work being done by subcontractors, the number of jobs created is at least double that.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2010/05/16/1016350/doe-planning-for-end-to-hanford.html#ixzz0oPNWvQ00>

May 13 & 14, 2010

N.M. Salt Beds Could Become Nation's Nuclear Dump, *NPR*

For 11 years, the federal government has been burying nuclear waste in New Mexican salt beds at a place called WIPP, or the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. It's waste from making atomic weapons. But now the government is looking for a place to put thousands of tons of spent fuel from reactors. These salt beds could be the place. New Mexicans, however, are faced with the prospect of becoming the nation's default nuclear waste dump. The former mayor of Carlsbad, N.M., is solidly on the "yes, bring it on" side. Say the word "salt," and he grins. "The biggest asset we have are those salt beds out here east of town," says Bob Forrest, as he sips iced tea in the restaurant of the Stevens Hotel. "They've been out there 250 million years, and they've just proven perfect to put this kind of waste to store it permanently, and that's the key to our success."

May 13 story: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126229739>

May 14 story: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126799978>

May 13, 2010

DOE tells Yucca contractors to stop work, prepare further job reductions - *News, Las Vegas Review-Journal*

WASHINGTON -- The dismantling of the Yucca Mountain repository plan advanced this week when the Department of Energy ordered the project's main contractors to stop most work and prepare further job reductions. The department Tuesday notified operations and management company USA Repository Services to halt activities on the nuclear waste program except to preserve records and administer the Yucca Mountain pension and workers compensation plans and medical coverage for retirees. "Effective May 24, 2010, USA RS is no longer tasked to perform work on contract tasks other than that needed for an orderly shutdown of the contract," a department contracting officer said in a letter to Douglas Cooper, the company's general manager. The contractor was directed to provide estimates of severance pay and other costs to carry out a reduction in the company's work force by Monday.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/doe-tells-yucca-contractors-to-stop-work--prepare-further-job-reductions-93662894.html>

May 11, 2010

At the heart of the Atomic City: Paducah's Gaseous Diffusion Plant, *WKMS (Kentucky)*

When people in the Paducah area discuss "yellowcake," it might not involve any sort of baked good. The confectionery nickname represents uranium's solid form -- a dense yellow powder. Uranium has been part of the Four Rivers region for over 50 years at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. The plant, located just within the borders of McCracken County, near Kevil, began as a weapon-building site for the U-S Nuclear arms program. After World War II, the race for nuclear arms rocketed uranium enrichment plants, like the one in Oak Ridge, Tennessee to heavy production. When U-S nuclear war program officials looked across the country for another plant location, Paducah Kentucky got the nod. Public Relations person for the

United States Enrichment Corporation or USEC Georgann Lookofsky says there were suspicions that friends in high places had something to do with it.

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wkms/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1648416/WKMS.Local.Features/At.the.heart.of.the.Atomic.City.Paducah%27s.Gasesous.Diffusion.Plant>

May 11, 2010

Hanford nuclear fuel storage buildings demolished, *Tri-City Herald*

Three large Hanford buildings used as early as World War II to store highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel are history. The 212-N, 212-P and 212-R buildings have been torn down, the holes that were left backfilled and the surface of the ground contoured using \$12.5 million in federal economic stimulus money. All that remains is to finish cleaning up three nearby ponds where contaminated water from the buildings was dumped and to deal with two radioactively contaminated locomotives and 13 radioactively contaminated railcars parked nearby. "By demolishing these buildings and taking care of waste sites with the help of Recovery Act funds, we are getting closer to our goal of reducing the footprint of active cleanup on the Hanford site to less than 75 square miles," said Dave Brockman, manager of the Department of Energy Hanford Richland Operations Office, in a statement.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/2010/05/11/15303/hanford-nuclear-fuel-storage-buildings.html>

May 11, 2010

Former governor: Yucca Mountain an 'opportunity of a lifetime', *Las Vegas Sun*

CARSON CITY – Former Gov. Robert List thinks the state should take a new look at construction of a \$100 billion project to bury high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. List, now a private attorney in Las Vegas, said it could be a "Fort Knox" for the state. "It's the opportunity of a lifetime to take a fresh look," he told the Legislative Committee on High-Level Radioactive Waste on Tuesday. But Bruce Breslow, head of the state's Agency for Nuclear Projects, said "The bookmakers have us favored" in canceling Yucca Mountain. The U.S. Department of Energy has announced it is withdrawing its application to go forward with Yucca Mountain as a site for burial of nuclear waste. List, who said he was an attorney for Esmeralda County, said anything can happen and "the project is not dead at this point." When Nevada opposed the Yucca Mountain project, Nevada had the only gaming in the nation and there was plenty of water for expansion. But now other states have casinos and the water supply is limited.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2010/may/11/former-governor-yucca-mountain-opportunity-lifetime/>

May 10, 2010

Colorado law sanctioning uranium mills complicates plans for New Mexico mine, *Colorado Independent*

A controversial plan to open an old uranium mine on Mt. Taylor near Grants, New Mexico, faces an obstacle in the new law passed by the Colorado legislature that forbids increased operations at uranium mills until the mill companies clean up sites contaminated in the past. The Cotter Uranium Mill, just a little over a mile south of Cañon City is owned by the same company that owns the Mt. Taylor mine and is the designated recipient of future Mt. Taylor uranium ore. Under the new law, which Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter has yet to sign, Cotter would not be able to accept the ore, at least not any time soon. "This is not unexpected," John Hamrick, vice president of milling at Cotter, told the Cañon City Daily Record. "This bill will prevent us from processing the Mount Taylor ore."

<http://coloradoindependent.com/53047/colorado-law-sanctioning-uranium-mills-complicates-plans-for-new-mexico-mine>

May 7, 2010

Depleted uranium delay proves costly for Energy Department, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

Delaying Utah-bound depleted uranium will cost the U.S. Energy Department up to \$12 million. That's the upper estimate agency officials shared recently with a citizens' advisory board in South Carolina during an update on the disposal of 15,600 drums of DU. Those 55-gallon containers were slated to be buried in the EnergySolutions landfill in Tooele County before Utah Gov. Gary Herbert asked the Energy Department for a delay. Now, 5,408 drums sit unburied at the EnergySolutions site, about 75 miles west of Salt Lake City, and another 9,392 remain at the South Carolina cleanup site until the agency figures out what to do next. One trainload of 56 cars is already loaded.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_15041654

See Previous NFAC Article (April 13 Salt Lake Tribune):

http://www.sltrib.com/ci_14877808?IADID=Search-www.sltrib.com-www.sltrib.com

May 7, 2010

Wash. congressmen vow to fight for Yucca Mountain, *The Seattle Times*

RICHLAND, Wash. —In a bipartisan visit to the Northwest's lone commercial nuclear power plant Friday, two Washington state congressmen said they will fight to keep the federal government from permanently abandoning a proposed nuclear waste repository in Nevada. The stop by Reps. Doc Hastings and Jay Inslee, the former a Republican representing largely rural central Washington and the latter a Democrat from Seattle's heavily populated suburbs, highlights the important role a national repository plays in ridding the state of its used nuclear fuel and defense waste. The Obama administration wants to withdraw its application to build Yucca Mountain, a project 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas that has been widely opposed by Nevada officials, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering the proposal. Washington state and South Carolina are suing to prevent the government from killing the project. Hastings and Inslee are among a bipartisan group in Congress sponsoring a resolution to bar the administration from cutting funding for the project.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2011811190_apwanuclearfuel2ndldwritethru.html

May 4, 2010

DOE cancels plutonium level change for SRS waste, *Augusta Chronicle*

The U.S. Energy Department has rescinded an order that would have nearly tripled the amount of plutonium in high-level waste converted to glass at Savannah River Site. "The Office of Environmental Management has decided not to move forward at this time with its February decision to direct contractors to start planning for higher concentrations of plutonium in waste canisters at the Savannah River Site," said Jen Stutsman, a spokeswoman at the department's Washington headquarters. The SRS-based Defense Waste Processing Facility uses a process called vitrification to convert liquid radioactive waste into a solid glass form suitable for long-term storage and permanent disposal. Plutonium is among many materials in the 36 million gallons of waste left behind at SRS by decades of nuclear weapons production. The department's order to increase plutonium levels in the waste canisters -- from 897 to 2,500 grams per cubic meter -- would have reduced the number of canisters needed to accommodate the waste.

<http://chronicle.augusta.com/news/metro/2010-05-04/doe-cancels-plutonium-level-change-srs-waste?v=1272932181>

See Previous NFAC Article (April 29 Augusta Chronicle): <http://chronicle.augusta.com/news/metro/2010-04-29/updates-will-double-volume-waste-processed-srs-facility?v=1272590134>

May 4, 2010

Stimulus Money Helps LANL Cleanup Project, *KOAT (New Mexico)*

Crews are preparing a massive cleanup effort at Los Alamos National Laboratory's first hazardous waste landfill, a six-acre site used from 1944 to 1948. The project gets under way in June and is being paid for with part of the \$212 million in federal stimulus money LANL received for environmental cleanup work. "This is one of those kinds of jobs that you can visually see because there's such a large area, buildings demolished, dirt being moved," said former New Mexico Gov. Toney Anaya, who is in charge of overseeing the state's stimulus funds. Anaya said the project will have long-term impact on the Los Alamos economy and the community. Crews will clean the site to residential standards and make it available to the county for future use.

<http://www.koat.com/news/23454184/detail.html>

May 3, 2010

Report on "The Interim Treatment of Salt Waste at the Savannah River Site", *DOE IG Report*

[Excerpt from Transmittal Memo] The Department's ISDP [Integrated Salt Disposition Project] has made significant progress toward meeting the programmatic goals for treating salt waste at SRS. For example, the ISDP has treated approximately 872,000 gallons of highly radioactive salt waste from the high-level waste tanks, the initial step toward relieving the critical shortage of operating space within the high-level waste system. Additionally, with the completion of the initial operational assessment period, ISDP is poised to begin treating salt waste with increased system throughput and radiological contamination removal rates beyond original expectations. Further, the Department issued the Savannah River Site Salt Waste Processing Facility Technology Readiness Assessment Report on July 13, 2009, that concluded that the ISDP "is successfully utilizing most of the processes that will be employed at the SWPF. The ISDP's Actinide Removal Process (ARP) and Modular Caustic Solvent Side Extraction Unit have successfully demonstrated removal of radioactive constituents from salt waste."

<http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-L-10-04.pdf>

May 2, 2010

Stimulus Workers Confront Legacy of Contamination at Nuclear Sites, *Pro Publica*

Chapter 1: Stimulus Jobs v. Beryllium Risks

The \$2 billion in federal stimulus money came as blessedly as rain to the desert of southeastern Washington state, where the government has spent decades trying to clean up the most productive A-bomb factory of the Cold War era. Phones at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation rang off the hook with calls from people in the nearby metropolitan area of Kennewick, Pasco and Richland who hoped to land one of 4,000 new stimulus jobs -- on top of 11,000 already working at Hanford. Robert Valdez, 33, a father of two young children who was among the early hires, said the starting pay of \$17 an hour plus benefits was "life changing." So were the nine weeks of intensive training he underwent to prepare for the hazards of working around a stew of poisonous chemicals and menacing pockets of radiation. The money for Hanford, part of a \$6 billion infusion at nuclear cleanup sites run by the Department of Energy, seems in perfect sync with goals of the stimulus plan -- the much-debated \$800 billion package of tax cuts, payments and infrastructure spending that President Barack Obama and Congress approved last year to stanch the bleeding economy.

<http://www.propublica.org/feature/all-beryllium-stimulus-workers-confront-legacy-of-contamination>