

U.S. transfers 71 Hanford acres to Port of Benton

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A tiny but strategically located chunk of Hanford now belongs to the Port of Benton.

The federal government formally transferred the 71 acres of the 3000 Area to the port Friday — the first time the federal government has given land to a port under a law passed in 1994.

"This is an unprecedented action," said John Wagoner, the Department of Energy's

Hanford manager, at a ceremony Friday.

"We congratulate the Port of Benton on being the first in the nation," said Joan Yim, deputy administrator of the federal Maritime Administration.

The 3000 Area and its 16 buildings are south of the Battelle-Northwest complex in Richland. The port plans to use the buildings to house light manufacturing companies.

The buildings originally were used as space for offices and maintenance and construction activities for Hanford. But they have been long unused.

In 1995, DOE began working with the federal General Services Administration, which supervises federal property, to relinquish ownership of the site.

The 1994 Defense Authorization Act allows the federal government to transfer property to local organizations for economic development purpose.

The Port of Benton eyed the Hanford site.

The port and five federal agencies — DOE, GSA and the federal departments of commerce, transportation and maritime — had to negotiate the transfer.

Port and federal officials credited Abe Greenberg, an ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. executive loaned to the port, with speeding up the process.

Greenberg served in the U.S. Navy with retired Vice Adm. Al Herberger, now head of the federal Maritime Administration.

"He cut through a lot of red tape," said Ben Bennett, director of the Port of Benton.

Bennett said other bigger coastal ports may find it easier to negotiate this process because the first transfer involved a small inland port.

Port officials said some light manufacturing companies have expressed interest in setting up in the 3000 Area, but none has signed at this point.

The 3000 Area also is designated a foreign trade zone. This means foreign raw materials and parts can be brought there to be assembled, then exported without paying tariffs.

Wagoner said the transfer helps Hanford environmental cleanup efforts because DOE does not have to spend money to tear down the site.

Charity campaign to honor Volpentest

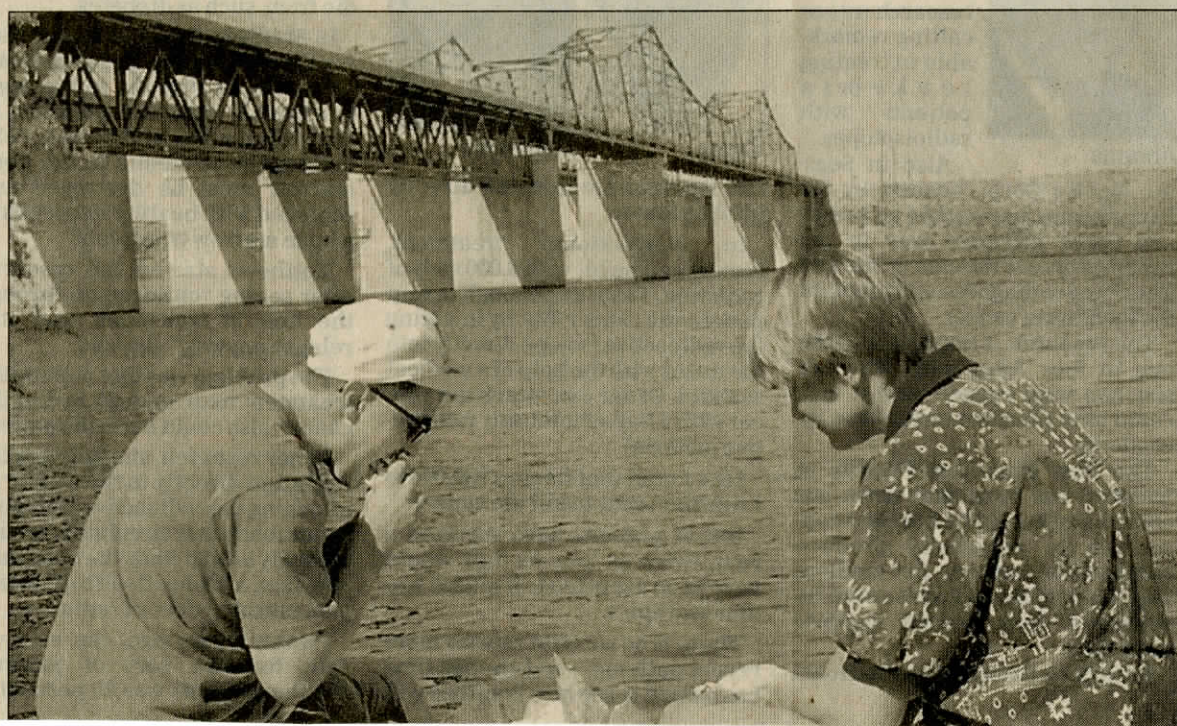
By the Herald staff

Longtime Tri-City advocate and leader Sam Volpentest celebrates his 92nd birthday Sept. 24.

Friends are planning to celebrate with a charity drive.

"I feel great about it, I'm tickled to death to do it," Volpentest said with a laugh. "It's a complete surprise."

Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, is considered one of the Tri-Cities' most illustrious citizens. He has been a key figure in



Ancient skeleton closer to a home

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Northwest American Indian tribes are a step closer to claiming a 9,200-year-old skeleton found in Kennewick.

The Army Corps of Engineers is starting the process to give the skeleton to the five tribes expressing an interest in it.

The corps announced late Friday that it plans to put legal announcements regarding its intent in the Tuesday and Sept. 24 editions of the Tri-City Herald.

The skeleton cannot be given to the tribes until after a mandatory 30-day comment period.

Chatters speculated that may mean the ancestors of today's American Indians and non-Indians may have closely resembled each other.

This is second oldest skeleton found in Washington.

The corps assumed control of the skeleton because Columbia Park is on land owned by the federal agency.

The Yakama, Umatilla, Nez Perce, Colville and Wanapum tribes are interested in the skeleton, which falls under the scope of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act, which requires the return of American Indian remains to tribes.

Human remains have religious significance to the tribes.

Corps spokesman Dutch Meier said the corps is discussing the mat-

Job tallies for Fluor remain incomplete

A final tally was unavailable Friday on how many Hanford workers are signing up with 13 new companies led by Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc.

Fluor officials were still tallying figures early Friday afternoon.

Phone messages seeking the latest figures late Friday afternoon were not returned.

A total of 8,600 workers from Westinghouse Hanford Inc., ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. and Boeing Computer Services have been offered jobs with Fluor Daniel Hanford, five major subcontractors, six new subsidiaries or another subcontractor, DyneCorp.

As of Tuesday, about 4,200 people had accepted new positions and about 200 rejected offers.

9-14-96 — Compiled by the Herald staff

Hanford floods by tank farms

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

A dry trench was turned into a canal early Sunday morning at Hanford when nearly 580,000 gallons of water gushed from a broken water pipe downhill toward underground waste storage tanks.

The "mechanical joint failure" in an old 14-inch water pipe happened about 3 a.m. Sunday in Hanford's 200 West Area, said Westinghouse spokesman Mike Berriochoa.

Few changes due, says Fluor chief

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Most of the 8,600 people now working for Westinghouse Hanford Co. and its partners at Hanford will see little change in their jobs when Fluor Daniel takes over management of the federal site Oct. 1.

That was the word Tuesday from Hank Hatch, Fluor's president and chief executive officer.

Hatch, in a prepared statement, said his message to all employees "is that on Oct. 1 they should report for work at the same time, at the same place and perform the same job in the same manner as they have in the past unless they are specifically notified of any change.

"Although all will have a new employer, we will make this transition as smooth as possible and seek continuous improvement after Oct. 1," he said.

Hatch also said 5,200 of the approximately 5,800 workers who were offered work by Fluor or



Hatch

its contractor team have accepted the jobs. Most of the remainder took early retirement.

The balance of the work force — some 2,800 — are covered by bargaining agreements that did not require job offers.

Fluor won a five-year, \$4.88 billion contract to replace Westinghouse as the Department of Energy's primary operator on the site.

Hatch said a major concern to Fluor and its partners is maintaining safety and continuity of work during the transition.

As Hanford's new prime contractor, California-based Fluor will supervise six major subcontractors and six newly created private divisions.

A key component of Fluor's winning bid called for creation of six so-called "enterprise compa-

nies" that will initially employ 2,500 of Hanford's current workers.

Those firms initially will provide services to Hanford, but the long-term plan is that they grow independent of Hanford's budget and attract new jobs and investments to the Tri-Cities.

Hatch and Hanford DOE Manager John Wagoner will appear on a half-hour cable television program that will begin airing at 7 p.m. Thursday on KTCI Channel 3 to discuss DOE's contract reform initiatives, which led to the new Fluor contract.

The program will be the first in an ongoing series designed to provide Tri-Citians with answers about changes taking place at Hanford.

Other programs will include discussions of procedures for doing business at Hanford, an explanation of Fluor's \$10 million venture capital fund and an introduction of the executives of the six new private divisions.

Air dates for those programs will be announced later.

Senate sends Hanford budget to Clinton

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Senate passed and sent to the president Tuesday spending legislation that keeps the Hanford cleanup on track and major projects at the reservation on schedule.

The energy and water appropriations bill for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1 previously cleared the House.

The White House has given no indication President Clinton will veto the measure.

The measure provides \$5.46 billion for environmental restoration and waste management at DOE sites, or \$50 million more than the administration had sought.

Hanford's share would be about \$1.3 billion.

The election-year funding level came in sharp contrast to last year when the Republican Con-

gress cut cleanup funding by roughly 10 percent.

Funding for other Hanford projects includes:

■ \$35 million for the Environmental and Molecular Sciences Laboratory, the same as the administration had requested.

■ \$61 million for the K-Basin spent fuel storage facility, the same as the administration had requested.

■ \$7.9 million for the Hazardous Materials Management Emergency Response (HAMMER) project, the same as the administration had requested.

The measure also calls for setting aside \$170 million in a contingency fund in case there are problems with the Department of Energy's plan to privatize cleanup of the underground waste tanks at Hanford.

The administration had sought \$185 million.

The department had offered assurances the

set-aside, funded from Hanford's cleanup accounts, would not result in additional layoffs at the reservation or delay the cleanup.

Both of Washington's senators, Democrat Patty Murray and Republican Slade Gorton, said they were satisfied with the assurances.

But they also inserted language in the bill designed to hold the department to its promise.

Rep. Richard "Doc" Hastings said the measure represented a "home run" for Hanford, even though Congress watered down his proposal requiring all savings from the new site contract at Hanford to remain at the reservation.

"This budget does two things: First, it increases funding for site cleanup activities and laboratory programs at Hanford," Hastings said. "Second, it orders headquarters to stop micromanaging the cleanup and let our site officials move forward."

9-18-96

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1996

TRI-CITY HERALD

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DOE wants to redraft tax rule

By ERIK SMITH

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy has backed away from a plan to immediately publish a tax regulation affecting scores of local governments nationwide, and is asking for their help in redrafting the rule.

Benton County Treasurer Claude Oliver, chairman of the Nuclear Communities Working Group, is calling the decision a major victory. The rule would govern how the Department of Energy compensates communities for property taxes lost when DOE installations were established in their back yards — and would mean millions of dollars to Benton County.

"It's a good start by the administration to work with local communities," Oliver said.

Under Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, DOE has been struggling to deal with claims from communities for tax money, as permitted by the 1946 and 1954 laws that established DOE's predecessor, the Atomic Energy Commission.

The laws said federal money could be made available to local governments to compensate for land taken from the tax rolls as the country built its nuclear weapons complex. But until Oliver launched his nationwide organization, few were aware the money was available.

In Southeastern Washington, where the federal government holds 560 square miles for its Hanford nuclear reservation, it's no small chunk of change. Oliver and other local government officials nationwide say DOE payments could be used to expand their tax bases and perhaps lower their property tax rates.

Originally DOE planned to publish a regulation this month standardizing the way land is to be valued. But Tim Travelstead, the DOE's point man on the project in Washington, D.C., said the timetable has been pushed back to November or December.

He said a meeting with local government officials is tentatively set for the second week of October.

Oliver and his staff got a copy of the proposed rule in late August, and challenged land valuation procedures they said could cut Benton County's

projected revenue by 30 percent. Not everyone agrees: County Assessor Barbara Wagner concluded payments actually would increase.

Travelstead said he is inclined to agree with Wagner. Under current land valuation practices, DOE's total obligation for about 50 nuclear sites nationwide would be between \$10 million and \$15 million a year, he said. Under the proposed rule, he said, it would rise to \$15 million to \$20 million. After publication of the rule in the Federal Register, DOE will conduct public hearings, and it could be in place as early as next year.

Hanford, Oak Ridge and Savannah River are the biggest sites for which "payments in lieu of taxes" are due. Local governments surrounding Savannah River currently get some PILT money; Oak Ridge is due to start collecting the money next year.

As for Hanford, DOE settled with two of the three affected counties, giving Grant County a 1995 payment of about \$520,000, and Franklin County, \$240,000. Benton County is negotiating with DOE, but is due a 1995 payment of about \$1.6 million.

DOE's Tom Grumbly to attend Hanford celebration

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Tom Grumbly, the Department of Energy's undersecretary, is expected this week at a celebration marking the first Hanford waste site to be clean enough to leave the nation's Superfund list.

He's scheduled to announce completion of the 1100 Area cleanup and its removal from the Superfund National Priorities List, a first in the DOE complex.

In addition, Grumbly will dedicate a new program that designates Hanford as a deployment center to solicit and test newly developed technologies for nuclear waste cleanup, participate in an emergency training exercise, meet with community leaders and speak at a dinner honoring U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash.

Grumbly will arrive in the Tri-Cities this afternoon.



Grumbly

Grumbly, Hanford manager John Wagoner and other federal and state officials, will attend an event at 10:45 a.m. Friday in Richland, where Grumbly will declare Hanford's 1100 Area off the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list, a compilation of the most hazardous waste sites in the nation.

That area, a parcel of land just north of Richland, which held bus barns and maintenance buildings, has been cleaned of all contamination.

The 1100 Area is to the north of the Vantage

Highway, between Richland and Horn Rapids. The site no longer poses a significant threat to public health or the environment, according to the EPA.

No radioactive contamination was found in the area. However, workers carted away construction debris, asbestos, office waste, petroleum products, battery acid and antifreeze.

The 1100 Area was added to the Superfund list in 1989 because some of the contaminated sites were close to drinking water wells used by Richland. Several other areas at Hanford remain on the Superfund list.

At a separate event — Grumbly, Wagoner and key participants including Clyde Frank, from DOE headquarters, Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel, which on Oct. 1 will take over as Hanford's new primary contractor, and Joe Nemec, president of Bechtel Hanford — will officially open

Hanford's Technology Deployment Center. The dedication will be at 2420 Stevens, Richland.

Later, Grumbly will be part of the so-called Roundup Exercise, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Saturday on the Oregon side of the Interstate-82 Bridge in Umatilla. Emergency management officials from Washington and Oregon will be part of drill.

That exercise is in response to requests from the Oregon and Washington departments of health. Additional sponsors include DOE's Hazardous Materials Management Emergency Response (HAMMER) center, DOE's radiological assistance program and DOE's program office responsible for complex-wide emergency management.

Finally, Grumbly is guest speaker Saturday night at a fund-raising dinner for Dicks, a Bremerton Democrat, who is closely involved in Hanford issues.

The \$250-per-couple dinner, scheduled to begin with a social hour at 6 p.m. at the Hanford House in Richland, was organized by Sam Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council.

"Norm is one of the ranking members on the House Appropriations Committee, is the minority member on the House Subcommittee on Interior, and is also the ranking minority member on the Defense Appropriations Committee," Volpentest said.

"He gets along with both sides of the aisle. He has long been a supporter of programs at Hanford, and was the first, for example, to embrace construction of the Environmental Molecular Science Laboratory back in 1986," Volpentest added.

"Norm's thumbprint is all over the 4th District."

Hanford engineers probe corrosion

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

A pair of Westinghouse Hanford Co. engineers combined ingenuity with emerging industrial technology to develop a unique probe to monitor corrosion of the steel walls inside Hanford's radioactive waste storage tanks.

"For the first time we can remotely monitor the corrosion rates of our waste storage tanks," said Glenn Edgemon of Westinghouse's materials and corrosion engineering division.

"Understanding tank corrosion rate is vital if we are to continue to store the waste safely until it can be prepared for disposal," he added.

The first probe was placed in a double-shell waste storage tank in August.

"The probe immediately began returning data showing corrosion of the steel tank walls is less than expected and well within the design specifications of the tank," said Jim Nelson, of the same Westinghouse division.

"We are excited because the probe shows no indication of pitting or stress corrosion cracking in our tanks," Nelson said.

Edgemon first worked with this technology as a graduate student for Georgia Tech at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and saw applications for Hanford's tanks.

"It's the first applications of this technology to a high-level waste tank environment anywhere," Edgemon said. "Our ability to detect the type and rate of corrosion is a real step forward in making sure the

tanks are sound and can continue to store the waste safely."

The probe allows continuous monitoring of the wastes for changes in corrosive conditions. Changes can be detected immediately, allowing corrective action to be taken sooner.

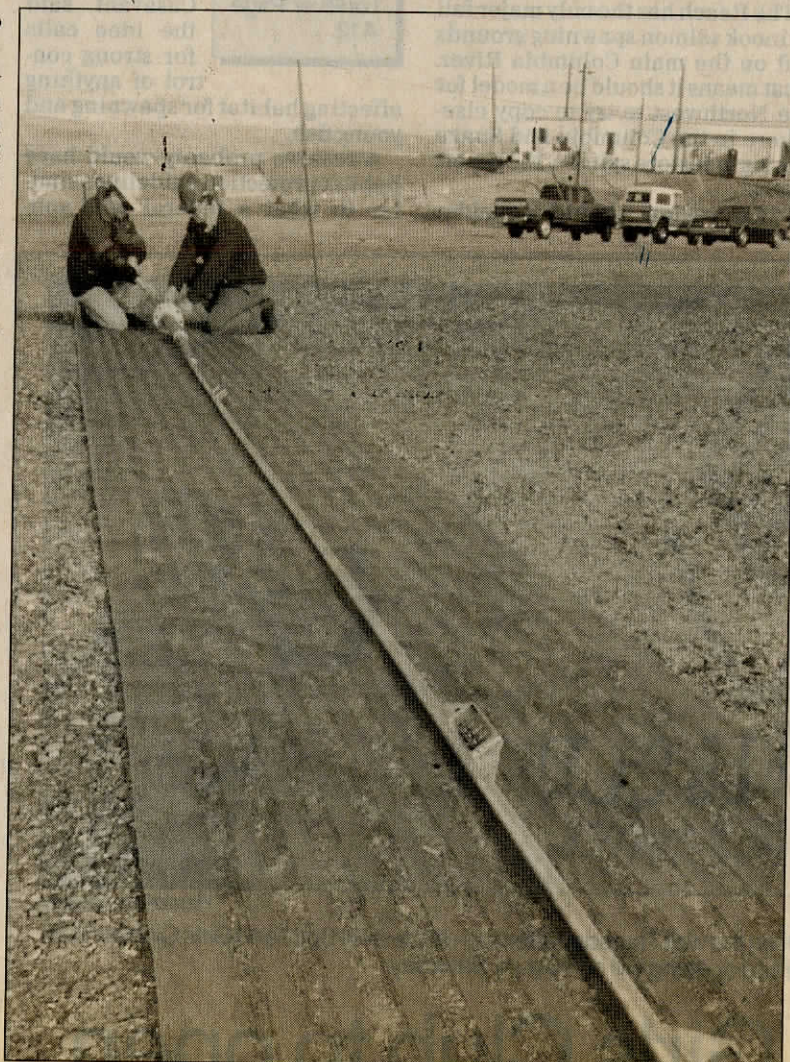
Since certain types of corrosion are capable of quickly damaging the tank, rapid detection will allow longer use of the underground tanks. The corrosion detector is expected to reduce costs for operations of the tanks, said Westinghouse spokesman Mike Berriochoa.

It currently costs about \$462,000 to sample a tank just once to evaluate corrosive chemistry. The new probe can be fabricated for about \$12,000 per tank and monitored remotely from a desktop computer.

The probe uses three electrodes made of the same carbon steel as the tanks. The electrodes monitor very small changes in current and voltage as they corrode. The changes indicate the type and extent of any corrosion.

"The use of this system is the first that we know of in the industry. It solves an important industrial problem in a cost-effective manner," said Phil Ohl, team leader of materials and corrosion engineering. "We have an invention disclosure submitted and hope to obtain a patent and transfer this technology back into the commercial market."

The prototype probe will be operated for four months, when a formal evaluation report will be prepared. The system will be in full operation next June. Probes are expected to eventually be installed in all 28 of Hanford's double-shell tanks.



Westinghouse Hanford photo
Jim Edgemon and Jim Nelson of Westinghouse Hanford's materials and corrosion engineering inspect the connections at the top of the new probe that will monitor tank waste for corrosion.

Hot Hanford mouse was a stowaway

By WANDA BRIGGS
and ANNETTE CARY

Herald staff writers

The radioactive rodent trapped this week in an abandoned Hanford building that now houses the Richland branch of the Tri-Cities Food Bank probably was transported there in a box of canned goods.

John Wagoner, the Department of Energy's Hanford manager, said Friday that the isotopic analysis done on the mouse shows contami-

Food collections to be halted in 200 Area

nation identical to that which has previously been detected on other mice caught in Hanford's 200 Area.

That 200 Area is where 55 million gallons of radioactive liquids are held in underground waste storage tanks and where surface contamination is being cleaned up.

Workers there had set up boxes to collect food for the food bank, he said. The theory is the mouse crawled into a box which had been filled with donated food.

That box was then delivered to the food bank, which has been located since December in a metal building in Hanford's 3000 Area, about a mile north of Hanford High School.

Wagoner said Friday that food collections in such high-risk areas as the 200 Area will stop.

"I hate to do that, but I guess we have no choice," he said.

Workers checking traps this week

found, then killed the mouse and as is customary, had it analyzed.

It's the first time a contaminated mouse has been found south of the Battelle-Northwest complex.

Discovery of the contaminated mouse led to the one-day shutdown of the food bank.

The food bank has rescheduled its Richland government commodity give away for 1-3 p.m. Monday.

The building was closed for a day,

but health officials found no evidence the mouse had gotten into any food.

The commodities are given away once a month to people with low incomes who qualify for a state program using federal block grant money. This month's box includes powdered milk, peanut butter and spaghetti.

The food bank is scheduled to move into new quarters on Wellsian Way by the end of the year.

For more information about the commodity program, call 372-1243.

Wyden presses for oversight of DOE sites

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Ron Wyden is stepping up his call for independent oversight of Energy Department nuclear sites, contending the agency bungled a recent review of health and safety problems at Hanford.

The Oregon Democrat said he wants to know why the department "pulled the plug" on a panel of experts who had been lined up to assess potential dangers in the storage of highly radioactive waste at the nuclear reservation.

Instead, the review was conducted this summer by a team whose leader, Paul Rice, is a former vice president of Westinghouse Electric Corp.

"The ongoing health and safety problems at Hanford stem from a culture of self-regulation. Whenever a contractor reviews itself, in the back of their mind are quarterly reports, the bottom line, what it means on a profit-and-loss basis."

— Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission or Nuclear Defense Facilities Safety Board — to oversee safety at DOE sites.

"The ongoing health and safety problems at Hanford stem from a culture of self-regulation," Wyden said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

"Westinghouse has nothing to do with it," he said.

Sidpara said he chose the Rice team because he was familiar with its three members' work, they were prepared to turn out a review quickly and the price — about \$50,000 — was right at a time of fiscal restraint.

report on safety concerns by investigators with Congress' General Accounting Office.

Sidpara said Moeller was enlisted by officials at MacTec, a DOE subcontractor that provides technical support services at Hanford. He said he had asked MacTec if they knew any likely candidates for the project.

"In both cases, they were independent panels," MacTec's Michael O'Neill told the AP.

"It's just a question of scope," with Moeller envisioning a "much larger and more encompassing" review than DOE had in mind, O'Neill said.

thorough analysis and would hire an independent team to do the analysis," said a DOE official at headquarters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We don't believe at headquarters that either a thorough analysis was done or that it was an independent analysis," the official said.

"It could be more appearance than anything else. ... The guy might be independent as hell as far as I know. The fact he worked for Westinghouse doesn't look good," the DOE official said.

Lisa Feldt, a special assistant to Al Alm, assistant energy secretary for environmental management and responsible for tank oversight, agreed.

Management group to discuss Hanford

The Project Management Institute will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Richland Tower Inn, 1515 George Washington Way, to discuss Hanford projects.

The Columbia Basin Chapter of the institute will feature speakers from Fluor-Daniel Hanford and the Department of Energy, talking about project management principles and techniques that may be applied in all professional undertakings.

Downwinder attorney removed

By ANNETTE CARY
Herald staff writer

A federal judge has removed one of the largest groups of Hanford downwinders from a massive lawsuit and suspended its attorney until an Oct. 18 hearing.

U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald of Yakima found Spokane attorney Nancy Oreskovich engaged in bad faith conduct by not promptly mailing her 1,500 clients a court-approved letter critical of how she has handled the case.

"This conduct is contrary to professional standards and raises grave doubts about her fitness to discharge her obligations to her clients and to this court," McDonald wrote in his ruling.

Oreskovich is accused of fraud and incompetence in her handling of the complicated case. A federal magistrate's report recommended her removal. She is scheduled to respond to those accusations Oct. 18.

The judge also said he had received information Oreskovich had tried to broker a substitute lawyer for her clients. It is inappropriate for her to hand-pick another attorney and negotiate payment to herself until allegations of misconduct are resolved, he wrote.

He also was concerned about reports some of her clients had not received the court-approved notice about her conduct, and others had received it along with a three-page letter contesting the magistrate's findings against Oreskovich.

These reports came after Oreskovich told the judge Sept. 6 she had not initially understood the urgency in mailing the summary to clients, and when she realized it, in her haste had sent out a

draft of the summary the court had said was inadequate.

"The charges against Ms. Oreskovich are serious and extreme," McDonald wrote. "If the detailed findings of the magistrate judge are not successfully challenged, Ms. Oreskovich should certainly not be permitted to further participate in this litigation."

"Indeed, there is great doubt whether she should be permitted to practice at all."

In a prepared statement to the Herald on Tuesday, Oreskovich said the court's ruling deprives her of contact with her clients even though there has not been a hearing on the magistrate judge's findings.

She is allowed no contact with clients since the ruling was issued, but before that, "hundreds of clients have called and written to express outrage at the court's conduct toward me and toward the client," she said in the statement.

Her clients still will have a case, but it will be considered separately from the consolidated downwinders case and no action can be taken until after the October hearing.

Her clients are "essentially unrepresented" in the case now, even though many crucial expert depositions are being filed, McDonald wrote about his decision to remove her clients from the consolidated downwinders suit.

The investigation into her fitness to represent downwinders and the upcoming hearing already have interfered with the progress of the suit for all the plaintiffs, he wrote.

It would be unfair to them to allow her clients to slow the progress of the case, he wrote.

About 4,200 people, with possibly 1,500 represented by Oreskovich, are claiming damages from exposure to radiation from the Hanford nuclear reservation. They have filed suit against the

Department of Energy and several former Hanford contractors for accidental and intentional radiation releases in the 1940s and 1950s.

The law firm of Feltman, Gebhardt, Eymann & Jones remains the attorney of record for Oreskovich's clients, said Richard Eymann of the Spokane firm, although that firm had asked to be removed from the case.

According to the magistrate's report, the firm agreed to become part of the suit in late 1995, after Oreskovich said she had invested \$450,000 in expenses and needed office and legal help to handle the massive case.

Downwinder attorneys are taking the case on a contingency basis — meaning fees and expenses would be paid from any settlement. The settlement has been estimated at \$500 million to \$1 billion.

But after agreeing to work with Oreskovich, the Spokane firm filed a motion to withdraw from the case in April 1996. When ordered to say why, the firm filed documents making several allegations of misconduct, which the court ordered sealed.

Magistrate Judge Nancy Fiora was assigned to investigate the allegations, and her report concluded the majority of allegations were on target.

Eymann said his firm's attorneys are willing to remain the attorneys for Oreskovich's clients, depending on what the court decides after the Oct. 18 hearing. The firm is not willing to work on the case if Oreskovich is allowed to continue on the case after the hearing, Eymann said.

At the Oct. 18 hearing, Oreskovich will be allowed to respond to accusations in Fiora's report. She is accused of wrongfully charging expenses to her clients and Eymann's firm, running a practice incapable of handling the complicated litigation, not releasing required information to other attorneys and not keeping clients well informed.

Foundation of progress awaits Fluor

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Ask LaMar Trego about the legacy Westinghouse Hanford Co. and its partners leave for Hanford's new managers, and he'll proudly answer.

"We've gone from gridlock to success ... from making little progress to making real progress. We've set the wheels in motion to get this job done," he said.

That job will be done beginning Tuesday by Fluor Daniel and its six major subcontractors, hired by the Department of Energy to manage Hanford for the next five years.

Trego took over as president of Westinghouse Hanford Co. 33 months ago in the aftermath of a series of safety mishaps that culminated in the infamous "rock-on-the-rope" incident in which two workers used a rock on a rope to probe the innards of a pipe leading into a storage tank filled lethal radioactive wastes.

Trego, with Westinghouse since 1971, was assigned by the Pitts-

Changing of the Guard

Today, the Herald begins a three-part look at Hanford's management changeover.

■ Today's articles examine the legacy left by the displaced management team. For reactions from Kaiser and Boeing officials, see Page A7.

■ Sunday's stories will look at the new contracting team.

■ Monday's stories will look at whether Fluor Daniel is ready for the job, and at Hanford workers who are unhappy with the change.

burgh-based company to take over and restore reason to Hanford.

He soon turned things upside down.

He chopped seven layers of

Hanford contracts awarded

Tank project major privatization effort

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Hanford's largest experiment with privatization began Wednesday when two private partnerships were awarded first-phase contracts totaling \$54 million to treat radioactive wastes stored in underground tanks.

Nuclear reactor barge headed for Hanford

A barge carrying the defueled reactor compartment package from the former USS Gurnard left the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Monday for its final burial at Hanford.

The river portion of the trip is expected to take three days. A transporter then will haul the submarine reactor compartment overland to the government's burial ground.

Business association makes bid for FFTF

By ANNETTE CARY
Herald staff writer

An association of businesses sent an unsolicited bid to the Department of Energy Thursday to operate Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility and the Fuels and Material Examination Facility.

Enterprise companies to create 3,000 jobs

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

They're Hanford's newest corporate critters. Officially, they're dubbed "enterprise" companies.

But workers are calling the six new companies "outside the fence."

And they're a huge piece of a master plan to spin off about 1,700 nonunion Hanford workers into companies that are supposed to grow independent of Hanford — and into something more permanent than the cleanup mission.

The idea to create these firms helped a six-company team, led by Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc., win the Department of Energy's new Hanford contract.

Each of the "inside the fence" six is required to create an "enterprise" company using transferred Hanford workers.

The "insiders" at first will depend heavily on Hanford work.

As the years pass, they are supposed to wean themselves from Hanford's budget and find customers elsewhere until they can survive independent of Hanford.

And they are supposed to grow — helping the Fluor team create 3,000 jobs by Sept. 30, 2001, as required by the new contract.

A lot of the details on what happens between now and then remain unsettled.

Initial indications are the enterprise companies probably will create not much more than a couple of hundred jobs in their first two or three years.

Meanwhile, the six enterprise companies appear to be the biggest source of anxiety among the 8,000 union, nonunion and temporary Hanford workers being transferred to the companies under Fluor's umbrella.

"Inside the fence" are the six core companies in Fluor's team, plus DynCorp Tri-Cities Services Inc.

Those seven companies will employ almost 6,400 people whose permanent focus is federally funded Hanford, and who will receive the same pay and benefits as they did under their old employers — Westinghouse Hanford Co., ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. and Boeing Computer Services.

But the "outside" companies gradually must enter a more cutthroat marketplace outside of Hanford.

That translates to leaner budgets and means leaner benefits packages for the approximately 1,700 employees on the outside. Each of the six offers a different benefits package that reflects a separate corporate culture and competitive marketplace.

Changing of the Guard



At first, they will survive on the Fluor team's "outsourcing" requirements in the DOE contract.

"Outsourcing" means the Hanford contractors will obtain equipment, supplies and services from outside their own firms.

The contract requires 50 percent of the Fluor team's operating budget be spent that way over five years. And 60 percent of that 50 percent — 30 percent of the total — must be purchased in the Tri-Cities or the surrounding area.

The six enterprise companies will count as "local" firms.

Here is a rundown of their plans:

Fluor Daniel Northwest Inc.

Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc. plans to invest \$3 million in this spinoff. Initial work force is 854.

It will be a construction and construction management company — similar to the old ICF Kaiser Hanford Co.

The firm hopes to shift about 10 percent of its business outside Hanford in a year, said General Manager Stew Heaton.

Heaton hopes outside work will expand to 30 percent to 40 percent of the business in five years, with a mix of government and private jobs.

That is expected to lead to 100 to 200 more jobs in three years — which is as far as Fluor Daniel Northwest wants to forecast.

"It's tough to predict because the market and global economy change so fast," Heaton said.

That market of potential construction projects includes power plants, pharmaceutical and biochemical buildings, communication facilities and food plants.

Heaton said the overall Fluor cor-



A crane is used to lift wastes from an old burial site at Hanford. At least 1,400 waste sites at the nuclear site need to be studied, guarded and cleaned up.

Co.'s spinoff, with 533 workers.

It will handle computer management for Hanford, payrolls and photography and video services. Most workers will be former Boeing employees.

Bob Russell, Lockheed Martin Services president, said possibly 30 percent of its business might go outside Hanford in three years.

The firm would sell its computer technical expertise to government and businesses, including other Lockheed Martin subsidiaries across the nation.

part of being a leaner non-Hanford company, Russell said.

DE&S Northwest Inc.

This is Duke Engineering & Services Hanford Inc.'s spinoff, with 45 workers.

Its primary mission is to provide quality assurance for Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc. — independent checks of management systems and

"There will be modest growth," Grier said.

The firm's market will be commercial nuclear facilities and other DOE sites. Duke Engineering & Services and other subsidiaries of Duke Power have many projects where a quality assurance firm could find work, Grier said.

DE&S Northwest is hunting for office space.

SGN Eurisys Services Corp.

This is Numatec Hanford Inc.'s spinoff with about 105 workers.

officials. "We expect measurable increases," Morson said.

And he said potential customers could include other DOE sites, plus nuclear sites in other nations.

The company will be based at 1200 Jadwin Ave., Richland.



Morson

B&W Protec Inc.

This is the Babcock & Wilcox Hanford Co.'s spinoff, with 179 employees.

It will handle physical, personnel, computer and classified material security.

It is a subsidiary of B&W Federal Services, which handles government work for the overall Babcock & Wilcox corporation. B&W Federal Services already handles security matters at DOE sites at Idaho Falls and Rocky Flats.

John Noon, director of safety and security at Idaho Falls, will be president, and Daniel Baker will be the Hanford site manager.



Baker

B&W Protec's short-term goals are to do well at Hanford and also handle security for one of the two privatized tank-waste glassification pilot projects — the one headed by a Lockheed Martin team, said company spokeswoman Betty Hansen.

B&W Protec's potential customers are federal and commercial high-technology sites.

The company is hunting for a Richland office.

Rust Federal Services Northwest

This is Rust Federal Services of Hanford Inc.'s spinoff, with 47 workers.

This company will handle air, ground water and other environmental monitoring.

Although it initially will concentrate on Hanford, "it's not going to take long to move to other commercial work," said President Dave Van Leuven.

Rust is working on its plan to target commercial customers and add jobs.

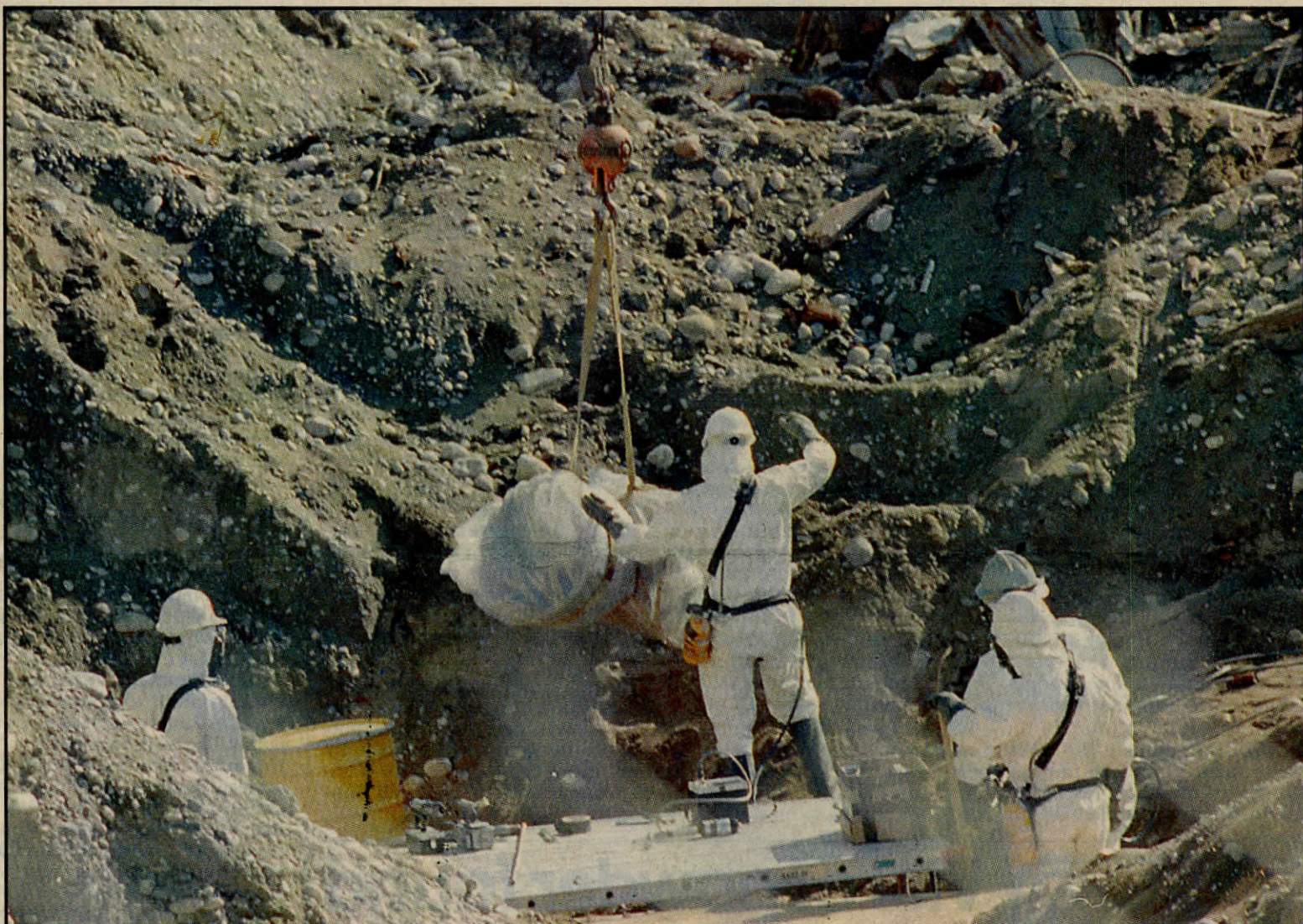
Rust is in the process of hiring



Changing of the Guard

**“We’re ready to pick up
without skipping a beat.”**

Dave Van Leuven,
president of Rust Federal Services of Hanford.



Herald file photo

Hanford workers remove barrels of contaminated materials from a trench. Responsibility for cleanup of Cold War wastes changes

hands Tuesday as a new 13-company consortium takes over operations at the nuclear reservation.

‘Team Hanford’ poised to take over

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

You could call it corporate fission.

Three Hanford companies will split into 13 on Tuesday.

And the new 13 won't resemble the original three. You'll need a scorecard to keep track of who is in charge of what.

This is the biggest and latest step in overhauling how Hanford cleanup is done. It thrusts a new group of companies into Hanford's intense limelight and leaves everyone wondering if the consortium will keep up the pace or stumble.

The name of the new game is the “project” approach.

Since 1987, one company — Westinghouse Hanford — has been in charge of the bulk of what goes on at Hanford.

However, the Department of Energy decided to tackle Hanford's cleanup as a collection of separate projects — each with a specific company, or section of a company, working toward a well-defined goal.

Today is the second installment of a three-day series examining Hanford's management changeover.

TODAY'S STORIES:

A look at the seven new core contracting firms and plans for six private divisions continues on **Page A6**.

MONDAY'S STORIES:

A look at whether Fluor Daniel is ready for the job, and at Hanford workers who are unhappy with the change.

Once a goal is met, the need for that group ceases to exist. And the people involved are to be reshuffled.

This idea evolved into the 13-company team — led by Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc. — that will take over Hanford's operations Tuesday.

That team replaces Westinghouse and its two subcontractors — ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. and Boeing Computer Services.

In their places will be:

■ Six core members of the new team.

Fluor Daniel Hanford is in charge, including control of the site's unionized workers for the other companies.

The focuses of four other companies — Babcock & Wilcox Hanford Co., Rust Federal Services of Hanford Inc., Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. and Duke Engineering & Services Inc. — are four major Hanford tasks.

These chores are taking care of the tank farm, cleaning up facilities so they are ready for environmental restoration, moving and neutralizing the spent nuclear fuel in the K Basins, and generally studying and handling radioactive wastes.

A sixth company — Numatec Hanford Inc. — will provide engineering help to Fluor Daniel Hanford and the other four subcontractors.

■ DynCorp Tri-Cities Services Inc.

Fluor Daniel hired it as an extra subcontractor — to add to the original six core firms — to take care of Hanford's buildings, land and equipment.

Please see **HANFORD**, Page A2 ▶

9-29-96

Fluor 'ready' at Hanford

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Seven weeks ago it was: Fluor who?
But Tuesday, Fluor Daniel — believed by some labor, community and contractor executives to have been the dark horse in a three-way competition — becomes the biggest player on Hanford's block.

"Without any hesitation, we are ready."
— Hank Hatch,
Fluor Daniel president

Angry workers not 'going to take it'

By WANDA BRIGGS
and JOHN STANG
Herald staff writers

About 600 white-collar workers are poised to sue Hanford contractors, claiming major inequities resulted when the 8,000-member work force was reassigned to the new Fluor Daniel management team.

In a meeting Saturday at the Tower Inn in Richland, about 15 workers representing a cross section of Westinghouse Hanford, ICF Kaiser and Boeing told officials of a California law firm that many workers are "madder than hell and aren't going to take it anymore."

It is the latest development highlighting worker frustration that has built up during months of downsizing, rightsizing, reorganization, re-engineering and finally, reassignment to Fluor or one of its 12 corporate partners.

At Saturday's session, Kaiser employee John Baxter was named chairman of a newly formed council that will have proxy authority to represent workers if a courtroom battle develops. About 600 employees have signed lists indicating their willingness in becoming plaintiffs in such an action.



From left, Guy Lobdell, Rose Hamann, Irene Berger, Dale Wagoner and Jerry Cramer chat about changes at Hanford after a meeting at the Machinists headquarters in Richland. Lobdell and Hamann have been leading an effort to organize Hanford's white-collar workers.

Herald/Paul T. Erickson

in writing, that such severance would be paid if a worker gets laid off in the future. those employees will have not only from our company, but from our partners, are

Officials perusing DOE site

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

If you've ever done a "walk-through" before buying a house, you may have a feeling for what Julie Erickson, Don Ofte and George Jackson are going through.

A small feel.

This trio, with the help of some 300 people, are "walking through" the Hanford site — 560 square miles of property where some 8,000 people work, which contains 378 major buildings, some 1,100 associated facilities such as waste holding tanks and about \$350 million worth of equipment from computers to coffee pots.

"I've been at a number of DOE sites, and was told that the transition from one contractor to another works well in 120 days. We have 53," said Ofte, a Fluor Daniel Hanford vice president and a 40-year veteran of America's nuclear program.

But, he added, "We will be ready to go Oct. 1 because of the planning, preparation and outstanding cooperation of DOE, Westinghouse, ICF Kaiser and Boeing."

Jackson is a veteran Westinghouse employee who is managing the transition for that company. Erickson is supervising the transition for DOE. Together, they are leading the push that started Aug. 7 when the Energy Department awarded a five-year contract to the Fluor Daniel Hanford team.

The tight timeframe demands the "walk-through" of physical property proceed rapidly. DOE, Westinghouse and Fluor must visually verify the condition of tons of nuclear material before the new team takes over Tuesday.

Mystery helicopter spotted on ALE

Information sought on harassment of elk herds

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Authorities are hunting for a mystery helicopter that has chased elk herds on the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve during three days in September.

Officials speculate the aerial harassment may be responsible for smaller herd sizes this year at the site.

About 450 elk roam in and out of Hanford's 120-square-mile ecology reserve, which is part wildlife refuge and part field laboratory. Public access to the land is restricted.

Hanford engineer has high hopes for air flow invention

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

A Westinghouse Hanford Co. engineer hopes his invention to control air flow through giant radioactive waste storage tanks at Hanford will one day make homes, offices and industrial facilities more comfortable.

The device was born out of a safety concern, but its application could be widespread.

"We needed to come up with a practical way to maintain and verify individual tank air flow rates to improve tank safety because some of these tanks can periodically release large quantities of flammable gas," Dan Minter said.

The device was initially fitted to a group of six double-shell radioactive waste storage tanks, but others also will receive them.

"This design can be reproduced for relatively little money and it will greatly improve the ability to control air flow and temperatures from one room to another."

— Dan Minter,
Hanford engineer

the entire system is thrown out of balance and everyone is uncomfortable. Minter said his controller can solve this problem.

"This air flow controller can be modified to fit nicely into conventional duct work so air flow in one room can be maintained at a desirable level no matter what adjustments are made to the air flow in any other room.

DOE to use NASA technology to look at Hanford waste tanks

By the Herald staff

The Department of Energy will test a hybrid NASA space technology in underground radioactive waste tanks at Hanford.

The new technology is a variation of the space shuttle's large robotic utility arm millions of television viewers have seen during broadcasts from orbit.

for use at other parts of the weapons complex, such as Idaho Falls and Oak Ridge, Tenn.

The robotic arm was tested in a single-shell tank that had a history of leaking, Ferguson said.

The arm was built by SPAR Aerospace of Toronto, the same company that supplies robotic arms for space shuttles.

"Private sector involvement helps

Benton County to reject US Ecology tax offer

By JILL FITZSIMMONS

Herald Valley bureau

PROSSER — Benton County commissioners say \$75,000 isn't enough — they want the \$3.7 million in property taxes they claim US Ecology owes them.

On Monday, commissioners met in closed session with deputy prosecuting attorney Ryan Brown to discuss the county's next move in the dispute.

They directed Brown to draft a letter to US Ecology, telling the waste management firm that its \$75,000 proposed settlement was rejected.

Last month, US Ecology sent the county a

letter suggesting an end to the six-year battle over what the firm's assessed value should be. The private company operates a low-level radioactive waste site in central Hanford.

Barry Bede, US Ecology vice president, said Monday that the company made the first move toward reaching an agreement, so the next move should be the county's.

Whether "the county willing to negotiate this at all is probably the major question," Bede said.

But commissioners are sticking to their belief the state constitution won't allow them to settle for anything under \$3.7 million — what Assessor Barbara Wagner says the county has coming. US Ecology and the county have been in a property tax battle since

1987, when the county claimed the company was undertaxed in relation to the value of the site.

Wagner has assessed the company annually at anywhere from \$14 million to \$45 million during the last six years. US Ecology has proposed its own assessment formula that puts the value at \$494,189.

Bede is afraid the county and US Ecology is headed back to court, which could take years to resolve.

The county and US Ecology reached a tentative agreement in 1992, but that died when the county wanted to increase the value of the company's site from \$376,000 to \$46 million — a 12,015 percent increase.

The assessment was based not only on US Ecology's building and land but also on its income, monopoly on radioactive waste handling and environmental permits.

Bede disagrees with taxing the company on its intangibles. By Wagner's method, every company should be taxed on its license or its lease, he said.

In 1993, Benton County Superior Court ruled the \$376,000 assessment was correct.

However, the Washington Board of Tax Appeals has since ruled the county could consider its business license a taxable asset.

A hearing Oct. 16 with the tax board is to decide the site's assessed value and how much its tax bill will be.

In other business, the auditor's office presented its preliminary budget report to commissioners. The report shows the county must cut 8 percent, or about \$1.9 million, from \$23.9 million of proposed expenditures for 1997 to break even with revenues.

Commissioners mandated cuts in every department this year, and department heads trimmed about \$823,600, or 3.8 percent, from the \$21.4 million budget, but only after much hand wringing.

Despite the need further cuts, six departments have requested additional staff, and departments are asking for a total of \$442,316 for new equipment, including nine patrol cars for the sheriff's department.

Fluor takes Hanford steering wheel

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Another chapter in Hanford's history began Tuesday when Fluor Daniel and its partners assumed management of the huge federal site.

In celebrations stretching across Hanford, the Department of Energy and the Fluor team greeted workers with words of encouragement and applauded the foundation left by the outgoing contracting team led by Westinghouse.

Northwest

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Wednesday, Oct. 2, 1996 Tri-City Herald

Post-cleanup land-use ideas proposed

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

One plan calls for biking and hiking trails along the Columbia River at Hanford.

Another plan suggests crops could be planted where sagebrush has grown unfettered within high-security fences since the 1940s.

And yet other ideas propose preserving the desert for wildlife or setting aside acreage for suburban Richland subdivisions.

Some of the plans for Hanford — proposed by the Department of Energy, Benton County and the city of Richland — might pan out. But the governments don't all agree on what to do with the nuclear reservation when it's finally cleaned up someday.

About 85 people were briefed Tuesday at Richland's Shilo Inn on

preliminary proposals for what should be allowed on Hanford's lands before and after cleanup.

This is in preparation for a public hearing on DOE's draft land-use plan at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 17 at the Shilo Inn in Richland.

The proposals include DOE's plan for managing land uses on Hanford segments it will control for the next several decades.

As cleanup progresses, DOE expects to gradually turn those lands over to other agencies or local governments — and relinquish some or all control.

Benton County's and Richland's land-use plans would kick in when those areas come under their control.

"One of the things that is unresolved is how the three parties will integrate their three plans," said Mary Lou Blazek, administrator of the nuclear safety division of the

Oregon Department of Energy. She acted as a neutral moderator for the meeting.

Benton County and Richland still have a long way to go in drafting their preliminary land-use plans.

So far, Benton County planners have identified Hanford areas to be set aside as wildlife refuges, developed with no restrictions, or developed if disturbed habitat is fixed or replaced.

The county commissioners must approve those recommendations before the next land-use planning stages are tackled.

Meanwhile, Richland's planning staff is preparing a recommendation for its planning commission that the city declare land just north of Horn Rapids Road and around the 300 Area as potential annexation areas.

The city staff is thinking about limiting those areas to industrial

development. The city would extend roads and utilities into those areas only when a company locates there.

All three plans agree southeastern Hanford is a good area for economic development.

But here are some areas where disagreements exist:

■ Benton County is thinking about putting in biking and hiking trails near the river. But DOE and area tribes lean toward restricting access because items that are culturally sensitive to American Indians are scattered throughout Hanford. County officials believe culturally sensitive areas can be protected with less restrictions.

■ A piece of Hanford — north of the ALE and west of Highway 240 — is being eyed for conflicting uses by three constituencies.

DOE is looking at that area's soil to provide dirt cover for a large

landfill in central Hanford. County officials believe that area can be farmed.

And conservationists argue that area should be declared a wildlife refuge to provide a corridor for animals to wander between the prime wildlife habitats in Hanford and the Yakima Firing Center.

■ DOE requires a huge safety buffer zone around the 200 Area — a buffer that covers most of central Hanford. Anyone in that zone would require a safety briefing. And emergency evacuation procedures would have to be in place.

As cleanup progresses, that buffer zone is expected to shrink.

Potential exists that DOE's buffer zone might limit what Benton County can allow inside that zone. The buffer zone issue already prompted DOE to keep ownership of the 120-square-mile Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve.

Clinton signs cleanup funding

By LES BLUMENTHAL
Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

President Clinton has signed legislation providing almost \$5.5 billion to clean up DOE sites, including about \$1.3 billion for Hanford.

The measure also provides necessary funding to keep such Hanford projects as the K-Basin spent fuel storage facility and the Environmental Molecular Science Laboratory on schedule.

Ohio failure said unlikely at Hanford

By The Associated Press

Hanford officials said Wednesday that they are confident problems with an experimental waste disposal method at a former Ohio uranium processing plant won't be repeated at Hanford.

At Fernald, where the waste is being encapsulated into glass-like marbles, not logs, the vitrification plant has had numerous problems, Energy Department spokesman Gary Stegner said.

GTE wins \$759,000 Hanford contract

ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. awarded a \$758,987 contract to GTE Telephone Operations in Kennewick to design, build and test the Hanford Emergency Alarm Dispatch Systems project at the Hanford Patrol's operations center in the 200 East Area.

Doc, Murray join Hanford benefit fray

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Two of Washington's lawmakers have intervened in the fray about the benefits for Hanford workers.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., have separately asked Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary to review

wage and benefits packages offered by the site's new management team.

"In these last weeks, I have felt increasing fear and concern from employees at Hanford who will be moved from their on-site jobs to others in off-site, newly created companies," Sen. Patty Murray wrote Thursday to O'Leary.

"This is a very difficult time for the workers at Hanford, their families and the com-

munity at large. We must all work together to ensure these people are treated fairly and honestly. Some of these workers believe the whole truth has not been told to them," said Murray.

She delivered that same message personally Thursday when she met with officials from the lead member of the contract team — Fluor Daniel — in Washington, D.C.

"While there is little doubt that economic

diversification provides the best long-term hope for the Tri-Cities, newly created companies with very different benefits must not be given free rein to treat dedicated workers unfairly," she said.

"I urged the department to conduct an independent review of these new wage-benefits packages. If the department finds the salary and benefits package offered to employees is noncomparable to their for-

mer package, I urge you to give strong consideration to providing additional benefits to affected employees," Murray wrote to O'Leary.

Hastings also told O'Leary he is concerned 8,000 people, who until Tuesday worked for Westinghouse, ICF Kaiser or Boeing, have not been treated equitably

Please see **BENEFITS**, Page A2

'No limit' to Fluor division in Tri-Cities

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel expects its new Northwest division in Richland to become one of its largest operating centers, says one of its chief officers.

With the transfer this week of about 1,000 Hanford workers to Fluor's Northwest division and the relocation soon of 50 peo-

ple from the firm's corporate headquarters in Irvine, Calif., Fluor Daniel Northwest officials are primed for action.

"There is no limit to the kind of work we can do in and from the Tri-Cities," said Ron Peterson, president of Fluor Daniel Government Services and Operations Co. — the umbrella corporation for Fluor Daniel Hanford and Fluor's new Northwest division.

Fluor Daniel Hanford is the new operating contractor at Hanford, while Fluor Daniel Northwest is a sister company Fluor has opened in the Tri-Cities to help diversify the area's economy.

"Fluor Daniel Northwest will initially focus on Hanford's cleanup, but it's our intent for Fluor Northwest within three years to be independent of the Hanford federal budget," Peterson said Friday in an

interview from his Rosslyn, Va., office.

He said the company believes it will be able to do a wide variety of work from Richland. For example, he said, the company could do the engineering and design of a Colgate toothpaste plant, a Mercedes Benz plant, a power plant or an oil refinery.

"What the Tri-Cities offers Fluor is a capable work force with advanced degrees, a better work ethic than we've seen in some

places and the ability to get the job done," he said. "And even more, that job can be done in an area where people can obtain reasonably-priced housing and have access to a fine educational system.

"As long as we can stay competitive, we can grow. I know we're going through the benefits struggle right now, but I think

Please see **FLUOR**, Page A2

Hanford companies set goal for United Way

By the Herald staff

Hanford companies, led by Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc., have set a goal of raising nearly \$2.1 million of the \$4.2 million the United Way is hoping to collect this year for organizations

in Benton and Franklin counties.

The campaign for the Hanford companies kicked off Tuesday evening with an agency fair to help managers of the new companies learn more about the Tri-Cities.

To date, the United Way has raised \$977,176, or 23 percent of its goal.

No limits for new Hanford lab



Mike Bowman, a staff scientist for Hanford's Environmental Molecular Science laboratory, monitors a cryogenic machine that helps scientists

examine the structure of proteins and enzymes. The complex will be dedicated Wednesday at a ceremony at Hanford.

Herald/Paul T. Erickson

EMSL marks a new era

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Hanford's new \$230 million science laboratory can play a major role in cutting the estimated \$1.5 trillion price tag to clean up America's contaminated soils and ground waters, its ardent supporters say.

And the Environmental Molecular Science — commonly called EMSL — can do much more, says its director Thom Dunning, who is eagerly looking forward to its dedication Wednesday.

EMSL's goal is to develop revolutionary new ways to clean up the Department of Energy's contaminated nuclear production sites — including Hanford — faster, cheaper and safer. Along the way, scientific research will produce many valuable spinoffs, Dunning said.

EMSL, which is part of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and also will be managed by Battelle, marks a new era of environmental research needed to resolve problems at government and private industrial sites

Please see **EMSL**, Page A2 ▶

Dedication draws big names

When the Environmental Molecular Science Laboratory is dedicated Wednesday, the flock of dignitaries will be among the largest since President Kennedy dedicated Hanford's N Reactor in 1963.

The ceremony will feature Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary.

Other officials expected to attend the 9:30 a.m. event on "Q" Street, between Battelle Boulevard and Horn Rapids Road are:

■ Martha Krebs, DOE director of the Office of Energy Research.

■ DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner.

■ Bill Madia, director of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) operated for DOE by Battelle.

■ Doug Olesen, chief executive officer of Battelle's parent, Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio.

■ U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

■ U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., whose 4th District includes Hanford.

■ U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash.

■ U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash.

— By the Herald staff

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TRI-CITY HERALD

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1996

Hanford benefits package called 'best news to date'

By ERIK SMITH
and JOHN STANG

Herald staff writers

Worker representatives and Fluor Daniel Hanford Inc. voiced optimism Friday about some Department of Energy steps to address disparities in benefits among Hanford's 13 new companies.

"It's the best news to date," said John Ruud, one of the organizers of a group of 600 white-collar employee pondering whether they want to sue Hanford's contractors over the disparities.

Legal delays frustrate downwinder plaintiffs

By The Associated Press

SPOKANE — A federal judge's displeasure at a Spokane lawyer has placed nearly 1,500 Hanford downwinders in legal limbo.

U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald last month temporarily removed the plaintiffs — who contend their health was affected by past Hanford radiation releases — from a lawsuit and suspended their attorney, Nancy Oreskovich of Spokane, from representing them.

thing for us. We want her off so someone else can win this case," Hayes said.

The American Civil Liberties Union is reviewing the case before deciding whether to help the Berg plaintiffs. McDonald also has detractors among the legal profession.

"This is unprecedented. It is the single worst case of unconstitutional abuse of power I've ever seen," said Leonard Schroeter of Seattle, former president of the Washington Trial Lawyers Association.

Tank farm work slowed to evaluate procedures

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Some work has been slowed in Hanford's east and west tank farms while employees evaluate what they do and how to do it better.

Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. has undertaken the review of Hanford's radioactive tank waste system to better understand the environmental cleanup project that company now manages for the Department of Energy.

Environmentalists fight FFTF restart

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Several environmental groups say restarting the Fast Flux Test Facility would hurt Hanford's cleanup efforts.

Fourteen Northwest organizations sent a letter Monday to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary urging her to finish shutting FFTF.

The letter goes to O'Leary as she arrives today in the Tri-Cities to dedicate the Environmental and Molecular Sciences Laboratory in Richland on Wednesday.

The groups that sponsored the letter include the Hanford Education Action League, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Greenpeace. Twenty-five groups from outside the Northwest also signed.

"We strongly oppose the production of tritium," the letter stated.

Tri-City interests want to restart the dormant FFTF with private money to eventually produce mostly medical isotopes.

But a temporary federal mission to produce tritium — which boosts the explosive power of nuclear bombs — is needed to get FFTF financially viable until isotope production reaches full swing.

The idea is to produce tritium before the nation's supply of the rapidly decaying substance is depleted by 2005. Estimates on completing a new permanent tritium source range from 2005 to 2011.

The letter's main criticisms of restarting FFTF are:

■ Producing new tritium before it is needed sends a signal to the world that would undermine nuclear disarmament efforts.

■ If FFTF follows a proposal to use weapons-grade plutonium as fuel, that would lead to importing plutonium to Hanford. And DOE

■ **DOWNWINDERS:** Judge's decision against lawyer stirs up litigants. **Page A7.**

■ **TANKS:** Work at Hanford's tank farms slowed. **Page A10.**

has not yet studied the environmental impacts of that.

■ Reviving FFTF would divert DOE money from cleanup. Maintaining FFTF in a dormant mode already costs money.

■ FFTF is on top of a ground water plume containing tritium. Tritium production would add to that problem.

Meanwhile, Bill Stokes, vice president of Informatics in Richland, said Monday evening that FFTF would produce "a minimal supply" of tritium until a permanent source gets on line.

He said producing tritium prior to 2005 would create enough of a cushion that the Department of Energy could avoid potentially last-minute frenzied and expensive work on a linear accelerator or reactor if either of those timetables ran into problems.

Informatics is part of a consortium of a dozen companies that wants to restart FFTF.

Stokes agreed plutonium burning was not addressed in DOE's last plutonium disposal

environmental impact study.

But Stokes said FFTF is designed to use plutonium oxide fuels that are similar to weapons-grade plutonium, and he does not anticipate major differences in potential impacts.

Also, Stokes said FFTF can use highly enriched uranium fuel. And plutonium burning is one alternative proposed by the consortium. Consequently, if plutonium burning falls through, FFTF still can function with highly enriched uranium fuel, he said.

Stokes also said the tritium plume underneath FFTF came from the 200 Area and is flowing by the 400 Area. He contended tritium production at FFTF is heavily controlled with little risk of new tritium ending up in the ground water.

Stokes said he could not address how DOE would channel its funds regarding FFTF. But he said a major selling point of the consortium is its plans would be 100 percent privately funded.

TRIDEC presented with transition funds

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary presented the Tri-City Industrial Development Council with a mock-up check Wednesday for \$5.5 million — the second half of her \$11 million pledge to help invigorate the Tri-City economy.

The real check soon will follow.

expand tourism opportunities and aid product development programs.

While in town Wednesday to dedicate a new molecular sciences laboratory, O'Leary attended a breakfast with about 60 people to hear comments from federal contractors and community leaders.

Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel, the California-based firm which took over management of Hanford cleanup Oct. 1, told how the corporate team intends to bring commercial practices to the site.

Sen. Murray talks to Tri-Cities about tritium mission

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A split Northwest congressional delegation could take the Fast Flux Test Facility out of the running for temporary tritium production, said U.S. Sen. Patty Murray on Wednesday.

DOE's decision on where to revive tritium production probably will be swayed by whatever region lobbies the hardest and which region is united in accepting that controversial mission, Murray, D-Wash., told the Tri-City Herald's editorial board.

Now, Washington's congressional delega-

tion supports reviving the FFTF. However, Oregon's congressional delegation opposes the restart.

A private consortium wants to revive the FFTF to eventually focus on creating radioactive medical isotopes. But it needs a short-term tritium production mission to be financially viable until producing medical isotopes reaches full swing.

Tritium boosts the explosive power of

nuclear bombs, which is why some people oppose producing more.

The United States' tritium stockpile is rapidly decaying, with a need for more expected by 2005. DOE hopes to convert a reactor or finish building a linear accelerator sometime between 2005 and 2011.

Tri-City interests view the proposed FFTF tritium mission to be a stopgap measure until a permanent tritium source is on line.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary expects to decide in December.

O'Leary did a quick tour of the FFTF Wednesday while in the Tri-Cities for the dedication of a new science laboratory.

She said little about DOE's plans for that

reactor — only that she wants to fully analyze all options DOE is considering for tritium production.

Murray said if North Carolina and South Carolina appear solidly in favor of a tritium mission, that could tilt matters in their favor if the Northwest remains split.

She contended the medical community needs to make better presentations in support of the FFTF in Western Washington and Western Oregon, and Tri-City interests need to lobby the Oregon congressional delegation.

"If they believe isotope production is the ultimate goal. ... I think that factor would sway them," she said.

Also Wednesday, Murray said:

■ Soon after the November election, she would reintroduce a stalled bill to declare the Hanford Reach a federal wild-and-scenic river.

Her current bill has not been able to get a hearing in a Republican-dominated Senate.

Murray wants that hearing in the Tri-Cities — or in Washington, D.C., as a second choice. The Northwest Power Planning Council, which supports the wild-and-scenic designation, also is pushing for that hearing.

But if that hearing does not materialize, Murray said she would attach the wild-and-scenic designation as an amendment to another bill.



Murray

Dream becomes reality with dedication of 'Wiley lab'



Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, left, embraces Gus Wiley on Wednesday after presenting Wiley with a replica of a larger plaque that will hang in the new science laboratory named in honor of Wiley's husband, Bill Wiley, who died this summer. Bill Wiley was the lab's greatest champion.

laboratory named in honor of Wiley's husband, Bill Wiley, who died this summer. Bill Wiley was the lab's greatest champion.

Laboratory sets new direction for Hanford

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Nearly 600 people attending the dedication Wednesday in Richland of a \$230 million world class science laboratory could almost feel the presence of the visionary for whom that complex has been named.

Mother Nature, warm memories and prospects of new scientific discoveries combined to turn the 90-minute ceremony at the William R. Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory

into a perfect occasion.

Henceforth, the sprawling brick building on the Battelle campus will be known simply as the "Wiley lab," Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary decreed Wednesday.

It was Wiley, former director of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, who a decade ago conceived of a state-of-the-art place where scientists can collaborate on molecular-level science

Wiley, 64, died this summer without seeing his vision of a "laboratory without walls" become reality.

"This is his dream realized," said O'Leary, one of several dignitaries at

INSIDE:

■ **TRIDEC:** Tri-City Industrial Development Council gets check for \$5.5 million. Page A3.

■ **FFTF:** Dissension means bad news for Fast Flux Test Facility, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray says. Page A4.

Wednesday's celebration honoring Wiley and applauding the potential of the laboratory, which will fully open next year.

Bill Madia, who assumed PNNL lead-

ership from Wiley, spoke of contributions that can come from the new lab, not only to environmental cleanup, but also to domestic and global issues in energy, health and national security.

Although many people helped persuade DOE and Congress of the need for the new lab, Wiley's was its greatest champion.

"I've had a strange feeling all week that he's here watching us — and that he's proud," said Madia, whose voice cracked with emotion as he spoke of his former

Please see LAB, Page A2 ▶

Greenpeace objects to using German fuel for Hanford research

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Greenpeace has criticized a German nuclear consortium's plans to transfer plutonium oxide fuel to a private Richland group that wants to take over a Hanford research reactor.

"It is unbelievable that high-level German industry officials are in secret negotiations to transfer title of weapons-usable plutonium to a private U.S. company," said Greenpeace spokesman Damon Moglen in Washington, D.C. "It is even more shocking that this company hopes to use these materials for use in the U.S. nuclear weapons program," he added.

Greenpeace is way off the mark, said Bill Stokes, president of Advanced Nuclear and Medical Sys-

tems (ANMS) and one of his partners, Richard Thompson of Ellensburg.

ANMS has submitted an unsolicited bid to the U.S. Department of Energy to use the Fast Flux Test Facility on a short-term basis to meet national defense needs for tritium and to use the Hanford reactor long term to produce cancer-killing medical isotopes.

It's for the latter that the 205 unused fuel assemblies stored in Germany and Scotland would be used, Stokes said.

Under negotiations that started in January, SBK, a consortium representing German, Belgian and Dutch utilities, would pay ANMS about \$35 million to assume ownership of 1,100 kilograms of fuel.

That money would be used by ANMS to transport the fuel via air or by ship to storage in Erwin, Tenn., and to modify the fuel assemblies for medical isotope production in FFTF.

If DOE decides the Hanford plant

Please see FUEL, Page A2 ▶

Fluor, DOE downplay layoff talk

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Rumors of a new round of Hanford layoffs early in January spread like wildfire among workers this week causing "speculation and uncertainty" for which the Department of Energy and its prime contractor now have no adequate answers.

Those rumors were driven by remarks attributed to a Lockheed executive who reportedly told a group of employees Thursday about layoffs of 700-750 and 1,000 or more coming next spring.

DOE plans five more meetings and hearings on the draft plan outside of the Tri-Cities.

These will take place on Oct. 22 in Portland, Nov. 12 in Mattawa, Nov. 20 in Seattle, Dec. 3 in Hood River, and Dec. 4 in Portland.

DOE hopes to have a final plan ready in the spring or summer of 1997.

Memo puts job losses at 696

By ERIK SMITH
Herald staff writer

Maybe the Department of Energy hasn't decided how many people will get layoff notices at Hanford in the next year, but an internal memo given Friday to the Herald states 696 people could lose jobs in the tank waste management program alone.

DOE and Hanford contractor officials said the memo was part of a planning exercise, and the eventual number probably will be different. An exact number is to be announced in a few weeks, when layoff notices would be issued.

The memo shows there's reason for a widespread rumor 700 to 1,000 people will lose jobs.

Proposals for Hanford land discussed at

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Requests for interpretive centers mingled with Hanford's "how-clean-is-clean" debate at a Thursday public hearing on the Department of Energy's draft land-management plan for the site.

No single issue dominated the testimony of the 13 people who spoke at the Shilo Inn.

DOE held the hearing on its draft plan to manage land on Hanford segments that it

will control for the next several decades.

As cleanup progresses, DOE expects to gradually turn those lands over to other agencies or local governments — and relinquish some or all control.

The Benton County's and Richland's land-use plans would kick in when those areas come under their control.

This proposed land-use plan does not address specific cleanup decisions, which DOE must hammer out with the agencies regulating it, said Lloyd Piper, DOE's acting deputy manager at Hanford.

The plan would be a factor in any cleanup decision, but not an overriding consideration, he said.

About 100 people attended the hearing.

Testimony included two requests for interpretive centers at Rattlesnake Ridge or the old White Bluffs town site.

Vicky Birkland of the Tri-Cities proposed a small zoo stressing shrub-steppe insects and animals that could be linked with an interpretive center or Washington State University's Tri-City campus.

Meanwhile, two environmental organiza-

tions presented different views on the extent that cleanup should go in areas likely to end up as wildlife habitat.

Page Leven of Heart of America Northwest contended those areas should be cleaned up to the "unrestricted" standard of where people could possibly live on those segments.

Laura Zybas of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society contended cleanup standards for habitat areas should go to only the level where wildlife can safely live.

Audubon chapter president Jerry Turn-

baugh said he didn't see many people in them.

DOE plans five more meetings and hearings on the draft plan outside of the Tri-Cities.

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DOE hopes to have a final plan ready in the spring or summer of 1997.

Officer in Oklahoma City bombing speaks to Hanford emergency team

By WILL SWARTS
Herald staff writer

More than a year has passed since Oklahoma City was devastated by the explosion of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 167 people in America's worst act of domestic terrorism.

Oklahoma City Police Department Maj. Steve Upchurch, like the 450,000 residents of the city, will never forget that day.

He will never forget the 17-day rescue effort and crowd control operation he helped supervise, from which he learned lessons he brought to Hanford on Tuesday.

Upchurch spoke to about 150 Hanford emergency response employees and officers from police and sheriff's departments from Yakima to Walla Walla about coping with disasters.



Upchurch

Hanford short \$87.2 million in first month

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Hanford's month-old 1997 budget already looks like it's \$87.2 million short of being enough to cover the work once planned.

The major portion of that is a \$59.8 million shortfall in the Tank Waste Remediation System budget and a \$13.5 million shortfall in the spent fuel project, which is the K Basin program to clean up 2,100 metric tons of nuclear fuel in two giant basins of water near the Columbia River.

18 tanks taken off Hanford watch list

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Jackson Kinzer was walking tall Wednesday.

"It wouldn't have been possible a year ago to be standing here," Kinzer said against the backdrop of Hanford's 103-TY tank, which until recently was one of the site's most worrisome underground radioactive waste storage tanks.

But not anymore, said Kinzer, assistant manager for the Department of Energy's tank waste remediation system.

Tank 103-TY and 17 others have now been removed from the "Ferrocyanide Tank Watch List," one of four tank safety watch lists established in 1991.

"This is a major step forward in resolving one of our most serious safety issues and represents a victory for our waste sampling and analysis organization," Kinzer said.

Ferrocyanide gas has the potential to ignite

or explode when heated above 450 degrees. Analyses of wastes in the tanks showed the ferrocyanide has decomposed and is no longer a threat.

Declaring the 18 tanks on the ferrocyanide watch list no longer a hazard leaves 38 of Hanford's 177 underground tanks still on lists requiring special attention because of the contaminants they contain.

Ferrocyanide was added to some of Hanford's single-shell tanks between 1954 and 1957 to remove cesium from the liquid wastes. Concern over the ferrocyanide surfaced in the 1980s as the old tanks began to leak and liquid was pumped from them, leaving a thick sludge.

Scientists were worried temperatures might increase and heat the sludge enough for the ferrocyanide to burn or explode. Monitors in the tanks showed the temperatures

were low, but precautions were needed to keep it that way.

"This has been a banner year," for the tank program, Kinzer told about 15 people gathered at the TY tank farm, which holds six tanks, five of which have leaked. Those five tanks and 62 others are estimated to have leaked about 900,000 gallons of radioactive liquids into the soil.

And, Kinzer added, a projected \$57 million budget shortfall for the tank programs in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 won't stall progress.

In fact, he said, "In cooperation with Lockheed (now overseeing tank operations), I think we've found our way through that." He said some work will be delayed, "but not much," and only one Tri-Party Agreement milestone likely will have to be renegotiated.

Part of the budget shortfall will be made up by \$14 million DOE has held over from previous years, Kinzer said. His plans to balance the budget first must be approved by Hanford DOE manager John Wagoner.

Other accomplishments at the tank farms

during the past year include:

- Putting three of Hanford's 12 tank farms (36 of the 149 single-shell tanks) into an "interim stabilized position." That means all liquids have been removed from the tanks, the tanks are monitored remotely by computers and surface areas around the tanks are cleaned up. "We save taxpayers \$4.5 million each year for every farm we put in interim stabilization," Kinzer said.

- Near completion of a project to install a waste sluicing system to remove high-heat wastes from single-shell tank 106-C and transfer it to a double-shell tank. The project will close out another watch list.

- Redesignation of the SY tank farm from a "contamination area" to a "radiological buffer area." That means it's safer and cleaner for workers, who no longer are required to wear anti-contamination clothing.

- Selection of two private consortiums to develop the best way to treat the 55 million gallons of radioactive liquids remaining in Hanford's tanks.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1996

New president named for Bechtel Hanford

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

There has been yet another management change at Hanford — this time, at Bechtel.

R.M. "Mike" Little has been named president of Bechtel Hanford Inc., succeeding Joe Nemec, who has managed Bechtel's contract at Hanford since early 1995.

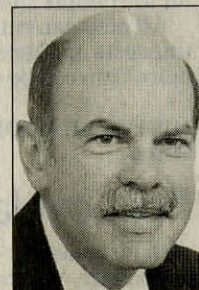
Nemec will leave Bechtel Hanford on Nov. 15 to become president of Bechtel Environmental Inc., headquartered in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

He will oversee 1,400 employees involved

in 56 environmental projects in 24 states. Nearly half that work force is based in Oak Ridge.

"In the past two years, Hanford's Environmental Restoration Project has made tremendous strides evolving from the study phase into full-scale remediation work," Nemec said Wednesday.

"We moved this project from the paper and study stage into actually getting into the field and cleaning up this



Little

site. A major share of every dollar budgeted to this project goes now directly into cleanup," he added.

When Bechtel took over the five-year environmental restoration contract in July 1994, its budget was about \$180 million. Last year, that budget dropped to about \$150 million and this year, it's likely to be between \$130 million and \$140 million. DOE has the option to extend that contract by three years.

Bechtel has been praised by DOE for the job it has done at Hanford.

"There are a lot of reasons for that," Nemec said. "But first, it's because we sat

down with (DOE) and developed, over the course of the first year, a true partnering arrangement where we agreed on what our overall objectives for the program are.

"Then, DOE worked with us to move bureaucracy out of the way, while at the same time, demanding we provide superior performance," Nemec added.

Little led Bechtel's yearlong proposal to become DOE's primary contractor at Hanford — a contract that in August was awarded to Fluor Daniel.

Bechtel Hanford and its subcontractors, CH2M Hill Hanford, IT Hanford and Thermal Hanford have a current combined work

force of about 1,000, down from a peak of 1,200 in 1995.

In addition to being president of Bechtel Hanford, Little also will provide oversight for Bechtel National Inc.'s work as a subcontractor to BNFL Inc. on Hanford's tank privatization project and develop business opportunities for Bechtel outside of Hanford.

Little has 25 years of commercial and government experience. He formerly was president of Bechtel Savannah River in Aiken, S.C. He has a doctorate in applied mechanics from the University of Virginia and a master's degree in management from Stanford University.

FFTF's future linked to costs, politics

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Fast Flux Test Facility's chances of being resurrected depend on numerous cost and political factors, the Department of Energy told the Hanford Advisory Board Friday in Richland.

Next month, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is to decide if the dormant FFTF should be evaluated further as a possible source of tritium.

If the FFTF survives past December, it would await a final decision by DOE in late 1998.

Much of the decision depends on political acceptance in the Northwest, DOE officials said. Currently, Washington's congressional delegation supports a revival, while Oregon's delegation opposes it.

DOE is considering three methods of replenishing a shrinking national stockpile of tritium — a gas used to boost the explosive power of nuclear bombs.

Those methods are reviving the FFTF, con-

verting a commercial light-water reactor or building a linear accelerator. Or DOE could combine two of these options.

Tritium has a half-life of 12 years. And the nation's stockpile — which is a classified amount — is expected to drop below existing needs between 2006 and 2010.

If Congress ratifies a nuclear weapons reduction treaty with Russia, that date could extend to between 2011 and 2016.

Currently, the FFTF cannot produce enough tritium to meet the United States' current needs.

But if Congress ratifies the nuclear arms reduction treaty, the FFTF has the potential of meeting the nation's lowered tritium needs through 2030, said Jim Mecca, DOE's director of its transitions programs division.

A private consortium is trying to persuade DOE to revive the FFTF, saying it wants to operate it, including paying the costs.

The consortium needs the tritium mission to resurrect the FFTF until it can gradually crank up production of medical isotopes while phasing out an interim tritium mission.

But Mecca and other DOE officials said DOE's decision will be based primarily on the tritium issue. The second priority is burning surplus weapons-grade plutonium. Medical isotopes are a distant third priority for DOE.

Mecca and other officials outlined pros and cons and costs of the options being considered.

■ Converting a commercial reactor could be the cheapest option — if the nation's tritium needs don't drop to a level that can be handled by the FFTF. DOE estimates that this option would cost \$3.9 billion through 2030.

A big hurdle is it would put federal plutonium in a civilian reactor — which would drastically reverse today's national policy to keep plutonium out of civilian hands.

If DOE takes this route, the first conversion would be at one of two reactors — the Watts Bar reactor operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority in Alabama or the Vogtle Reactor No. 2, operated by the Southern Nuclear Operating Co. in Georgia. A converted reactor would begin production in 2006.

■ Building an accelerator at Savannah River,

S.C., would cost \$9.9 billion through 2030, DOE said.

It would be tremendously expensive to build with annual operating costs leveling out at slightly more than \$200 million after it would begin production in 2006. A revived FFTF would cost \$90 million a year to operate.

A big plus for the accelerator is it would not use plutonium. A big minus is the accelerator technology still has to be perfected, raising the possibility of halting the project after hundreds of millions of dollars are invested.

An accelerator would also need 550 megawatts of power — almost half of what the Washington Public Power Supply System's reactor produces. That power would come from the TVA power grid or from a new fossil fuel plant.

■ Combining the FFTF and the accelerator would cost \$9 billion through 2030.

That is because the accelerator's construction could be spread across more years, which would make it cheaper, Mecca said. This scenario envisions the FFTF operating

in 2001 and quitting its tritium mission in 2012 when the accelerator would be functioning.

■ Resurrecting the FFTF alone would cost \$3 billion through 2030. But it currently cannot meet the nation's tritium needs by itself.

The isotope mission is needed to politically sell the tritium mission in the Northwest. And an increasing isotope mission would diminish the FFTF's capacity to produce tritium in the long run.

Any FFTF tritium would be bound to metal in the fuel assemblies to be shipped to Savannah River to be processed. No tritium processing would occur at Hanford, said Mecca and Peter Knollmeyer, DOE's acting assistant manager for facility transition.

States' concerns about shipping tritium and possibly plutonium will face any option, they said.

Another common pitfall is Congress would be unlikely to increase DOE's overall budget, which is now about \$16.4 billion. So tritium production anywhere would take money from other DOE programs, including cleanup at all DOE sites, they said.

Fluor still working out Hanford layoff totals

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel and its partners at Hanford remain on schedule to send layoff notices to some workers later this month — perhaps just in time for Thanksgiving.

How many workers get pink slips is not yet known, the president of Fluor Daniel Hanford told Hanford Advisory Board members Thursday in Richland.

"Numbers are being worked, numbers are being rumored, but I'm here to tell you that there are no competent numbers today," said Hank Hatch. Fluor assumed management responsibility at Hanford on Oct. 1.

Fluor and the Department of

Energy are expected to decide within three weeks exactly how many workers will lose their jobs in the next round of layoffs, he said.

That size of the remaining work force will be what Fluor and its team "believes can safely and cost effectively get the job done for taxpayers," he added.

The bottom line is being determined now through a staffing analysis. A draft report on the exercise must be submitted to DOE in December, with a final report in January.

Workers must be given 60 days notice, so that means for Hatch to meet his goal of cutting payrolls in January, layoff notices must go out on Oct. 1.

Please see LAYOFFS, Page A2▶

Doctor talks in favor of FFTF revival

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Once the federal Food and Drug Administration approves the use of new medical radioactive isotopes, the need will grow for a reactor to produce them, a cancer specialist said Thursday.

Enough isotopes are being produced — mostly in Canada — to fill the United States' current needs, said Dr. Robert Carretta of California, past president of the American College of Nuclear Physicians and a specialist in the treatment of bone cancer.

Board sends DOE ideas on dealing with shortage

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Hanford Advisory Board sent several recommendations Friday to the Department of Energy on how to deal with a nearly \$90 million shortfall in Hanford budget for the current fiscal year.

But questions remain on whether those recommendations would be sufficient — even if DOE follows them.

Cleanup for this fiscal year, which started Oct. 1, looks like it will cost \$87.2 million more than the budgeted \$1.3 billion, according to some DOE cost estimates.

That's partly because transition costs when Fluor Daniel took over as Hanford's prime contractor were higher than expected, and partly because of some unanticipated juggling of various DOE funds nationwide.

The biggest shortfall is almost \$60 million for Hanford tank farms.

The 32-member Hanford Advisory Board represents a wide range of political interests, and advises

DOE and its regulators.

The board's recommendations might reach \$53 million, including some proposed cuts and some suggestions for transferring money from other DOE programs. But the numbers are hazy.

The board recommended that \$30 million in tank farm management and Hanford overhead costs be cut.

And it looked back to when Congress cut \$15 million from the \$185 million insurance fund for plans to turn tank wastes over to private companies. The \$15 million went into DOE's national budget, but the advisory board wants it returned to Hanford.

Meanwhile, the board wants DOE to take \$8 million from a national fund created to speed up closing down DOE's sites, and send that money to Hanford. But DOE has only \$15 million in this fund for all of its sites.

Also, the board recommended any unused funds allocated for workers separated from their Hanford jobs be used for tackle the budget shortfall. It is unknown how much of that money would be available, DOE officials said.

Also Friday in Richland, the advisory board:

■ Failed to reach consensus on recommendations on a draft DOE land management plan for Hanford.

Several board members — led by environmental group representatives — voiced confusion on how the land management plan is supposed to fit in with Hanford cleanup.

And they voiced fears the land management plan would lead to some portions of Hanford being cleaned to inadequate standards.

Paul Krupin, DOE's land-use planning project manager, said the plan would not dictate cleanup decisions — including the level of cleanup.

■ Told DOE it should take precautions to ensure that the new concept of using multiple contractors and subcontractors at Hanford does not reduce accountability. And DOE should take care the multiple contractors don't increase cleanup costs.

■ Requested a briefing on how DOE will measure the requirement in Fluor Daniel's contract that the contractor create 3,000 new jobs in five years.

Hanford efforts faulted

DOE report targets employee concerns

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

An independent study commissioned by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary has faulted the way employee concerns have been handled at Hanford.

The study said, in part senior management did not support the employee concerns program and "the lack of support by management has not promoted a work environment in which workers were comfortable in identifying concerns to their supervision."

DOE's Hanford manager John Wagoner responded to the criticism Wednesday by appointing Jennifer Sands to head the reorganized Hanford Employee Concerns Program for DOE in Richland.

missions

successfully fought off a Republican to abolish her department. She did so at the agency's budget and overhauling her business.

Johnson, a former Minnesota lieutenant governor who recommended O'Leary to the 1992 election, has called the leader in re-inventing government. O'Leary introduced performance-

Hanford won't forget O'Leary assistance

By The Associated Press

RICHLAND — Departing Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary will be remembered at Hanford for creating a dialogue between the Energy Department and stakeholders here, acting Deputy Hanford Manager Lloyd Piper said Thursday.

O'Leary, who always said she intended to serve only four years in the job, submitted her resignation this week to President Clinton. She has been harshly criticized by Republicans for her travel expenses, including 16 foreign trips that cost taxpayers \$4.2 million. The trips included trade missions in 1994 and 1995 to India, Pakistan, China and South Africa.

"She was very instrumental in the Hanford Summits... that started a regional dialogue that focused on progress," Piper said. "Also, the openness she insisted upon was essential for us to develop a better understanding with regional stakeholders and regulators."

Environmental activist Gerald Pollet, executive director of the Seattle-based Heart of America Northwest, said he was disappointed O'Leary was "being chased out of office."

"She's been a good secretary,"

Pollet said. "In fact, she's been the best secretary of energy — period — and opened up the Department of Energy and Hanford to public accountability for the first time."

Prospects to replace O'Leary are believed to include Rep. Bill Richardson, D-N.M.; retiring Sen. Bennett Johnston, D-La.; EPA director Carol Browner, and Tim Wirth, undersecretary of state for global affairs.

But Piper said the list of possibilities includes more than those four.

"We just had a communique from headquarters HQ that the list keeps getting longer as opposed to getting shorter," he said.

Pollet was particularly concerned about Johnston's name being bandied as a prospect. In March 1995, Johnston proposed capping Hanford's cleanup budget at about \$800 million, half of its then-current budget.

"The Northwest public has a huge stake in making sure that the president picks someone who will continue O'Leary's commitment to openness," Pollet said. "And if the person selected is an advocate for openness, accountability and cleanup, that would be terrific. One worries about it being someone who has a record of not supporting openness or full funding of Hanford cleanup."

Court rules for former Hanford employee

By ERIK SMITH

Herald staff writer

A decision by the state Court of Appeals could put money back in the pockets of about 500 former Hanford workers who volunteered for layoffs in 1995.

The decision could award as much as \$6,000 to workers who took advantage of the Westinghouse Hanford Co. Voluntary Reduction of Force offer, then applied for unemployment benefits.

The state initially awarded the benefits to workers who applied for them, then changed its mind and demanded the money back.

The state Court of Appeals ruled Monday in favor of a Pasco man who briefly collected unemployment checks from the state after taking the voluntary layoff. The court said the state acted improperly when it cut off his benefits in July 1995.

At the same time, the court sent 72 similar cases back to trial, most of them to superior courts in Benton and Franklin counties. The ruling means workers stand a good chance of prevailing in every case, said William Knowles, a Seattle-based attorney for many of the workers.

Counties unanimous on FFTF restart

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Commissioners from Washington's 39 counties endorsed restart of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility during the group's annual convention Friday in Richland.

The unanimous vote of the Washington State Association of Counties calls for reopening of FFTF to meet the nation's interim needs for tritium and for medical isotope production and medical research.

The ratification came after the group's executive board toured FFTF and the adjacent Fuels Materials and Examination Facility (FMEF), where fuel would be fabricated if the reactor is restarted.

licated if the reactor is restarted.

The significance of the vote is it offers broad-base support that Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary and Undersecretary Tom Grumbly say is vital for any proposed new uses, said Benton Commissioner Sandi Strawn.

The endorsement Friday follows earlier approval from Washington Gov. Mike Lowry, Gov.-elect Gary Locke and ongoing support from Washington's congressional delegation and the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, which has been designated as the community voice on Hanford matters.

The resolution approved Friday will be

"The thing we wanted to demonstrate to DOE headquarters is that we have broad statewide support for restarting FFTF. I think we do that through this resolution."

— Ray Isaacson,
Benton County commissioner

submitted to the National Association of Counties for consideration in late February. Its adoption culminates a yearlong effort

by Benton Commissioners and, is a good note on which to end commission terms now held by Strawn and Ray Isaacson, she said.

Strawn will be replaced on the commission by current county Treasurer Claude Oliver. Richland businessman Leo Bowman will take Isaacson's place.

"There was no objection to this resolution," Strawn said. "There was unanimous support for tritium production and for the long-term benefits of medical isotopes production."

"These people have variations of understanding about what Hanford does. This is significant that we've got statewide support," she added.

Isaacson agreed.

"The thing we wanted to demonstrate to DOE headquarters is that we have broad statewide support for restarting FFTF. I think we do that through this resolution," he said.

Tritium, used to trigger nuclear weapons, degrades rapidly. It is being replenished at present from obsolete weapons, but the nation faces a tritium deficit without new supplies.

Several reports, including those done by the independent, scientific JASON Panel and by the Argonne National Laboratory

Please see FFTF, Page A2 ▶

Public wants more details on Hanford history study

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Some people want a greater, better-informed role in deciding where historical research and preservation should be conducted at Hanford.

That was the biggest theme that emerged Tuesday from 45 people attending a Department of Energy information meeting in Richland on historical preservation issues.

DOE wants to consolidate historical preservation efforts at Hanford — site of several Indian villages and two long-gone towns, as well as hundreds of Manhattan Project and Cold War facilities.

So far, historical preservation research has been conducted on a piecemeal basis.

Historians have been researching each building as it is decontaminated and destroyed.

The new concept is to pick the best sites to study or preserve — and pass by the rest.

DOE believes this will save money and effort. And it would enable all the preservation research to be finished in four years for an estimated \$2.2 million, DOE believes.

Hanford has about 2,000 Cold War structures. About 180 have been targeted to be researched under an agreement among DOE, the State Historical Preservation Office, which enforces state preservation laws, and the Advisory Council on Historical Preservation, which advises the president and Congress on historical matters.

The selection of those 180 is not final but is close to it, said Dee Lloyd, manager of DOE's

cultural resources program. DOE hopes to nail down those 180 by spring when it adopts a historical plan for the Cold War sites.

Several people — including representatives from local historical groups — said they and the public do not know which buildings are among the 180 and why they are on the list.

Benton near accord on DOE settlement

By JILL FITZSIMMONS
Herald Valley bureau

PROSSER — Benton County officials are aiming for an \$11.2 million settlement with the Department of Energy by Dec. 31.

By Wednesday, all but one of eight taxing districts involved in the settlement — payments in lieu of taxes DOE would have paid if its Hanford lands were privately owned — had signed a proposed agreement.

Benton County commissioners, the last signatures required, are expected to sign the agreement Monday, said deputy prosecutor Ryan Brown.

He said Wednesday that the proposal authorizes commissioners to approve a final settlement with DOE. It's uncertain how quickly DOE will move on the settlement or if the federal government will agree with it, Brown said.

"I don't know what happens (at DOE)," he said.

The county has been working

since 1988 to reach an agreement with DOE over 128,710 acres of Hanford land taken off county tax rolls in World War II. The land today is valued at \$151.7 million, according to the settlement agreement.

A settlement has been held up because of negotiations between DOE and the Richland and Kiona-Benton school districts. But the districts have signed the settlement, agreeing not to fight for \$3.4 million DOE claims already has been paid.

DOE officials argue the school districts are paid through a federal program that gives schools money when a high number of federal employees live in a community. When the \$3.4 million impact money is subtracted from the \$5.3 million the districts sought, the districts are to receive \$1.9 million.

The proposed agreement requires DOE to apply the same standards to school districts nationwide.

If DOE signs the proposal, the tax-

ing jurisdictions each would receive three payments. The first must be made within 30 days, the second by Sept. 30, 1998, and the third by Sept. 30, 1999.

The county and its taxing jurisdictions are to receive an initial payment of almost \$6 million. The remaining two payments would total \$2.6 million each.

By tax district, the payments would be:

■ Benton County, \$2.2 million initially, then two payments of \$964,223.

■ Richland School District, \$992,755 initially, then two payments of \$434,102.

■ Prosser School District, \$149,452 initially, then two payments of \$65,351.

■ Kiona-Benton School District, \$6,988 initially, then two payments of \$3,055.

■ Prosser Hospital District, \$21,183 initially, then two payments of \$9,262.

■ Mid-Columbia Rural Library District, \$272,155 initially, then two payments of \$119,005.

■ Port of Benton, \$327,688 initially, then two payments of \$143,288.

■ The state's public school fund, \$1.9 million initially, then two payments of \$874,102.

■ Benton Franklin Health District, \$13,683 initially, then two payments of \$5,983.

Brown wasn't concerned about how the pending resignation of Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary might affect the settlement. She is to resign by Jan. 20.

"We can't do anything about the fact that she's quitting," Brown said. "We've been proceeding for the past eight years as fast as we can proceed."

Benton County Treasurer Claude Oliver, who takes office as a county commissioner in January, said O'Leary's resignation should have little effect. She has been good to work with, but the responsibility to settle won't go away with her resignation, Oliver said.

"We're worked with a great deal of people in that department to familiarize them with this issue," he said.

Hanford job cuts for '97 at 750

Total far below earlier reports

By DON McMANMAN
and JOHN STANG
Herald staff writers

Up to 750 layoffs are expected at Hanford during 1997, with notices to go to the first 250 in early December.

Fluor Daniel Hanford and its subcontractors plan to lay off up to 500 people next year, the company announced Thursday. About 150 working for the Fluor team of companies will get 60-day layoff notices within the next two weeks and will be laid off in February.

Meanwhile, Bechtel Hanford Inc. said it expects to send 60-day layoff warnings to about 100 people in early December. Bechtel believes possibly another 100 workers could be laid off later in 1997.

Battelle-Northwest, meanwhile, does not expect to lay off anyone in the near future. But Battelle won't know if it will have to cut a small and yet-undetermined number of workers in 1997 until it gets some budget figures from Fluor Daniel in a few weeks.

Lowry against FFTF making tritium

By ERIK SMITH
Herald staff writer

Efforts to restart Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility received a setback Wednesday as Gov. Mike Lowry announced he opposes production of tritium at Hanford.

The lame-duck governor released a letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary saying he supports production of medical isotopes at the reactor, but not nuclear weapons materials.

The letter could put another nail in the research reactor's coffin. Though just six

Tri-City officials angered by governor's statements

weeks remain in Lowry's term, Department of Energy officials are watching the Northwest's political currents closely as they decide in the next month whether to dismantle it.

Lowry wrote, "The economy of the Hanford area can best be served by continuing aggressive cleanup and by the use of the Fast Flux Test Facility for the benefit of all people rather than for the potential destruction of many."

Lowry's statement came as a shock to

Tri-City community leaders, who have been mounting a last-ditch effort to keep the reactor alive. Built for the nation's long-dead breeder reactor program, the FFTF is the country's most advanced reactor but sits idle, kept on standby status at a cost of \$60 million a year.

Tri-City civic leaders and most of the state's congressional delegation have been touting the reactor as a medical isotope factory, a mission that could turn the Tri-Cities into a national cancer research

center. Department of Energy officials insist isotopes alone won't pay the bills. So reactor boosters urge that the reactor be used for short-term production of tritium gas — a fast-decaying element that gives the nation's hydrogen bombs a bigger bang and for which there is no domestic source.

The reactor also has been suggested as a vehicle for destroying weapons-grade plutonium from retired nuclear warheads, a mission Lowry endorsed.

Lowry's statement couldn't have come at a worse time, said Sam Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council and one of the reactor's biggest advocates.

"You couldn't print what I'd like to say," he said. "I don't think he (Lowry) will be coming



Lowry

Please see LOWRY, Page A2 ▶

Benton signs PILT deal

Final approval still needed from DOE

By JASON HAGEY
Herald staff writer

Benton County commissioners signed their half of a deal Monday that, if approved as expected by the Department of Energy, soon will bring the county and many of its taxing districts an \$11.2 million windfall.

All that stands between the local governments and their checks for payments in lieu of property taxes is DOE approval from Washington, D.C. The payments are money DOE would have paid if its Hanford lands were subject to tax.

Mike Fergus, a Richland DOE spokesman, said Monday that the approval could come within a day or two.

South Carolina fights to stop tritium at FFTF

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

South Carolina's congressional delegation has requested the Fast Flux Test Facility be dropped as a potential tritium producer.

"We urge you to cease further consideration of the (FFTF) for the production of tritium," stated a Nov. 20 letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary.

The letter was signed by South Carolina's two senators, Strom Thurmond and Ernest Hollings, its six U.S. representatives and U.S. Rep. Charlie Norwood of Georgia. South Carolina is the site of another tritium production proposal.

The letter contends the FFTF is a research reactor not intended for tritium production, and it cannot produce enough to meet the Department of Energy's targets.

The letter also contends reviving the FFTF is "contrary to the intent of Congress." But Jennifer Parsons, aide to U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, said a 1997 defense bill specifically named the FFTF for the tritium studies.

This is the latest move in the debate over the nation's tritium sources and the FFTF's fate.

Tritium boosts the power of nuclear bombs. But its short half-life means the nation's classified stockpile will drop

Forum planned on medical uses

By the Herald staff

The Nuclear Medicine Research Council is holding a forum on using the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford to make medical isotopes at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 19.

Presentations will address the uses of radioactive isotopes in medicine, isotope production issues and effects of producing isotopes at the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford. Speakers will represent the medical and business communities and Hanford. A question and answer period will be included.

The forum will be at the Battelle Auditorium, 904 Battelle Blvd., Richland. For more information, call Bob Schenter at 375-1485.

below existing needs between 2006 and 2016.

DOE is considering — singly or combined — three methods of replenishing the

Please see FFTF, Page A2 ▶

Medical leaders support FFTF

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Scientists described as "leaders of the major medical centers in the nation" say not restarting the Fast Flux Test Facility to produce medical isotopes is "unconscionable."

In a letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, 52 scientists and physicians say, "We are deeply concerned about the inadequate supply of radioisotopes for use in diagnostic and therapeutic medicine."

"Without a clear solution to the problem, we find it unconscionable to shut down the FFTF without a full review of its potential."

O'Leary is to decide this month the fate of DOE's most modern research reactor. It has been promoted for a triple-purpose mission — production of tritium for nuclear weapons, destruction of excess weapons-grade plutonium and creation of isotopes for medical uses.

■ OREGON: Gov. Kitzhaber opposes restart of FFTF. Page A4.

Oregon governor opposes tritium plan

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

PORTLAND — Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber has joined his state's congressional delegation in opposing plans to revive Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility for tritium production.

Kitzhaber's letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary was circulated Wednesday at a Hanford Advisory Board meeting in Portland.

"I believe that this project will divert money and attention away from cleanup efforts," Kitzhaber wrote.

The letter adds to the ongoing dispute among Northwest politicians on efforts to resurrect the experimental reactor.

"I believe that this project will divert money and attention away from cleanup efforts."

— Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber

Latest Hanford layoffs on hold

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

The 150 Hanford workers scheduled to receive pink slips this week have gotten a reprieve that means no Hanford layoff notices until after New Year's Day.

The new Hanford contract team, Fluor Daniel and its partners, has shifted the 150 to other work.

Fluor officials said last month that their share of Hanford's work force would be cut by about 500 by Oct. 1, with the first 150 to get 60-day layoff notices perhaps as early as today.

"We were able to place many of the initial 150 internally, finding positions for employees moving from one pro-

ject to another," Hank Hatch, Fluor Daniel Hanford president, told Hanford workers Thursday.

"This has helped out the staffing picture in the short-term. However, we still estimate a need to reduce the work force by up to 500 employees in 1997," Hatch added.

That total will be spread out.

"It's a matter of timing and will be spread throughout 1997," explained Fluor chief spokesman Nolan Curtis.

Fluor's preliminary staffing analysis indicated a reduction of 500 workers.

"If we give out information as soon

as we can, then it is subject to variation, and that's what happened here," Curtis said.

"One of the roles Fluor plays as prime contractor is to look at the integration of all the companies and projects ... where there may be excesses in one and where there may be needs in another."

"In this first go-around, we found needs, so it makes sense to transfer people and their skills. That's what we've done," he added.

For now, the bottom line hasn't changed: 500 workers must go next year — a total that may be offset, in part, by hiring new workers with specific environmental cleanup job skills.

Please see LAYOFFS, Page A2 ▶

■ JOBS: Fluor Daniel is under pressure of Hanford Advisory Board to create jobs. Page A3.

12-6-96 Creating jobs top priority in 1997

Hanford Advisory Board plans to oversee Fluor Daniel to ensure they fulfill job promise

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

PORTLAND — Worker safety and whether Hanford's new operating contractor lives up to promises to create Tri-City jobs will be carefully watched in 1997.

Dan Silver, Washington Department of Ecology assistant director for waste management, discussed the concerns about worker safety with members of the Hanford Advisory Board meeting here Thursday.

The job creation issue was raised by advisory board members, all of whom said they want to ensure Fluor Daniel Hanford lives up to the spirit of its contractual promise to try to create 3,000 Tri-City jobs.

On the safety issue, Silver noted his department cited Hanford for four significant safety

violations in handling and storing hazardous materials in 1996. He said that was the most ever noted in state inspections.

Two violations resulted in fines of several thousand dollars, and had the potential for penalties of a few hundred thousand dollars.

"(The Department of Energy) and its contractors are not performing waste management in an excellent way," Silver said. He added his department will keep a close eye on the new set of Hanford contractors led by Fluor Daniel Hanford.

On the job creation issue, the advisory board decided to send a memo to DOE asking it to carefully watch how it calculates jobs created by Fluor Daniel.

Fluor's contract offers financial incentives to create 3,000 Tri-City jobs in the next five

years, without shuffling current Hanford jobs.

Advisory board members voiced concern that Fluor could import outside workers for a couple of years for limited projects, and then try to count those among the 3,000 new jobs.

But Dan Carlson, Fluor's director of economic transition, said the company is "looking at as permanent a form of jobs" as it can create. He said Fluor expects industrial recruitment to be the biggest source of new jobs.

Also Thursday, the advisory board:

■ Heard that DOE, the state Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plan to reopen discussions on the work and timetable involved in removing 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel from the K Basins for storage near the 200 Area. The new talks, expected to start early in 1997, are

to allow Fluor Daniel to examine the K Basin cleanup plans for itself.

■ Supported a plan for trimming the number of Hanford buildings requiring historical research from 2,200 to 180. But the board agreed with some Tri-City board members that more public involvement is needed in planning this research.

■ Noted Hanford land use planning and a complicated plan to privatize cleanup of high-level radioactive wastes at the tank farms will be heavily scrutinized and debated in 1997. Silver voiced qualms about the plan to have two private consortiums simultaneously design, build and operate plants to convert liquid radioactive wastes into glass logs — and not get paid until they do so. But he said the state will do its best to make the concept work.

12-8-96 Benton to collect part of PILT deal Monday

By the Herald staff

PROSSER — It's payday Monday for Benton County.

The county will collect the first installment of an \$11.2 million settlement with the Department of Energy over property taxes the county would have collected if Hanford lands were privately owned.

John Wagoner, DOE's Hanford manager, will sign the agreement at 2 p.m. on behalf of DOE, and give the county a giant ceremonial check for \$5.98 million.

The remainder of the \$11.2 million will be paid in two installments by 1999.

Benton County commissioners signed their names to the settlement

Monday after eight years of negotiating with DOE for the payment in lieu of taxes, or PILT.

The settlement reimburses the county and eight taxing districts for money they could have collected from 1988 to 1995. The settlement also establishes a precedent for annual PILT payments from DOE.

Also Monday, commissioners begin the day with a workshop meeting at 8 a.m. and a board meeting at 10 a.m.

At 10:15, commissioners will open bids for crushing and stockpiling, and a series of four public meetings will start at 10:25 a.m. regarding supplemental budget appropriations.

At 10:45 a.m., the commissioners will meet behind closed doors for union negotiations.

12-6-96 Hastings' letter counteracts S. Carolina's tritium opposition

Letter to Rep. Norwood, R-Georgia, supports restart of FFTF

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

South Carolina's opposition to producing tritium at Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility is off the mark.



Hastings

South Carolina's two senators, Strom Thurmond and Ernest Hollings, its six U.S. representatives and Norwood. They urged FFTF be dropped as a tritium contender.

South Carolina is the proposed site of another tritium production facility. Tritium is used to boost the power of nuclear weapons.

The southerners contend FFTF is a research reactor not intended for tritium production and cannot generate enough tritium to meet national defense needs.

Further, the group claims consideration of FFTF is "contrary to the intent of Congress."

Not so, Hastings replied.

"Contrary to your letter, Congress did not preclude consideration of the FFTF for tritium production." In fact, he wrote, the House-Senate Conference Committee, on which Hastings served, "strongly support(s) full consideration of all technically feasible tritium production

options, including accelerator, existing commercial reactor and multi-purpose reactor. FFTF clearly is a technically feasible option and also represents a multi-purpose reactor."

In addition, Hastings wrote, "Use of the FFTF for interim production of tritium would in no way 'further delay' a source of tritium, or 'jeopardize our nuclear deterrent.'"

The need for tritium has accelerated, Hastings said. Several reports, including recent findings from the JASON panel of scientists, have concluded FFTF could with "reasonable confidence" provide up to 1.5 kilograms of tritium per year.

"Doing so would meet the immediate tritium need at low cost to the government, thus freeing resources for the development of a long-term, permanent tritium source in South

Carolina," Hastings said.

"Thus, rather than serving as a competitor, FFTF should be considered complimentary for South Carolina's mission," he wrote.

Washington's congressional delegation "is committed to ensuring that FFTF focuses on an interim tritium role," Hastings wrote.

"Our long-term goal is the production of cancer-curing medical isotopes, and the tritium mission is viewed by the community as a necessary, but temporary, bridge to the development of a major medical treatment facility in the area."

A Richland-based private consortium wants eventually to use FFTF for medical isotope production, helping to free the U.S. from dependence on other countries, primarily Canada, for isotopes.

"Private interest in isotopes is growing, and private investment in the isotope mission could further reduce the interim tritium costs to the government," Hastings wrote. "I look forward to outlining how we can work together to ensure that our nation's defense needs are met in a timely and economical fashion."

Saturday, Dec. 7, 1996 Tri-City Herald

State's ports back FFTF restart

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Washington's 76 public port districts announced support Friday for restart of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility to help meet national defense and medical needs.

"This was a big effort on everyone's part... it took a lot of doing, but we pulled it off," said Ben Bennett, manager of the Port of Benton in Richland.

Bennett was joined in Bellevue by other port officials from the Tri-Cities and helped persuade Washington Public Port Association members of the value of a new mission for the experimental reactor.

brought a hailstorm of protest from ANMS president Bill Stokes and criticism from community leaders.

Hill told Murray ANMS's "erratic behavior" in attempting to negotiate a deal to buy enriched uranium fuel from a German utility group reflects its "self-serving greed," and shows ANMS's proposed isotope program "is a scam."

Further, he said during an interview Friday, ANMS's mishandling of that fuel purchase was the "negative publicity" that

Bob Ferguson, chairman of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council's Hanford division, said Hill's attack against ANMS missed the mark.

"The real issue is production of tritium, and equally important is the mission of medical isotopes," he said.

"FFTF technically can do the job at the least cost... we have all that capability here and the major issue is not who runs the reactor, but rather if DOE chooses to use it for that purpose, it will select the best contractor."

agenda. His letter is contrary to one we received from him about a month ago."

"Then, he wished us well," Stokes said. "This thing with Oscar today is a flat lie. All he's trying to do is a self-serving edifice because of his failure as Benton County Democratic chairman."

ANMS has letters of support from several union organizations and governor-elect Gary Locke has said he's for FFTF restart.

Labor Council backs restarting FFTF

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Organized labor in Washington has come out solidly for a restart of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

The state Labor Council voted unanimously to support a program that would have the test reactor produce tritium for the short term and medical isotopes in the long term.

"It's a good thing for the whole economy," said Don Bushy, a member of the state council.

"FFTF is a state-of-the-art reactor. The government put a lot of money into those facilities. By using it, taxpayers will get a lot of

bang for their buck," said Bushey, who's also business manager for Tri-City Local 280 of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

The council endorsed a plan put forth by a Richland-based consortium, Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems, which would place operation of the test reactor in private hands.

Initially, tritium would be produced by the reactor and sold to the government.

Tritium is an isotope of hydrogen needed to make nuclear bombs work as designed. U.S. stocks of tritium are low, because the isotope degrades over a relatively short half-life.

Once an alternative source of tritium is built — most likely in South Carolina — FFTF

would focus on its major mission: producing medical isotopes.

"Medical isotopes are probably the most promising thing for a long-term cancer cure," Bushey said.

That claim was supported last week by 52 experts in medical radiology who wrote Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary saying FFTF should be used to produce isotopes.

However, production of tritium has drawn criticism. The Oregon congressional delegation is unanimously opposed, as is Washington's outgoing governor, Mike Lowry.

In response, supporters of the tritium-medical isotope have been collecting endorsements. Washington's congressional delegation likes the idea, as does the state's port districts.

Some critics are afraid the tritium plan will distract from efforts to clean up Hanford.

Nonsense, Bushey said.

The council, when it voted Friday, understood work at FFTF would be done by a private company — the consortium, Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems — and not require any Department of Energy cleanup dollars.

The council has 18 members, representing districts from across the state.

Mel Chapman, director of labor relations for the consortium, praised the council, especially the work of Bushey.

"Don was very supportive before the council," Chapman said.

U.S. plans to burn plutonium

Decision marks 'milestone in history of nuclear weapons'

By The Washington Post
and the Herald staff

Officials of the commercial nuclear power plant north of Richland were "delighted" Sunday night as reports spread that the federal government would endorse a plan to burn plutonium.

The Washington Post was reporting the Clinton administration will announce today a two-track plan to get rid of 50 tons of highly radioactive surplus plutonium from the nation's dwindling stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Some of the toxic material will be "immobilized" — encased in glass or ceramic blocks and consigned to a permanent underground repository. The rest is to be combined with conventional nuclear power plant fuel and burned in commercial electricity-generating plants under the plan.

The Washington Public Power Supply System is leading a consortium of three other utilities that want to burn plutonium.

At stake could be the very survival of the WPPSS plant and others as deregulation

forces down the price of electricity. The message to WPPSS has been clear: The only way to keep running is to produce cheaper electricity.

Commercial plants like the idea of plutonium because it represents free fuel and, conceivably, payments from the government to get the material off its hands.

WPPSS is a major employer in the Mid-Columbia. By the end of June, it will have about 1,100 of the region's highest-paid workers on the job.

Both plutonium disposition methods to be announced today in a \$2 billion program involve immense technical, economic and political uncertainties. But the Energy Department, after a three-year study, concurred with the National Academy of Sciences that they are preferable to all 34 other known methods of plutonium disposition. In reaching the decision, the administration followed the process prescribed by law for actions that have a major environmental impact.

"We're extremely glad they made the decision to go with the two alternatives," said Vic Parrish, who runs the WPPSS plant.

Scientists recommended pursuing more than one option because, according to the NAS report, "it is crucial that at least one of these options succeed ... and because the costs of pursuing both in parallel are modest in relation to the security stakes."

In selecting two methods, the Energy Department discarded such options as launching the plutonium into space or sinking it in the ocean. The department also rejected as too dangerous the "do-nothing" alternative, keeping the plutonium in secure storage.

Keeping the material in storage would be easiest and cheapest, officials said, but that would perpetuate the danger that the material could fall into the hands of terrorists or rogue nations. It also could make Russia suspicious that the United States plans to retrieve the plutonium some day for use in new weapons.

By burning the plutonium, in a combination with regular uranium, a reactor will eliminate a relatively small amount of the plutonium but make the residue much too

Plan faces long list of difficulties

By The Washington Post
and the Herald Staff

WASHINGTON — The MOX fuel — or plutonium — option faces a long list of difficulties before it can be implemented.

Technically, it is feasible, scientists agreed. The plutonium would be mixed with conventional uranium fuel, then burned over 17 years in any of the nuclear power plants in this country or Canada.

At least 18 U.S. utilities have expressed interest, officials said, including the Washington Public Power Supply System.

All would expect to be handsomely paid by the government for the regulatory and public-relations grief they would surely encounter when they apply for a Nuclear Regulatory Commission license to burn MOX fuel.

One official involved in preparing the disposition plan said it would be so easy to stir up community opposition with a "plutonium is coming to your neighbor-

hood" campaign he doubted any U.S. utility would commit itself to MOX fuel.

The not-in-my-back yard response gives the WPPSS proposal a major advantage over others, said Vic Parrish, who runs the commercial nuclear reactor north of Richland.

"We have a community that's familiar with what we do up at Hanford. Our community supports us very strongly," Parrish said Sunday evening.

But the Energy Department has "retained the option" of shipping the MOX fuel to Canada for consumption in that country's heavy-water reactors "in the event that a multilateral agreement to use (Canadian) reactors is negotiated among Russia, Canada and the United States," according to the plan.

As the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons heads down from an estimated peak of 12,000 to a target of 3,500 in 2003, about 1,400 weapons a year are being disassembled at the Energy Department's Pantex plant near Amarillo, Texas.

Please see **PLUTONIUM**, Page A2 ▶

Plutonium disposal options reviewed

By the Herald staff
and Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — The United States will focus on two options for disposing of 90 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium — burning it as fuel in civilian reactors or melting it into glasslike logs.

Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary said Monday that no decision has been made on whether the government would use only one of the processes or both in a 10-year, \$2.3 billion program to create a disposal system. Among the leading candidate sites for producing the glass logs and plutonium-

Hanford's role in destruction uncertain

containing reactor fuel are Hanford and Savannah River, S.C.

Hanford could play a role in the disposal process in several ways:

- It is to be studied for a possible new plutonium vitrification or ceramic immobilization plant in conjunction with planned high-level waste vitrification facilities.

- A mothballed fuel assembly and research laboratory — the Fuels Materials and Examination Facility (FMEF) — might be revived and reconfigured for production of

the mixed uranium and plutonium oxide fuel for civilian reactors.

- The Washington Public Power Supply System has proposed its Hanford No. 2 power production reactor as a possible site for burning some of the fuel. WPPSS hopes the federal government would provide the fuel for free or at a greatly reduced cost, thus substantially cutting its electricity-production costs.

- Not addressed in O'Leary's comments was whether another Hanford plant — the

Fast Flux Test Facility — might be used to burn some of the mixed-oxide fuel (MOX) as part of a multipurpose mission to save the sophisticated research reactor from final shutdown.

DOE Undersecretary Thomas Grumbly said later that O'Leary's comments don't rule out using FFTF but also don't mean it will be used.

FTTF has been touted as a way to temporarily satisfy DOE's pressing need for tritium for nuclear weapons, as a partial solu-

tion to the plutonium glut and, longer term, as a potentially privatized reactor to produce isotopes used in sophisticated medical procedures to diagnose disease and treat an array of cancers. Tritium, a rapidly decaying radioactive isotope, loses its potency for boosting the power of warheads and must be replenished regularly.

Both options O'Leary listed offer a chance for Hanford to regain or retain jobs that have been disappearing as Hanford cleanup proceeds and WPPSS streamlines operations. The MOX fuel and glassification programs could bring from 150 to 440 jobs

Please see **OPTIONS**, Page A2 ▶

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TRI-CITY HERALD

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1996

Benton County, DOE agree on PILT settlement

By JASON HAGEY

Herald staff writer

And it is, almost.

The first installment of the \$11.2 million in back payments — \$5.98 million — will be electronically transferred into the county's bank account Wednesday, leaving the county and eight of its taxing districts to figure out what to do with the money.

"It's a nice problem to have," said Treasurer Claude Oliver, who will have a say in the dispersal when he takes a seat on the county commission next month. "I would much rather have this scenario going into 1997 than another year of negotiations."

Exactly what will happen with the county's portion of the initial payment, \$2.2 million, or with the money going to various taxing districts, isn't decided yet, but Oliver hopes the county will spend \$1 million to improve Columbia Park.

"I'd like to see the park bloom," Oliver said.

Commission Chairman Max Benitz Jr. said Monday that Benton County's portion likely will be divided between road improvements, capital projects and a rainy day savings fund. The commissioners will listen to suggestions from department heads and the public before making decisions, said Benitz, the only current commissioner returning next year.

Dave Hedengren, president of the Richland School Board, said the district might use its portion — \$922,755 to start with and two more payments of \$434,102 — to build up its reserves or to help with the repair or replacement of Carmichael Middle School.

"Certainly, there will be a lot of demand for it," Hedengren said.

County Commissioner Ray Isaacson said there should have been more for Richland schools.

Isaacson, although pleased to see the \$11.2 million, believes Richland schools should have gotten an additional \$3.5 million from DOE. But the agency argued it already had paid the school district that amount in "impact funds" and refused to pay again.

After eight years of battling to reach an agreement, Isaacson said, it wasn't worth holding out any longer.

"The DOE said it was their last and final offer," he said. "And since it is discretionary, how far do you beat a dead horse?"

The fight for the settlement money — called PILT, or payment in lieu of taxes — started in 1988, when the county first asked

DOE for money to make up for the taxes the county wasn't collecting on Hanford lands.

Numerous snags held up the deal during the years, but Wagoner credited Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary for making Monday's ceremony possible by changing the DOE's stance on the payments in 1994.

In January, Franklin and Grant counties came to agreements with DOE that brought \$1.5 million to Franklin County and \$4.7 million to Grant.

Under terms of the deal, the counties and their taxing districts will not only receive the back payments, but also will begin receiving annual payments in lieu of taxes.

Benton County will receive about \$1.5 million for 1996 based on the current tax rate.

Hanford Communities loses key city

Kennewick departure, however, won't end group

By MARINA PARR

Herald staff writer

For nearly three years, cities in Hanford's shadow have looked to one another to keep watch on the health, environmental and economic issues facing their citizens.

But the future of that group, known as Hanford Communities, is now clouded by budget cuts facing Kennewick — the group's second largest player.

"We won't do away with the organization," said Joe King, Richland city manager and chairman of the group, which also includes Pasco,

Benton City, West Richland and Benton County. "We won't have a dedicated staff person. We won't be hiring consultants."

Trimming the mission and scope of the intergovernmental group, formed in 1994 as a way to pool resources and information, is one way Hanford Communities will likely cope with the expected withdrawal of \$17,000 in funding from the Kennewick.

The group's anticipated 1997 budget is \$80,000, with 60 percent of the cost being paid by Richland and the remaining 40 percent, or \$34,000, split between the other members.

Kennewick City Council mem-

bers are expected to vote Tuesday on a 1997-98 budget that will most likely eliminate funding for Hanford Communities as one of several money-saving cuts.

The cost burden among the six local governments was allocated by estimating the number of Hanford workers living in each community.

In Kennewick's case that came to about 20 percent of the total in the six jurisdictions.

"The city council believed we had higher priorities that needed to be funded," said Kennewick City Manager Bob Kelly of the proposed funding cuts. "We could not — at least in 1997 — participate in the

funding allocation."

But Kelly was quick to praise the group's efforts in scrutinizing Hanford's impact on local communities. He pointed out that this year Hanford Communities' paid staffer, Pamela Brown, alerted the group to one preliminary federal report that excluded Hanford as a site for helping to deal with the nation's surplus plutonium.

Hanford Communities then hired a consultant to look into the study, and from there, the group has lobbied to have Hanford considered as a potential site, Kelly said.

"Those kinds of things have proved invaluable to the community. That's a potential for several hundred jobs," he said.

Should the group decide to

become more of a voluntary organization without a paid staff member, it's unlikely that such federal studies will be given close scrutiny.

"In any one given week there's a mound of paper distributed about issues," Kelly said. "Just reading through it would be a fairly substantial task," he said.

King stressed Hanford Communities will survive in one form or another. There's a potential the group could secure outside funding through grant-writing.

Or the cities may parcel out pieces of Hanford documents to look at as time permits.

"We're not going to fold up our tent and shut down," King said.

Westinghouse paid for good grade

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

The Westinghouse Hanford Co. earned a final award fee of \$2.6 million from the Department of Energy for work the firm did at Hanford from Oct. 1, 1995, through Sept. 30, 1996.

The "good" rating gave Westinghouse an

overall score of 89 out of 100 — its highest marks since 1989 — and three points higher than its last evaluation. DOE's rating scale has five categories — outstanding, good, satisfactory, marginal and unsatisfactory.

"The increase in the award fee evaluation from the previous period can be primarily attributed to continued improvement in the performance of the Tank Waste Remediation Systems project and improvements in

overall management and functional support areas to the projects," said DOE Hanford manager John Wagoner.

"There was a continued high level of performance in the waste management, spent nuclear fuel, facility transition and Hazardous Materials Management Emergency Response (HAMMER) projects," Wagoner, DOE's Hanford manager, wrote to Larry Peters, Westinghouse's director of close out.

If Westinghouse had an unblemished record during the evaluation period, it could have received about \$5 million. A score of 80 or below means no bonus.

Peters is overseeing Westinghouse's departure from Hanford, where, from 1987 until Oct. 1, the firm was DOE's primary contractor.

The latest score pleased LaMar Trego, former Westinghouse Hanford Co. president.

"There were like 47 significant accomplishments, 5 deficiencies and 5 'atta-boys,' and I'd say that's great," Trego said. "This is reflective of the spirit of our employees because we had a lot of milestones in the last quarter on top of the transition, but the employees did what was asked of them and

Please see **GRADE**, Page A2 ▶

Battelle director's changes prepare company for future

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Battelle director Bill Madia has merged, consolidated and reorganized the firm's Richland operations, he announced Monday.

The changes are designed to position the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory for 1997 and decades beyond, he said.

He called the changes a "midcourse correction" to strengthen the science base of

PNNL and the Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory (EMSL), which Battelle operates for the U.S. Department of Energy.

The leadership changes, effective Jan. 1, will help link Battelle science to public and private technology needs and aim to help Battelle prosper in an ever-changing national and international economy, Madia said.

Battelle has an annual operating budget in Richland of about \$530 million and about 3,800 employees. Its current contract with

DOE ends in September, and a five-year extension has been approved and is being negotiated.

"As the Department of Energy's research budget continues to decline — perhaps by 20 percent by the year 2002 — we must broaden our customer base," Madia said.

New customers likely will come from such public agencies as the U.S. Department of Defense or Environmental Protection Agency and from such private industries as chemicals, pharmaceutical and automotive — all of which Battelle

now does some business with.

Driving the changes is next fall's opening of EMSL — a \$230 million one-of-a-kind laboratory where scientists from around the world will study molecules and how to make them work to benefit mankind.

"In order to meet my objectives of strengthening our science base, linking our science to problems, and then growing, I needed to make these changes well in advance of EMSL's opening," Madia said.

"These changes allow us to hit the ground running when EMSL opens its doors."

These are the changes made by Madia and approved by Doug Olesen, chief executive officer of Battelle's parent company, Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio:

■ Longtime Battelle executive Gerry Stokes will lead the new Environmental and Health Sciences Division, formerly called the Environmental and Energy Sciences Division. Mike Knotek headed the latter group but is leaving Battelle after not being

Please see **CHANGES**, Page A2 ▶

Benton County haggles over PILT dollars

By JASON HAGEY
and JILL FITZSIMMONS
Herald staff writers

The money is in the bank, and eight years of negotiating with the federal government are over, but the haggling over payment in lieu of taxes continues for Benton County commissioners.

A week after the Department of Energy paid Benton County its first installment of an \$11.2 million settlement on the PILT issue, commissioners are questioning whether any of the money should be used to pay for trips Treasurer Claude Oliver made during the negotiations.

And Commissioner Ray Isaacson is wondering if the county might be able to squeeze a little more money from the DOE for the PILT claim. The money is to reimburse the county and other affected taxing agencies for Hanford lands that were taken off the tax rolls by the federal government.

The issue of reimbursing the treasurer's account surfaced Monday. Commissioners were meeting to figure out how to divide the money collected from the

DOE among the county and eight taxing districts and to discuss the expense of collecting the money.

Isaacson said it isn't clear if the treasurer's budget should be repaid \$131,000 for travel expenses because Oliver, who visited various DOE sites across the country, didn't clear his trips with commissioners. "He was out on his own," Isaacson said.

The commissioners decided the reimbursement money should go into the county's current expense fund until a final decision is made, probably after Jan. 1 when two of



Oliver

the three commissioners are replaced. Oliver will be one of those taking a seat on the commission.

Oliver, who butted heads with commissioners throughout the negotiating of the settlement, defended his travels and called the commissioners' reluctance to repay his department "11th hour brinkmanship."

"It shows the people of Benton County the obstacles I was up against," Oliver said. He added that the few times he did go to the commissioners for approval of trips, they failed to support him.

In any case, it's too late now for the commissioners to decide his budget won't be reimbursed, Oliver said. He said the money already has gone into the treasurer's budget.

Isaacson said it will be up to Oliver to transfer the money into the county's current expense fund until a final decision is made.

Meanwhile, Isaacson also is beginning to wonder whether the county might be due more money

from the DOE. On Friday, Isaacson said he found a letter he wrote in 1987 to DOE that inquired about payments in lieu of taxes. This could prove the county began inquiring about the PILT case a year earlier than DOE has written in the contract, he said.

DOE held the payments to a 1988 start date because that's the year in which a formal request was believed to have been made, Isaacson said.

"It definitely shows we were actively pursuing this issue in 1987," he said.

That means the federal government owes Benton County taxing jurisdictions another \$1.1 million, the amount of money they received for 1988, Isaacson said.

But Oliver said it's too late for that. The county has signed a contract, waiving any rights to taxes owed before 1988, Oliver said.

"Ray raises an interesting question, but I wish he would've brought it to my attention in 1987," Oliver said.

Bechtel, subsidiaries hand out pink slips

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Sixty-five employees of Bechtel Hanford Inc. and its subcontractors received layoff warnings this week.

Federal government contractors must give employees a 60-day warning before they are laid off. For those receiving notices, the clock started ticking Monday.

"We get laid off for the holidays. Merry Christmas," said Dave Oestreich, a safety analysis engineer for International Technologies Hanford Inc., a Bechtel subcontractor. He has worked at Hanford for 11 years.

But no time is good to learn you're targeted for layoff, said Rick Dale, a Bechtel spokesman.

"It's difficult anytime you do it. It's a tough business decision made even tougher by the fact that you've worked with these people," Dale said.

A chance exists other positions within the companies will open, providing employment for those who received layoff warnings, Dale said.

In November, Bechtel and its subcontractors announced they would lay off about 100 workers. That number was cut to 65 after the companies analyzed the work remaining at Hanford.

But more layoffs may be on the horizon, Dale said.

Also in November, Fluor Daniel Hanford and its subcontractors announced they would lay off about 500 people in 1997. Layoff notices won't be sent out until after the first of the year.

The Bechtel layoff warnings focused primarily on workers in "characterization," the task of examining and describing waste at Hanford, Dale said.

Much of that work has been completed, while other tasks remain, he said. The layoff warnings occurred because "the scope of work" changed as the cleanup focus shifted, Dale said.

Of the 65 layoff notices issued Monday, Bechtel Hanford delivered five. The company has 673 employees.

Thermo Hanford, a Bechtel subcontractor, gave one warning out of 125 employees.

CH2M-Hill delivered 19 warnings out of 125 workers.

IT Hanford had 31 warnings out of 92 employees.

HAMTEC had nine warnings out of 296 workers.

Bechtel and its subcontractors work primarily in the 100 areas, where the old production reactors line the Columbia River.

Most of the waste in that area will be buried.

Richland forum tonight on isotope production

The Nuclear Medicine Research Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the application of radioisotopes for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, is sponsoring a public forum on medical isotope production at Hanford.

The topic, "Medical Isotope Production at the Fast Flux Test Facility," will be discussed at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Battelle Auditorium, 902 Battelle Blvd., Richland.

The session is free and open to the public. Presentations will include the uses of radioisotopes in medicine, isotope production issues and the environment and Department of Energy funding effects on FFTF operation.

Speakers are Thomas Rado, medical director of the Tri-Cities Cancer Center; Alan Waltar, now associated with Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems; Robert Schenter, nuclear Medicine Research Council; and Bruce Klos, deputy director of FFTF.

Whistleblower honored today

Hanford whistleblower John Brodeur will receive the 1996 Joe A. Callaway Award for Civic Courage today in an award ceremony sponsored by the Shafeek Nader Trust for the Community Interest in Washington, D.C.

Brodeur blew the whistle on the failure of DOE's managers to adequately monitor the contaminated soil beneath Hanford's high-level nuclear waste tanks, then was part of a team that is now trying to document and report to the public the concentrations of the specific radionuclides contaminating the soil and ground water from the tanks, many of which have leaked.

He was fired by Westinghouse Hanford Co. in 1991 for criticizing Hanford's failure to use state-of-the-art monitoring techniques to determine if waste was contaminating ground water. He eventually settled his case against Westinghouse and later was hired by a DOE contractor.

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1996 Tri-City Herald

Former Westinghouse chief relocated

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

LaMar Trego, former president of Westinghouse Hanford Co., has been reassigned to Westinghouse Electric's corporate offices in Pittsburgh.

He has been named vice president of strategic operations within Westinghouse's Government and Environmental Services Co. (GESCO) — an agency specializing in safe stabilization of extremely hazardous materials.

Trego will report to James Gallagher, who



Trego

heads that division.

Gallagher said GESCO's work includes processing and cleanup of radioactivity in defense and commercial markets and the destruction of chemical weapons.

"As we look ahead to the 21st century ... we intend to maintain our leadership position in these markets," Gallagher said.

"However, these marketplaces have undergone major changes in recent years, and sig-

nificant additional change is expected.

"To effectively compete in these markets, we must focus more effectively on innovative approaches to developing new businesses.

"These new approaches will require a seamless blending of our strategic planning and business development activities."

That's where Trego comes in, starting in January.

Trego, 58, became Westinghouse Hanford's fifth president in January 1994.

He took over the helm of Westinghouse Hanford Co. just a month after the firm received all all-time low federal work evaluation and no performance fee for the first

time in Department of Energy history.

Within months after Trego's takeover, he had cut his management staff by 45 percent and developed bite-sized, accomplishable projects.

Westinghouse had been at Hanford about two decades, including nearly 10 years as DOE's prime contractor.

But Westinghouse Hanford Co. ceased operating Oct. 1, when Fluor Daniel Hanford Co., assumed DOE's new five-year, \$4.8 billion management contract at Hanford.

Since October, Trego has helped to close out Westinghouse's contract at Hanford.

Benton County eyes DOE cash

There's plenty of reasons it's entitled to more money, treasurer explains

By JASON HAGEY

Herald staff writer

Claude Oliver and Benton County aren't finished with the Department of Energy.

Oliver, the Benton County treasurer during the county's eight-year struggle to collect money from DOE for Hanford property taken off the tax rolls, met Wednesday with the Herald editorial board to talk about the next challenges.

Most involve trying to get more money from DOE.

A little more than a week after DOE paid the first installment on an \$11.2 million PILT settlement, or payment in lieu of taxes, Oliver said there are plenty of reasons why the federal government owes Benton County additional help during the next few years as Hanford jobs continue to dip.

"PILT is good, but we're in even more transition now than we were back in 1988. ... There are even more exciting things on the horizon."

— Claude Oliver,
Benton County treasurer

any additional payments DOE may agree to make.

"If people want to come at us with those kinds of questions in the next five years, we're going to come at them with stronger questions" about DOE's plans for Hanford, he said.

Another source of cash for the county might be a second \$51 million claim against the federal government for burdens imposed when

Doctors group opposes tritium at FFTF

By The Associated Press
and the Herald staff

SEATTLE — Physicians are arguing with physicians whether the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford should be restarted.

On Thursday, leaders of Physicians for Social Responsibility denounced a plan to reopen the plant to temporarily produce tritium for nuclear bombs.

But two weeks ago, leaders in the field of nuclear medicine endorsed the plan, saying the reactor will be needed to create isotopes to fight cancer.

Joining Physicians for Social Responsibility in opposing the plan Thursday were the Fellowship of Reconciliation, National Lawyers Guild, Heart of America Northwest, Peace Action of Washington, Government Accountability Project and Seattle Samoan Center.

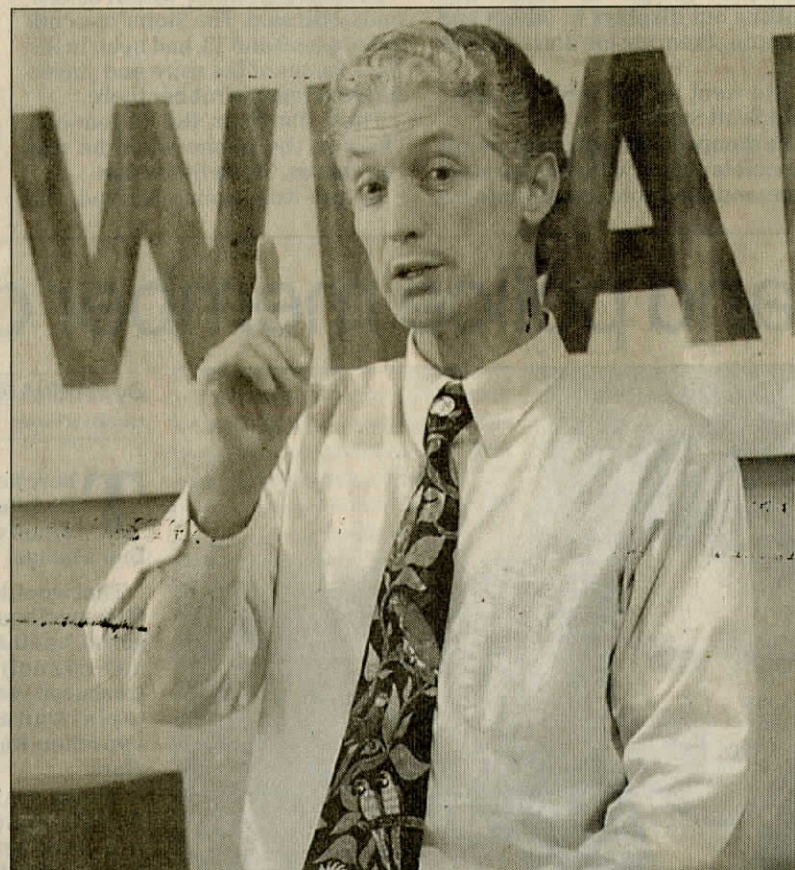
"It's time to rid the world completely of nuclear weapons. These are weapons we don't need," said Dr. David Hall, national president of the physicians group.

Dr. Jim Trombold, vice president of the state chapter of the physicians group, said the 500 to 800 jobs that a restart could support in the Tri-Cities would be a poor short-term tradeoff.

"We need to have more solid, healthy, long-term jobs," Trombold said.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is expected to decide in about a week whether to add the sodium-cooled Hanford reactor to a list of potential tritium production sites, including operations in New Mexico and South Carolina. It costs \$60 million a year to keep FFTF ready for shutdown.

If tritium is produced anywhere in



Associated Press

Dr. David Hall, president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, talks about Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility on Thursday in Seattle.

the country, it should be in a new accelerator at the government's Savannah River complex near Aiken, S.C., "a much cleaner facility and a much more modern facility," said Scott Carpenter, executive director of the peace group.

Top DOE officials have said the agency's primary interest in the Hanford reactor is for making tritium — a

quickly decaying radioactive gas that boosts the power of nuclear warheads — and for burning excess plutonium created for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

A private consortium has proposed to run the reactor and sell tritium to the Energy Department as an interim step toward an operation for medical isotope production.

That plan has won the support of most of Washington state's congressional delegation, although Sen. Patty Murray has said she would reconsider unless medical isotopes are a significant part of the package.

Oregon's congressional delegation is opposed.

Dismantling of FFTF has been delayed at the request of the private consortium, Advanced Nuclear Medical Systems, which has proposed a private takeover to produce tritium for DOE initially, shifting to production of isotopes for fighting cancer by 2015 as DOE brings other tritium plants on line.

Gerald Pollett, executive director of Heart of America Northwest, said the Tri-City company misrepresented his group's as favoring FFTF restart.

"I don't think this company has ever said that," said William J. Stokes, Advanced Nuclear president. "We've tried to develop a bridge of trust with Heart of America."

Heart of America opposes any tritium production at Hanford and favors shutdown.

The scenario considered by DOE would shift \$32 million of the \$40 million annual FFTF cleanup allocation to preparations for restart but could free \$8 million for other cleanup work.

In a news release from Washington, D.C., Rep. Doc Hastings said FFTF would be a much cheaper short-term tritium option than Savannah River, which he said would drain funds from other Hanford cleanup work.

"Tritium has always been a bridge to our long-term goal of a new national cancer center in the Tri-Cities," Hastings said.

DOE ordered to pay Benton County in BWIP tax dispute

County originally sought \$51 million for 'payments equivalent to taxes'

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy has been ordered to pay as much as several million dollars to Benton County in payments relating to a long-dead Hanford program.

Benton County learned Thursday that DOE's Office of Hearing Appeals ruled in its favor in a long-running dispute over "payments equivalent to taxes" on the defunct Basalt Waste Isolation Project, or BWIP.

The ruling comes almost two years after county and DOE attorneys argued the issue at a hearing in Washington, D.C.

BWIP was a \$500 million project to study creating a burial site at Hanford for spent fuel rods from the nation's commercial nuclear reactors.

BWIP died in 1987 — at least 20 years after the first preliminary studies — when DOE picked Yucca Mountain in Nevada as the burial site.

Benton County has contended that a 1982 law requires DOE to make tax-like payments on the work and improvements on Hanford's 11,000-acre BWIP site — arguing those efforts increased the land's value. Those assessments are

dubbed "payments equivalent to taxes."

DOE has contended BWIP was a failed project that cost a lot of money — not something that increased land values.

The main permanent physical "improvements" to the site were 116 holes bored in the basalt.

After a few years of initial sparring, Benton County and DOE took the dispute to DOE's Office of Hearing Appeals in January 1995.

At that point, Benton County contended DOE owed it \$51 million for several years of payments plus interest.

But DOE argued it already had paid \$700,000 when it only owed \$400,000 — and wanted \$300,000 back.

The hearing tribunal decided largely in the county's favor, said Ryan Brown, a Benton County assistant prosecutor specializing in government matters.

That means DOE owes money to the county.

While the hearing tribunal generally agreed with the county appraisals stances, it altered the formulas a bit — which Brown expects will make the payments less than the \$51 million that originally was sought.

The county has 90 days to recalculate the payments under the modified formulas.

Cesium below tank farm, data show

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

New data have confirmed radioactive cesium 137 is beneath Hanford's SX tank farm, the site of 15 of the 149 single-shell underground waste storage tanks.

Hanford officials emphasized Friday that there is no new risk to workers, the public or the environment based on the new data.

The cesium was found in a new bore hole drilled near tank SX-109 in response to recommendations by an independent panel assembled at the request of Department of

Energy officials in Richland to examine cesium movement below the tanks.

Tank SX-109 was declared a leaking tank in 1965. About 10,000 gallons of radioactive liquids have leaked from it. Based on data released by DOE in 1995 from previously drilled bore holes, cesium was detected at the 125-foot depth — deeper than earlier estimates projected. The new bore hole was drilled to provide more information on how cesium got there.

Some scientists suggested cesium found at 125 feet was carried down along old bore holes, some believed the cesium migrated through the earth, and others believed a com-

bination of factors contributed to the cesium's movement through soil beneath the tank farms.

Cesium was found in the new bore hole at the 130-foot level, deeper than expected based on computer models of the relatively dry soil between the surface and the ground water level, which is 210 feet beneath the surface of SX tank farm.

The tanks' bottoms reach about 55 feet below the surface.

Jackson Kinzer, DOE's assistant manager for the Tank Waste Remediation System, said the new data will help improve researchers'

understanding of how radioactive contaminants move through the soil.

After reviewing the new data, an expert panel has confirmed contaminants such as cesium have migrated through natural and man-made pathways.

In drilling the new bore hole, techniques were used to limit the bore hole as a pathway for the contaminants. The panel agrees with DOE that more studies are needed.

"This work demonstrates the value of applying good scientific technology and practices to complex problems such as our tank wastes," said Hanford manager John Wag-

DOE panel sides with Benton

By JASON HAGEY
Herald staff writer

A Department of Energy appeals board has decided Benton County is due some money for work it did studying a nuclear isolation project at Hanford in the 1980s, but the board left the specific dollar amount open for negotiation.

The decision, a partial victory for the county, gives Benton County until the end of March to produce a revised amount it believes DOE should make as payment equivalent to taxes, money stipulated under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 as compensation for nuclear waste repository studies.

In 1993, Benton County made a \$23 million claim, appraising an area at Hanford where DOE spent an estimated \$500 million on the study, known as the Basalt Waste Isolation Project, commonly known as BWIP.

In 1987, Congress chose Yucca Mountain, Nev., as the site of the country's first high-level nuclear waste vault, knocking out Hanford and a site in Texas.

Since the original claim, about \$28 million in interest and penalties accrued, bringing the county's total request to \$51 million.

But the Richland office of the DOE denied the claim on several grounds, and Benton County appealed to the DOE panel.

The panel's ruling finds areas where the county and the Richland office of the DOE were correct and stipulates Benton County must work with the Richland office of the DOE to develop a revised claim.

While the appeals board did agree some money is owed Benton County, it agreed with the Richland office the payment equivalent to taxes are only due beginning 1986 — the year Hanford became an official candidate for the isolation waste project — and not 1982, when the Nuclear Waste Policy Act was established.

It also agreed with the Richland office that neither interest penalties nor personal property taxes should be considered as part of the claim.

Although not a total victory, Benton County officials expressed satisfaction with it Monday.

"That's moving it in the right direction," said Treasurer Claude Oliver.

The next step will be for the county treasurer and assessor to come up with numbers to start negotiations with the Richland office the DOE.

If the county's eight-year struggle to collect money from the DOE for Hanford lands taken off county tax rolls is any indication, the latest negotiations could take a while.

But Oliver is hopeful these negotiations will be different.

Unlike PILT — the payments in lieu of taxes — the basis for the payment equivalent to taxes is not based on the discretion of the DOE.

"The lines are much more clear than it was under PILT," Oliver said. "That's not to say (the Richland DOE) won't disagree" with the figure the county arrives upon, he said.

Commissioner Ray Isaacson, who worked for years with Oliver and the other commissioners on the \$11.2 million PILT settlement that finally was concluded this month also is optimistic the latest negotiations will be more smooth.

"I hope it goes much faster," he said.

Lawmakers push Savannah River for tritium site

By The Associated Press and the Herald staff

AIKEN, S.C. — Congressional delegations in South Carolina and Georgia are lobbying the U.S. Energy Department to approve Savannah River as the country's new tritium production site.

They say it is the most logical choice, and they hope to keep Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility, a mothballed research reactor, off the short list.

Washington's congressional delegation is

squarely behind an FFTF restart, which also is supported statewide by port association members, commissioners from Washington's 39 counties, labor and several other organizations.

Tritium is a gas that boosts the power of nuclear weapons, but it decays quickly and must be replenished, DOE has said. The United States has relied on tritium from dismantled weapons since it stopped producing the gas in 1988, but the supply is running low.

Nine members of the South Carolina and

Georgia congressional delegations wrote Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary last month asking that FFTF be kept out of the picture.

"Reconsidering the FFTF at this late stage would at best further delay having an assured source of tritium and at worst jeopardize our nuclear deterrent," they said.

O'Leary is expected to decide in the next few weeks whether FFTF will compete against a \$3 billion accelerator that could be built at Savannah River early next century. The two could go up against a propos-

al to use commercial power reactors.

"If you have three options instead of two you decrease the possibility that you're going to be selected," noted Bill Reinig of Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness, a group pushing for new missions at Savannah River. "So we certainly would be concerned if this decreases the possibility of SRS becoming the tritium producer."

The chosen site can bet on money and jobs for nearby communities.

"All we've asked from DOE is that FFTF be considered fairly for interim production

of tritium," said Sam Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council.

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., wrote a letter early this month to U.S. Rep. Charlie Norwood R-Ga., saying Hanford only views tritium as a temporary assignment.

A private consortium hopes to take over the government-owned Hanford reactor and produce tritium to pay for the restart until the reactor can begin producing medical isotopes used in cancer treatment.

Fluor policy prompts complaint

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

About 20 Mid-Columbia construction contractors contend Fluor Daniel is squeezing them out of Hanford work.

Representatives from about 20 Tri-City-area construction companies voiced those concerns Thursday night to U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings and Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver in Kennewick.

Hastings and Oliver urged the contractors to discuss their concerns in a joint meeting with the Department of Energy and Fluor Daniel officials. Hastings volunteered to help with the talks.

Battelle, ex-employee reach settlement

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

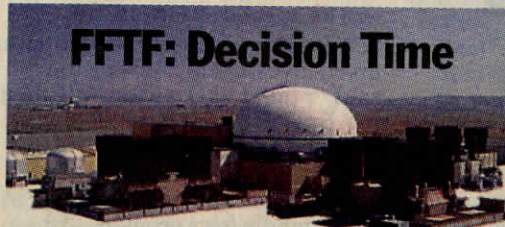
Battelle-Northwest has agreed to pay a former employee of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory \$185,000 to settle a lawsuit that dates to 1990, when the scientist was fired.

In addition to the cash payment, J.C. Laul, 56, who now lives near Denver, will go back on Battelle's payroll for one month — a move that will boost his retirement and medical benefits and is valued at \$65,000.



Laul

Panel wants FFTF kept as option



FFTF: Decision Time

Sunday's Tri-City Herald will take an in-depth look at the past, present and future of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility and issues in deciding whether it should remain an option for tritium production.

Hastings says report is good news in effort to resurrect reactor

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility could be a cost-effective backup for producing tritium if kept in roughly its current condition.

That's a preliminary conclusion in a study ordered by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary to examine the financial feasibility of resurrecting the reactor 11 miles north of Richland.

And that's important, Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said Wednesday, because it's one more step toward keeping the reactor alive as an option for producing tritium and, later, perhaps making medical isotopes.

Representatives from the Washington, D.C., firm of Putnam, Hayes & Bartlett briefed Department of Energy officials

earlier in the day about their analysis of cost impacts of using FFTF and the Advanced Test Reactor (ATR) in Idaho Falls to produce tritium. The ATR is managed for DOE by the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois.

In a separate meeting also Wednesday, Terry Lash, director of the Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology updated O'Leary on FFTF issues. That

briefing was attended by DOE's Hanford manager John Wagoner.

The Putnam group reportedly presented its findings to the Tritium Council, a group that includes DOE and Department of Defense representatives who advise O'Leary.

"The Putnam group will recommend

Please see FFTF, Page A2

Reviews due of US Ecology's operating permit

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

US Ecology's Hanford site faces a series of studies and reviews by state agencies.

Washington's ecology and health departments are setting up several related examinations of US Ecology's low-level radioactive waste disposal site.

These include:

- Renewing the site's five-year operating license, which expires in May.
- Reviewing a plan for covering and monitoring waste trenches. US Ecology submitted a preliminary plan in 1995 and has revised it since.
- Adopting a limit on how much slightly

radioactive rubble US Ecology can accept.

■ Deciding, probably in February, if an environmental impact study is needed to address the ramifications of these issues. Such a study appears likely and could delay the licensing and planning decisions several months, state officials said.

■ Beginning about two years' worth of other environmental studies to see if any contaminated substances have leaked from the site.

The Hanford site is on 100 acres in subleased from the state. It serves 11 states and gets much of the wastes from hospitals and nuclear plants. The nation's only other operating low-level radioactive waste site is in South Carolina.

Even though the Hanford license is scheduled to expire in May, the state likely is to

extend the permit until the ecology and health department reviews are complete.

The wastes are buried in trenches that usually are 45 feet deep, 1,000 feet long and about 150 feet wide.

So far, wastes are buried in 20 trenches, with four still accepting wastes.

The plan for covering the trenches includes how the site would be monitored through the duration of US Ecology's 99-year sublease, which ends in 2063.

Meanwhile, US Ecology and the state health department are discussing whether to increase the state's limit of "Naturally Occurring or Accelerator Produced Material" — or NARM wastes — to 100,000 tons a year.

NARM wastes are dirt and rubble from

mining and industrial sites slightly tainted with uranium and other radioactive substances. US Ecology can accept NARM waste from all 50 states.

Before 1995, the state had no limit on NARM waste. The state created an 8,600-ton ceiling in 1995, but US Ecology sued to stop the limit. The company dropped the lawsuit in exchange for the state's plan to put in a 100,000-ton annual limit.

But the proposed higher limit has drawn fire from environmental groups. For now, a temporary limit of 100,000 tons is in place until the state makes a final decision.

"The ecology and health departments plan to hold public comment hearings and take written comments on the licensing, the plan for covering the trenches and NARM issues

— hoping to bunch them together. No dates have been set.

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And in 1996, the site accepted 12,837 cubic feet of NARM wastes, compared with 77,418 cubic feet in 1995.

The site operated under the 8,600-cubic-foot limit in early 1996.

The state's study of possible leaks from the trenches will examine soil, ground water and gases.

All three phases are expected to be complete by late 1998.

Some results might be used in an environmental impact study.

Reviews due of US Ecology's operating permit

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

US Ecology's Hanford site faces a series of studies and reviews by state agencies.

Washington's ecology and health departments are setting up several related examinations of US Ecology's low-level radioactive waste disposal site.

These include:

- Renewing the site's five-year operating license, which expires in May.

- Reviewing a plan for covering and monitoring waste trenches. US Ecology submitted a preliminary plan in 1995 and has revised it since.

- Adopting a limit on how much slightly

radioactive rubble US Ecology can accept.

■ Deciding, probably in February, if an environmental impact study is needed to address the ramifications of these issues. Such a study appears likely and could delay the licensing and planning decisions several months, state officials said.

■ Beginning about two years' worth of other environmental studies to see if any contaminated substances have leaked from the site.

The Hanford site is on 100 acres in subleased from the state. It serves 11 states and gets much of the wastes from hospitals and nuclear plants. The nation's only other operating low-level radioactive waste site is in South Carolina.

Even though the Hanford license is scheduled to expire in May, the state likely is to

extend the permit until the ecology and health department reviews are complete.

The wastes are buried in trenches that usually are 45 feet deep, 1,000 feet long and about 150 feet wide.

So far, wastes are buried in 20 trenches, with four still accepting wastes.

The plan for covering the trenches includes how the site would be monitored through the duration of US Ecology's 99-year sublease, which ends in 2063.

Meanwhile, US Ecology and the state health department are discussing whether to increase the state's limit of "Naturally Occurring or Accelerator Produced Material" — or NARM wastes — to 100,000 tons a year.

NARM wastes are dirt and rubble from

mining and industrial sites slightly tainted with uranium and other radioactive substances. US Ecology can accept NARM waste from all 50 states.

Before 1995, the state had no limit on NARM waste. The state created an 8,600-ton ceiling in 1995, but US Ecology sued to stop the limit. The company dropped the lawsuit in exchange for the state's plan to put in a 100,000-ton annual limit.

But the proposed higher limit has drawn fire from environmental groups. For now, a temporary limit of 100,000 tons is in place until the state makes a final decision.

The ecology and health departments plan to hold public comment hearings and take written comments on the licensing, the plan for covering the trenches and NARM issues

— hoping to bunch them together. No dates have been set.

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Some results might be used in an environmental impact study.

Tank-waste project delay anticipated

Hanford budget short of funds

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Hanford's tank-waste analysis program — the springboard for much of the work at the tank farm — could be trimmed this year to help get Hanford within its 1996-97 budget.

Overall, Hanford's money for 1996-97 is \$162 million short of what it needs, Department of Energy and contractor officials said Friday at a Richland briefing for regulators and other Hanford players.

No more DOE money is available for 1996-97. So officials have to figure out what to cut or delay this year, said Lloyd Piper, DOE's deputy Hanford manager.

The biggest cuts are proposed for the tank farm program and the K Basins' spent fuel removal program — considered the top priorities in Hanford's cleanup.

Reductions in those two programs account for almost \$99 mil-

lion of the \$162 million in proposed cuts.

Those cuts could run deep. The \$99 million is a 16 percent budget cut from the tank farms and K Basin programs' total budgets of \$621 million.

The rest of the proposed cuts are spread across numerous other programs. The proposed cuts have to be scrutinized by DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Hanford's regulators.

The budget shortfall stems from DOE calculating in 1995 what it wanted to request Congress for Hanford funding in 1996-97, Piper said.

That translated to DOE requesting \$1.319 billion for Hanford's cleanup in 1996-97. And Congress allocated \$1.301 billion to Hanford cleanup — almost all of the requested amount.

But since then, Hanford officials

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good news by Washington's congressional delegation and Tri-City FFTF supporters.

O'Leary is not expected to make a formal announcement until next week, but she gave lawmakers a sneak preview of her decision Thursday afternoon.

One of the first to be informed was Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., who shared the good news with Sam Volpentest, executive director of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, or TRIDEC.

"She has made up her mind and will keep FFTF on hot standby as they continue to look at it as a tritium option," Dicks said. "This looks like a significant step in the right direction."

O'Leary made her decision just hours after John Wagoner, manager of DOE's Hanford office, called the Herald to caution no decision had been made.

"It wasn't then," Wagoner said with a laugh later in the afternoon. "It apparently has been now."

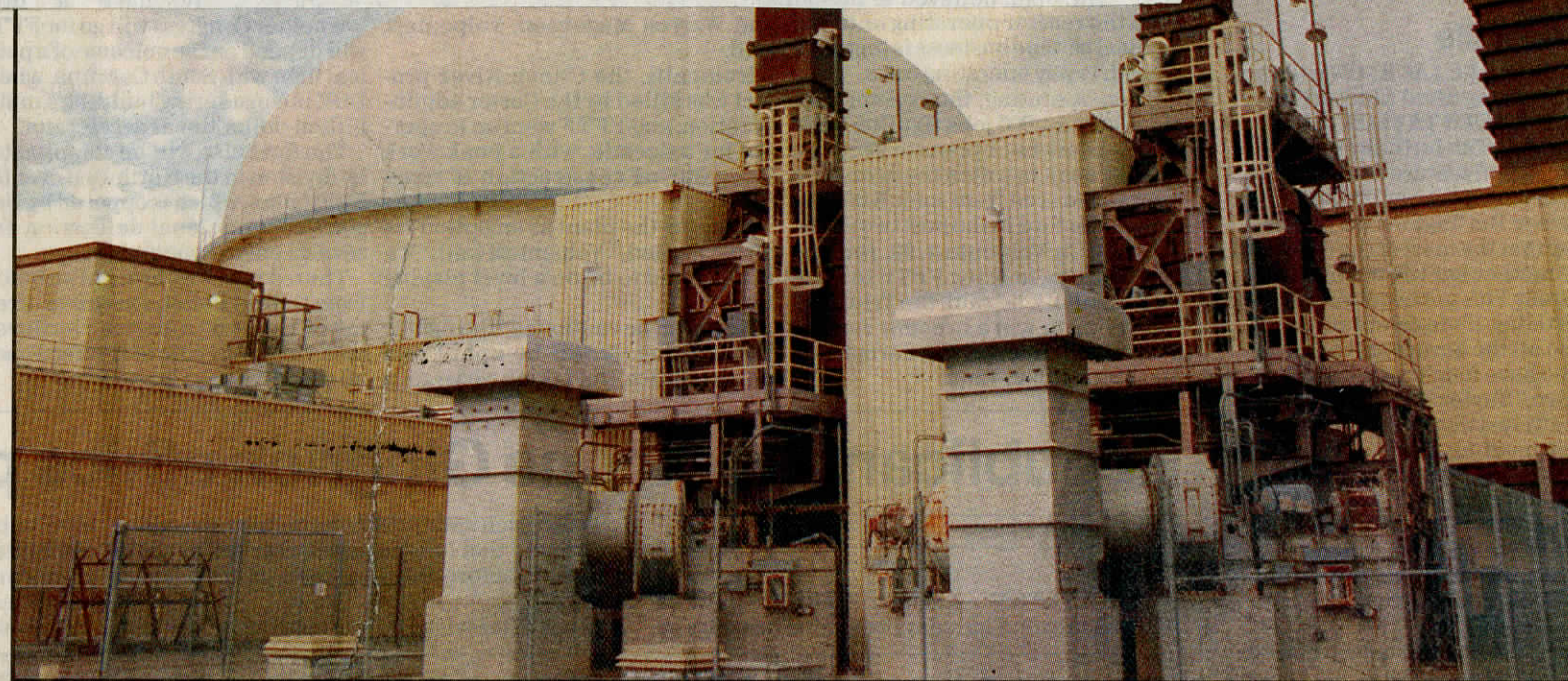
Wagoner said he was pleased but not surprised.

"We were optimistic because we thought we had made a good case for FFTF," he said. "I think this is the right decision to make."

So do Washington Sens. Patty Murray and Slade Gorton and Rep. Doc Hastings, whose 4th District includes Hanford and whose intervention in 1995 helped prompt O'Leary to re-evaluate the reactor's future.

Plans then to drain the liquid sodium that cools the reactor were scrubbed. The latest dictate from O'Leary means FFTF will be maintained at a level at which it could be more easily restarted.

The decision means DOE's envi-



Herald/André Ranieri

The Department of Energy has decided to keep Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility as an option for potential tritium production.

FFTF: Decision Time



Sunday's Tri-City Herald will take an in-depth look at the past, present and future of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility and issues in deciding whether it should remain an option for tritium production.

ronmental impact statement on future tritium production will be amended to include FFTF as an

option. In addition, it's the first time DOE has publicly acknowledged that if FFTF ever restarts, its long-term mission would be medical isotope production.

While O'Leary has made the decision, Dicks said she will be leaving office Jan. 20 and it will be important to work with Federico Pena, who has been nominated to replace her.

"We are going to have to be vigilant," Dicks said, adding as a member of the House Appropriations Committee he is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to secure funding to keep FFTF on standby.

Hastings agreed.

"We have some work to do in Congress in regard to funding, and that's my responsibility and that of our whole delegation," he said.

FFTF's current-year budget is about \$47 million. Officials have said for it to remain a viable option, about \$12 million more is needed to better keep the plant in a ready-to-restart condition.

"The figures are preliminary, and I know we have some challenges, but this is terrific news," Hastings said. "What we've wanted all along is the opportunity to remain an option. ... Now we are."

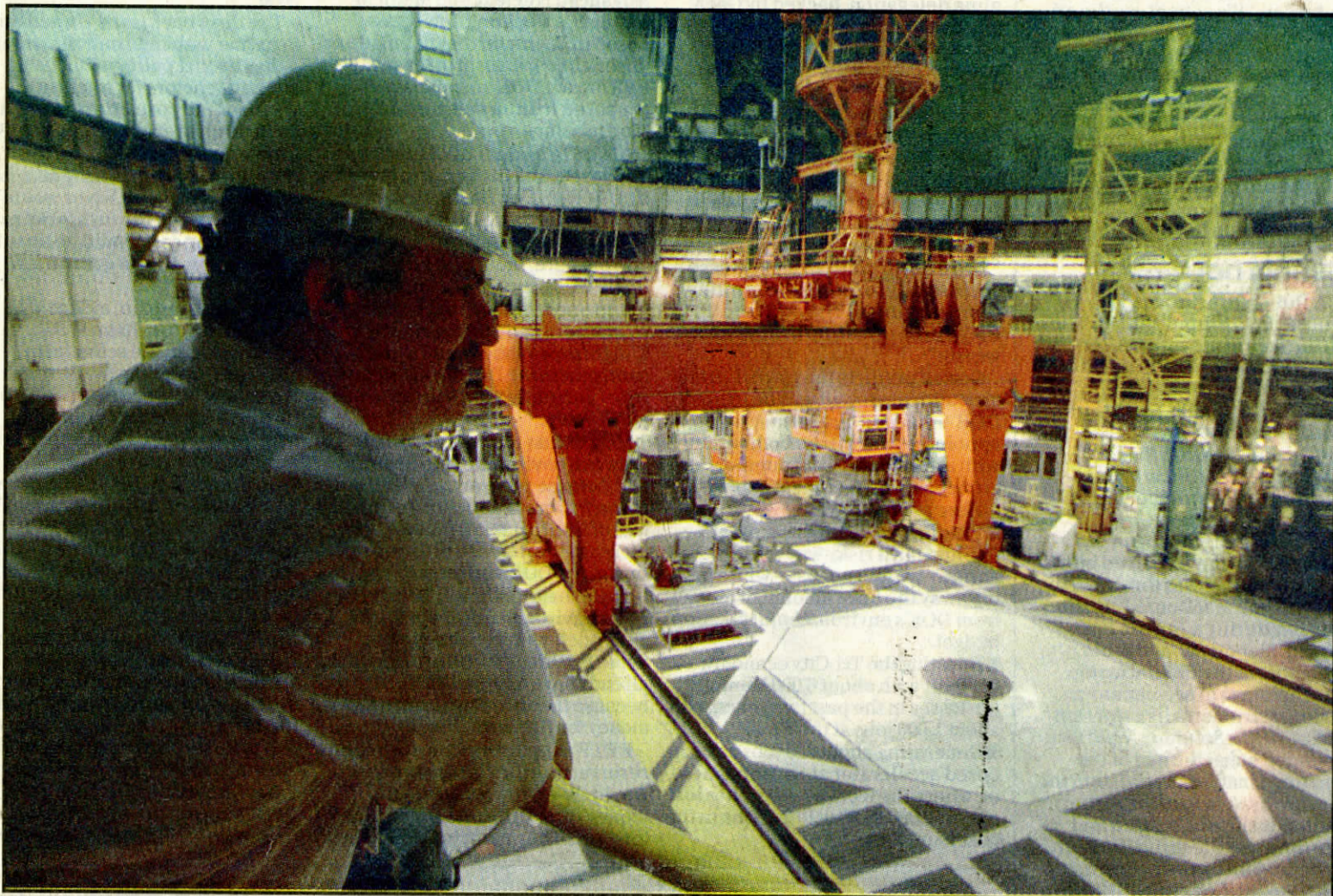
Murray said she told O'Leary any decision to keep FFTF as a tritium option also must include a long-term medical isotope mission, money can't be diverted from Hanford's cleanup budget to maintain the plant, and the public must have a say in the process.

"The secretary asked that if she could satisfy those concerns, what would my position be, and I told her, 'Squarely behind restart,'" Murray said.

Gorton likewise was pleased with O'Leary's decision. "FFTF received the attention and credibility it deserves."

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The uncertain future of FFTF



Herald/André Ranieri

Department of Energy employee Guy Schein looks out over the containment room at Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility. The reactor's core lies

30 feet below the white hexagon at lower right. An announcement is expected this week that the FFTF should be kept in a standby mode.

Restart hinges on array of factors

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility appears to have jumped one hurdle on the track toward restart.

But the FFTF project has landed in a political and technological swamp its supporters must hack their way through over the next 18 months.

This quagmire is filled with complicated budget calculations, classified nuclear weapons materials requirements, technical questions, fiercely protective politicians from the Northwest and the South, the prospect of hundreds of jobs and fears of the effect on environmental cleanup.

The track through the swamp goes through Washington, D.C., where it meanders through Congress and the Department of Energy.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is expected to announce this week that the FFTF should be kept in a standby mode while it is studied for production of tritium, a radioactive gas that boosts the explosive power of atomic bombs. DOE expects to decide how it will make tritium by mid- to late 1998.

O'Leary's announcement this week on FFTF will be one of her last acts before she leaves office Jan. 20.

FFTF: Decision Time



On Pages A6 & A7

The Herald takes an in-depth look at the promise many see for FFTF, and the roadblocks still to overcome in fulfilling that promise.

On an immediate basis, what it means is FFTF will remain in a dormant state, capable of being restarted. The test reactor has been shut down since 1992 after efforts to find a new mission for it failed.

Work began to decommission FFTF and

was near the point of no return when a new mission of making medical isotopes and tritium was proposed.

Workers were ready to drain the 260,000 gallons of liquid sodium from the miles of pipes in the FFTF's cooling system.

Experts say once the complicated network used to hold liquid sodium heated to 400 degrees Fahrenheit is drained, numerous structural problems could result. Reactor restart then would be too expensive.

While O'Leary is FFTF's immediate savior, its final fate will pass on to the new energy secretary — probably nominee Federico Pena.

The new secretary will have to decide how to replenish the dwindling stockpile of tritium. With tritium's half-life of 12 years, the nation's supply is expected to shrink below projected needs between 2006 and 2010.

Options to be considered for making tritium are:

- Restarting the FFTF.
- Building a linear accelerator at Savannah River, S.C. — near Aiken, S.C., and Augusta, Ga.
- Converting a commercial reactor to produce tritium. Potential sites are Georgia Power's Vogtle Plant near Augusta, Ga., and the

Please see FFTF, Page A2 ▶

Medical isotopes offer hope for many

By ANNETTE CARY
Herald staff writer

How radioisotope "smart bullets" attack cancer cells

Doctors think Nancy McLemore of Kent has been cured of what had been thought a largely incurable disease.

She was one of the first patients accepted in a University of Washington study of a new way to treat cancer using radioactive isotopes, substances most often produced in nuclear reactors.

The treatment helped McLemore after chemotherapy twice failed to halt her non-Hodgkins lymphoma. The therapy is expected to win Food and Drug Administration approval in 1998.

That's only the start, say many researchers working in nuclear medicine. They are confident lymphoma will be the first of many cancers — and, within a decade, possibly other diseases ranging from arthritis to blocked arteries — that will be treated with radioactive isotopes.

"I think the need for medical isotopes will explode as we get into the next millennium," said Dr. Robert Carretta, of Roseville, Calif., immediate past president of the American College of Nuclear Physicians.

If he's right, doctors will need a wide variety of radioactive isotopes produced in a reactor that's preferably new, big and powerful — a reactor like the now-idle Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford.

According to an October study by Stan Scott of Babcock & Wilcox Hanford Co. with other Tri-City scientists, if FFTF is given a mission of producing medical isotopes, it could provide the material to 20 million cancer patients over the next 30 years and save 100,000 lives a year.

For the Tri-Cities, it could mean a new regional industry as the international leader in cancer research and treatment, and the creation of thousands of jobs, according to the report.

It could change the United States — the largest user of medical isotopes — from a country that makes just 5 percent of the isotopes it uses, to a supplier of 50 percent of the world market.

Not everyone is so optimistic.

Whether FFTF has a future rather than being closed forever is up to the Department of Energy. Congressional delegates announced last week the decision is to keep the reactor in working condition as it is considered for producing tritium for nuclear weapons, with a possible secondary mission of producing medical isotopes.

If FFTF were shut down, it would have

"My concern is that an adverse decision from the secretary would have (had) a ripple effect over the next two decades and would make it extremely difficult for medicine to make the advances we've made over the past 25 years."

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., has said DOE previously had not been particularly supportive of medical isotope development.

The FFTF has produced 60 types of medical isotopes in the past, but in recent years reports done either by or for the DOE have either rejected or been lukewarm to the idea of making isotopes there, particularly as a primary mission.

The reactor's too big, the plan too costly, DOE has suggested. But also the future of isotopes, not just for diagnosing diseases but also for treating them, is too uncertain, the reports have variously concluded.

But many doctors and scientists believe research has progressed so rapidly it's time to reconsider.

In 1993, an independent review team that considered the shutdown of the FFTF came away impressed with the facility's capabilities to produce medical isotopes for treatment, but uncertain about the need for them.

What about the rapid development of oth-

Northwest National Laboratory senior scientist who's worked on medical isotope research. "As far as I know, the most effective new treatment is isotopes that maximize the effectiveness of radiation on cancer cells."

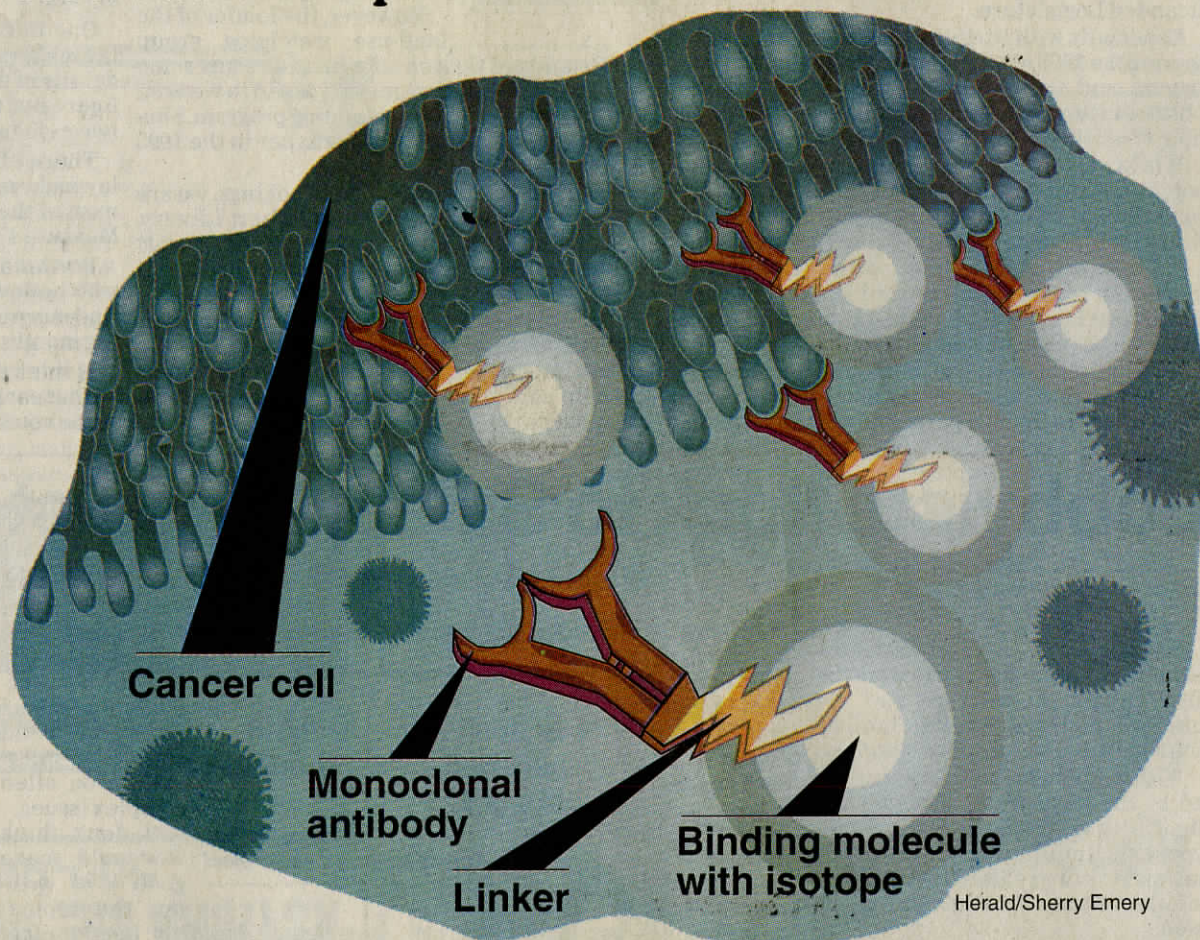
One of the difficulties doctors face in treating many types of cancer is that cancerous cells spread through the blood stream or lymphatic system and later appear in other parts of the body.

That was the trouble with the lymph cancer that first showed itself as a little knot on the side of McLemore's neck. Doctors treated her with chemotherapy, but the cancer was difficult to target because it invaded some cells in the lymph system and not others.

Killing enough cancer cells without killing too many healthy cells was difficult, and two years later the cancer was back. She underwent a second round of chemotherapy, but again cancer lurked in her body and reappeared.

In the University of Washington study, researchers cloned antibodies in mice that would seek out the cancerous cells in McLemore's body and cling to them.

The antibodies were injected into her body, carrying a cargo of radioactive iso-



similar technique to seek out and destroy cancer cells in the bone marrow of leukemia patients, has helped 14 of 15 patients in the most recent trial survive for as long as 30 months without relapse.

The technique also shows promise for liver tumors, pancreatic cancer and certain brain tumors that nearly always are fatal.

But Tom Tenforde, manager of the Hanford Radioisotopes Program at PNNL, believes the range of potential treatments is far greater than that. As the "smart bullets" become more sophisticated, they can be used to treat breast cancer, for instance, in combination with more traditional therapies like surgery and chemotherapy to wipe out cancerous cells that have begun to wander to other parts of the body.

"It is those secondary tumors that are often the killers," he said.

He also sees promise for treating the 400,000 cases of heart disease that annually require angioplasty, a surgical procedure in which a catheter is inserted into an artery to unblock it. The body responds as it would to an injury, and in trying to repair the trauma to the artery it re-blocks it in about a third of the cases.

Studies are showing that using radioactive isotopes that could be produced at the FFTF might

eliminate that problem.

Scott is projecting there would be enough demand for various medical isotopes that production at FFTF no longer would have to be subsidized by 2008. From there, the demand would climb quickly, he predicts, netting about \$400 million by 2015 and \$1.4 billion by 2025.

A business study for FFTF done by Tulane University in 1993 predicted the demand for isotopes, already in demand for industrial uses such as testing equipment for metal welds and products like common household smoke detectors, will be 10 times greater by 2002, driven by the demand for therapeutic isotopes.

Those who studied FFTF for the energy secretary in 1993 found that projection "extremely optimistic." They concluded that by 2002, FFTF could hit potential revenues from isotope production of \$22 million.

"Previous studies have not focused on therapeutic uses," said Robert Schenter, deputy program manager for the Hanford Radioisotopes Program. The previous work based projections on present isotope use, not the potential for treating cancer and other diseases.

But beyond the cost issues are humanitari-

Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility was still being built when Wanda Munn began working there in 1977.

She was a newly graduated nuclear engineer, eager to be a missionary for the profession she had come to in midlife.

That hasn't changed.

Now 65 and retired, Munn remains evangelical about the nuclear industry and the 400-megawatt FFTF, built at a cost of \$647 million and operated for a decade to test fuels and materials for advanced power plants and as an experimental reactor.

She is elated at last week's announcement that the reactor she fondly calls "BRT" for Big Round Thing, could have a new dual national mission.

The Department of Defense has concluded the United States needs to replenish its supply of tritium used for nuclear weapons. The radioactive gas is used to boost the power of nuclear bombs, but its short half-life means the U.S. stockpile will drop below what's needed between 2006 and 2010.

DOE's job is to meet Defense Department requirements in the quickest, safest and cheapest manner possible.

One possibility, at least for the near future, is FFTF, which would have been dismantled unless Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary decided it had potential as a tritium source.

Munn agreed it made scientific, technical and economic sense to keep the plant as an option, but she said common sense isn't always the determining factor in Washington, D.C.

"FFTF is the only complex in the United States which is already owned by the federal government where tritium can be manufactured safely and cost-effectively," she said.

"The plant meets both security and environmental concerns, it is where stockpiled plutonium can be burned, and where, eventually, medical isotopes can be produced to fight an array of illnesses.

"We have it all," said Munn, also a Richland city council member.

She was first introduced to the plant 11 miles north of Richland in Hanford's 400 Area in 1976, when she worked at Hanford as a summer intern

through Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Munn describes herself as "the little old lady in tennis shoes," who at age 40 was at a crossroads in life. Her 20-year marriage had collapsed, and she had two sons, an aging mother, a disabled sister and a nephew for whom she was financially and emotionally responsible.

"It was a time of reassessment for me. I realized I had spent the first half of my life fulfilling other people's goals. I decided the last half would be spent fulfilling my own."

Munn sold everything "that wasn't tied down" and set herself a goal of finishing a four-year college program in three years.

She almost made it.

But the roof on the small home she owned in Corvallis leaked, the kitchen stove and the hot water tank gave up the ghost. By 1976, her three years were up, she was out of money and she still had two terms to finish.

A \$2,500 scholarship from a Corvallis Soroptimist club replenished the peanut butter and jelly supply, paid the bills and allowed her to graduate in June 1977.

That same week, she packed up, moved into a small rental unit on Davenport Street in Richland and began a career dedicated to FFTF.

"It was a perfect time for me to arrive," she said. "Construction was well under way. There was excitement about the opportunities ahead. One of the highlights of my life was standing on a board that was placed across the top of the reactor, which held simulated core assemblies, so that when the hot sodium was pumped through we could get readings," she said.

Nearly every day of the almost two decades Munn worked at Hanford was spent dedicated in one way or another to the sodium-cooled reactor.

The reactor was built to support a multi-billion-dollar breeder reactor research program.

Along the way, the people who worked at FFTF earned Hanford's best operating record.

Over time, 50,000 oxide fuel pins were tested to

burn-ups greater than four times that obtained in light-water reactors. Design lifetimes of control rods were doubled as a result of other tests. Isotope production was studied and demonstrated.

In 1986, the FFTF produced gadolinium-153, which is used today to diagnose osteoporosis. Later still, other isotopes were produced for cancer treatment and diagnostic research for heart and brain studies.

FFTF also was used for research and testing of alloys and other materials for potential space power use. Further, an international research program was done to develop materials for use in fusion power systems.

When Congress stopped work on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor project, FFTF and its nearly \$100 million annual operating budget became pointless.

Thus began an unsuccessful two-year effort by then Washington Gov. Booth Gardner, the Northwest congressional delegation and DOE to find international funding for FFTF's operation.

The marketing effort identified potential customers in Europe and Japan. But the countries wanted a commitment from DOE to long-term operation of the plant. DOE wouldn't make such a pledge, and the marketing effort fell short of DOE's target of \$40 million to help offset costs.

DOE told Westinghouse Hanford Co., the plant manager, to put it on standby in April 1992 but to keep it capable of restart.

About 18 months later, O'Leary ordered permanent closure.

That process had begun when DOE realized in late 1995 that its study showing FFTF to be too old to make tritium was faulty.

O'Leary ordered another round of reviews, including an examination by the prominent scientific JASON panel. She told Washington congressional leaders last week that FFTF will make the agency's short list of options and promised a formal announcement this week.

"I know this sounds hokey, but that plant represented the future of the world ... of who we are and what we're doing. It epitomizes the good of the nuclear industry."

Leading physicians sold on promise of isotope production

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility is a hidden treasure well worth preserving.

That's the view of Dr. Robert Carretta of Roseville, Calif., immediate past president of the American College of Nuclear Physicians and a specialist in treating bone cancers.

"If that reactor can be converted for the dual use of tritium production for defense programs, and later, to produce a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic medical isotopes, we all benefit," Carretta said in a telephone interview.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary is expected this week to confirm that FFTF will remain an option for tritium production.

"Why invent the wheel when FFTF can do it all?" he asked.

The United States relies on Canada for 90 percent of its medical isotopes — an unhealthy dependency, Carretta said.

"We depend on Canada's goodwill for the vast majority of our isotopes ... and to get them, we pay more. We need not do that," he said.

He has joined colleagues from around the nation urging O'Leary to consider carefully the need for new isotope production as she pondered FFTF's fate.

"There's a whole host of diagnostic studies that can only be done through the use of isotopes," he said. "FFTF could provide a combination of isotopes to meet this nation's needs in the year 2000 and beyond.

"By doing that, we can improve the quality of life and slow the progress of disease," he said.

Carretta believes the Food and Drug Administration will, within five years, approve use of iso-

topes that will travel through the body, seeking and destroying cancer cells — the kinds of "smart bullets" that can come from FFTF.

He worries, however, that political and economic pressures on DOE "may make it difficult for the department to provide the quality and quantity of medical isotopes this country needs."

"In the past, it has been shown that medical needs are secondary to the governmental needs," he added.

Many in medicine would like to see a public-private partnership for isotope production.

"That would give us the best of both worlds," he said.

"This is the next frontier We need to have a greater awareness of the role medical isotopes and the FFTF can play in that frontier," he said.

"I'm glad I'm not in (O'Leary's) shoes," Munn said. "Because her shoes are political. She has received advice and information from all levels, which is contradictory in the extreme and politically loaded.

"If she makes the decision based on economics, safety and the lowest impact to the public and the environment, FFTF comes out on top," Munn said.

One of the pluses for the reactor is the nearby and near-new Fuels and Materials Examination Facility where fuel would be made for FFTF, Munn said.

"Having FMEF is wonderful because one of the problems people have with radioactive materials is transportation. FMEF takes care of that issue."

The facility originally was designed for nuclear materials processing, but none has ever been done there, she added.

FMEF — as it is called in Hanford's acronym-happy lingo — is a 250,000-square-foot building with about half of it a processing area and the rest mostly administrative and support offices.

The \$300 million structure originally was designed for post-irradiation examination of FFTF fuel and test assemblies. In 1988, it was selected to assemble radioisotope thermoelectric generators for the nation's space program to provide electrical power for deep-space probes or for earth sites where solar or battery power is not practical.

That mission also was terminated.

"It's time to stop terminating programs and projects," Munn said. "It should start with FFTF."

"To this day, just driving over the rise in the road and seeing that dome lifts my spirits," she said. "I know this sounds hokey, but that plant represented the future of the world ... of who we are and what we're doing. It epitomizes the good of the nuclear industry."

It's also an example of what nuclear engineers and others in the nuclear industry don't do well, she said.

"It distresses me that as technical people we haven't been able to convey our vision to non-technical folks. We have allowed politics and semantics to keep us from doing that. It's one of the reasons I'm fighting so hard now to make people understand what a loss it would be to pull the plug."

officials in Aiken and Augusta until about a month ago.

"We received no communication on it at all. Obviously, different sides of the country are being told different things on tritium production," said John Stone, press aide for U.S. Rep. Charlie Norwood, R-Ga., whose district includes Augusta.

Even Southern opponents of tritium production didn't hear about the FFTF option until recently.

The FFTF "is barely a blip on the radar screen down here," said Brian Costner, director of the Energy Research Foundation, a citizen watchdog group based in Columbia, S.C., that opposes tritium production at the 310-square-mile Savannah River site.

Officials from Savannah River, which produced tritium from 1950 to 1988 in now-closed reactors, are not impressed with the idea of the FFTF as a tritium source.

"No place in the country has more knowledge about tritium than this site," said Mike Butler, director of Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness, a pro-nuclear group in South Carolina and Georgia.

Like the Tri-Cities, most of the Aiken-Augusta population is solidly behind tritium production. The area would gain 1,350 construction jobs and at least 600 permanent jobs with an accelerator.

There is some opposition to a tritium mission in the South, but apparently not as strong or as organized as in the Northwest.

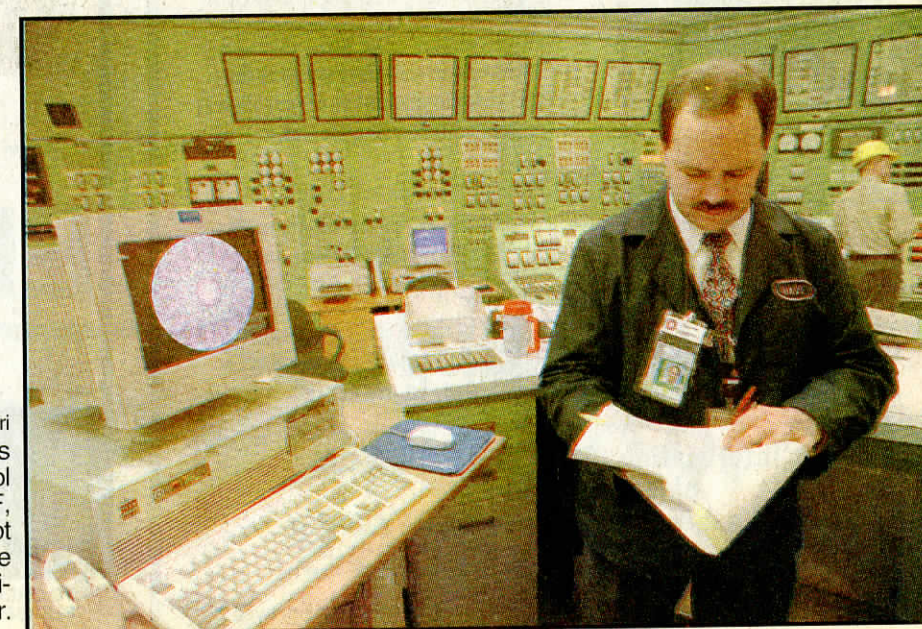
The South Carolina and Georgia congressional delegations solidly support tritium production, while the Northwest's congressional delegation is split. Oregon representatives don't want the FFTF option, while Washington's support it.

Politically, that may give the Southern proposals an edge. However, there is not unanimity of opinion on which Southern option is the best.

Stone, Cavanaugh and Butler said Savannah River supporters are nervous about an accelerator for a couple of reasons: A machine that size would be experimental, which could delay the projected 2006 startup date. And the price tag — \$9.9 billion to build and operate through 2030 — could cause a future Congress to slash funding.

Savannah River backers originally wanted to build a multipurpose reactor that would produce tritium and electricity, as well as burn plutonium.

But DOE didn't like the multipurpose reactor because linking the destruction of plutonium with the creation of tritium appeared to violate nuclear nonproliferation treaties.



Herald/André Ranieri
David Tate stands watch in the control room of FFTF, which will be kept in a standby mode as a potential tritium producer.

Panel discusses plans to provide radiation estimates

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Perhaps as early as November, people who lived downwind from Hanford between 1944 and 1970 will be able to find out how much radiation they received.

A panel of radiation and health experts met Tuesday in Richland to discuss plans to provide downwinders with estimates of how much radiation they may have received from Hanford releases.

The panel — dubbed the Oversight Committee for the Individual Dose Assessment Project — represents the state health agencies of Washington, Oregon and Idaho, the federal Centers for Disease Control and members of the old Technical Steering Panel of the Hanford Dose Reconstruction Project.

The panel is trying to finish work done by the Hanford Dose Reconstruction Project, whose technical panel disbanded in late 1995.

That original panel supervised Battelle-Northwest when it calculated how much radiation was released intentionally and unintentionally from Hanford into the air, rivers and food chains.

Individual dose estimates will be used in a parallel study by Seattle's Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center aimed at determining if releases of iodine 131 can be linked to thyroid cancers in downwinders.

So far, 2,863 medical exams have been done in that study, with a goal of 3,200 or more exams, according to the center. The exams are expected to be completed between September and November 1997, with a final report scheduled in fall 1998.

The main way people were exposed to Hanford radiation was through the food chain. For instance: short-lived radioactive particles

landed on grass, which cows ate, and people drank milk from the cows.

The complex calculations in determining doses must consider wind patterns, dairy and pasture locations, residents' eating and drinking habits, radiation release dates and other factors.

Calculations on overall exposure were completed and published in 1994. The panel now is addressing the next step in the process: setting up a way for people to find out how much radiation they received.

As envisioned, advertisements would be run that ask downwinders to call their state health agency. Health department employees would mail a questionnaire to the downwinder.

Questionnaire answers would be analyzed by computer to estimate the individual's radiation dose, and the results would be returned to that person.

Individualized results likely will not be exact, and margins of error may vary from very narrow to very wide, cautioned Steve West, chief of the Idaho Health Department's bureau of environmental health and safety.

The system should be able to handle most downwinders, but likely will not work well for some people — mostly Indians — who ate large amounts of fish from the Columbia River downstream from Hanford.

Indians not only usually eat more fish than non-Indians, they also eat

the native fish, which causes dose



O'Leary

By JOHN STANG
and WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writers

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary on Wednesday formally extended the life of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

O'Leary described the Hanford reactor as a "safety net" in the nation's tritium production plans as she announced it will remain available until at least 1998.

The decision will require several million dollars more over the next two years to pay for extra studies and safety measures in case the FFTF is started up again as early as 2000. The FFTF now employs about 370 people but could have up to 1,000 if resurrected.

O'Leary said the FFTF will be studied primarily as a backup to the Department of Energy's top two tritium production options — building an accelerator

or converting a commercial reactor, both in the South.

The study will end in 1998, when DOE is to make its final decision on the FFTF, accelerator and commercial reactor options.

O'Leary's announcement echoes what she told Washington's congressional delegation last week — the dormant FFTF will stay in a standby condition for more study.

Tritium boosts the explosive power of

nuclear bombs. But tritium's short half-life means the nation's supply is expected to shrink below the country's needs between 2006 and 2010.

For now, O'Leary said the FFTF is not to be considered as a substitute for converting a commercial reactor or building an accelerator — which shoots protons at a metal target to knock loose neutrons to be transformed into tritium.

She said producing medical isotopes

would be added to the FFTF's mission if it is revived.

FFTF supporters want tritium production as a short-term mission to get the reactor on line to eventually switch to making medical isotopes. As that happens, the tritium mission would be phased out and turned over to an accelerator or converted commercial reactor. Washington's political support for

Please see FFTF, Page A2

Northwest

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Tuesday, Jan. 21, 1997 Tri-City Herald

Fluor to send out 180 layoff notices

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

About 180 Hanford workers are expected to receive layoff notices this week.

The layoffs are to be the first of about 500 the Fluor Daniel team has said it would lay off in 1997.

It is undetermined yet which day the notices — giving 60 days warning — will go out this week, said Fluor Daniel spokeswoman Penny Phelps.

The 180 cuts will be spread across the 13-company team headed by Fluor Daniel Hanford.

And it is unknown yet when the next stage of Fluor Daniel's layoffs will occur, she said.

The layoffs are driven by federal budget restraints, changes in work projects and Hanford's reorganization under new lead contractor Fluor Daniel.

This week's notices will be the latest in several rounds of Hanford layoffs since late 1994,

when Hanford employed about 18,700. By December 1996, about 5,600 had been laid off or retired.

In November, the Fluor Daniel team, Bechtel Hanford Inc. and Battelle-Northwest speculated they might combine for up to 750 additional job cuts in 1997.

This is how those predictions are unfolding:

■ Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel Hanford, told employees Monday in a memo to expect 180 notices this week. And the memo said possibly up to 500 employees — including the first 180 — are still likely for this year.

■ Bechtel originally predicted 100 layoffs in December and another 100 later in 1997.

Bechtel notified 65 people in December that they would be laid off. Bechtel still expects to lay off some people later this year, but the number is uncertain, said spokesman Rick Dale.

Those figures depend on the scope of environmental restoration work Bechtel will do in 1997.

■ Battelle expects to lay off a handful — possibly up to 50 people — in 1997.

But its calculations await work load and budget figures from Fluor. And since only about one quarter of Battelle's work is Hanford-related, it has some flexibility to shift people facing layoffs to non-Hanford projects.

Consequently, Fluor and Bechtel are prepared to cut 245 jobs in early 1997 — bringing the total of Hanford layoffs since 1994 to between 5,800 and 5,900.

Laid-off workers at Fluor Daniel Hanford and its six "inside-the-fence" subcontractors — companies that are totally Hanford-oriented — will receive severance packages that are about the same as laid-off workers received in 1996, Phelps said.

Under that plan, severance pay would be based on one week pay for each year worked up to 26 weeks. It also would include some sort of continued medical benefits and help with training to find new jobs.

Workers laid off from the six "enterprise"

companies would receive similar severance packages, Phelps said.

The enterprise companies are spinoffs from six of the seven "inside-the-fence" corporations. The enterprise firms handle mostly Hanford work but are trying to wean themselves away eventually to tackle mostly non-Hanford work years from now.

The six enterprise companies are structured so their personnel policies reflect their national-level parent corporations more than Hanford's personnel policies.

Enterprise company employees will receive information detailing their individual firms' layoff processes, Hatch wrote in his memo.

Hatch also wrote Fluor will try to determine if some of the laid-off workers with needed skills might be rehired for other Hanford work — adding this will be not possible for all those laid off.

Also, if specific skills are unavailable in the current work force, new employees with those skills may be brought in, he wrote.

O'Leary officially extends FFTF's life

By JOHN STANG
and WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writers

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary on Wednesday formally extended the life of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

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High-tech lab in Richland signs lease for future

By MELISSA O'NEIL
Herald staff writer

A lease agreement signed Thursday puts a high-tech laboratory closer to helping entrepreneurs test their theories on treating real environmental waste as they develop new Tri-City businesses.

Two steps remain before the Advanced Process Engineering Laboratory is official, said Bob Rosselli. He's the assistant manager of science and technology with the U.S. Department of Energy in Richland — the five-paragraph letter.

He said what's left to do is to approve the final lease agreement and to release \$3.5 million in federal grant money to pay for the renovation of a north Richland warehouse.

The concept is to support new businesses, college research and pilot projects with a place where theories can be applied to real waste materials, such as contaminated soil or water. Materials not allowed include explosives, radioactive waste, mixes of radioactive and other wastes, and biological or chemical warfare agents.

The laboratory — known by its acronym, APEL — is a joint project with the Port of Benton, city of Richland, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, the Washington Public Power Supply System and Washington State University at Tri-Cities.

"I think people are on a fast track," Rosselli said. "My hope would be that before the end of January, we're in a position to publicly go forward."

Chuck Allen, PNNL's project manager for the new laboratory, said the goal now is for space to be available in mid-November

the contracts and legal aspects before giving APEL a thumbs-up.

"We've come to what we think is a fair price and is a good idea for all involved," Allen said.

Annual rent fees range from \$8 per square foot for an unimproved "dry" lab area to \$28 per square foot for a "wet" lab with special ventilation systems for chemicals. Also available will be space for offices and large "high bay" and chemical storage.

Allen said he's ready to start seeking bids for design and construction work

"It's taken awhile to get here, obviously. The neat thing about it is you've got the whole community working together for a common goal that provides jobs and will benefit the economy of the area."

— Chuck Allen,
PNNL's project manager
for the new laboratory

the lab, where the main tenants will be PNNL and WSU Tri-Cities, said port Executive Director Ben Bennett. The port also plans to help pay for the renovation with a \$1.5 million bond, which doesn't require voter approval because it will be paid off with APEL revenues.

Officials believe the laboratory will help the Tri-City economy by attracting businesses and creating commercial products. One of APEL's requirements is for successful inventors to establish their companies in the Tri-Cities.

"It's taken awhile to get here, obviously," Allen said of the three-year process.

"The neat thing about it is you've got the whole community working together for a common goal that provides jobs and will benefit the economy of the area."

"If we can get the community working together as well on other things as well as APEL, that's

Northwest

A3

Thursday, Jan. 23, 1997 Tri-City Herald

Battelle given high marks for 1995-96

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy gave Battelle-Northwest an "excellent" rating for the 1995-1996 fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

An "excellent" is the second highest of five possible grades. The grades will determine Battelle's fee for 1995-96, which still has to be determined. The potential fee ranges from \$9 million to \$17 million.

"They improved on what they did last year," said Bob Rosselli, DOE's manager for science and technology.

"I want to publicly thank the staff for its work in a difficult year. ... It's a great tribute to all the folks who put in the long hours to make all that happen," said Battelle Director Bill Madia.

Rosselli said a direct comparison with Battelle's grades in 1994-95 is impossible because the grading and award system changed as part of a federal push for contract reform. For 1994-95, Battelle received \$11.7 million.

A major change is that Battelle received a fixed fee in 1994-95. For 1995-96, its fee will be about 50 percent fixed and 50 percent based on its meeting performance goals.

And in 1996-97, the fee will be entirely based on meeting performance goals.

Meanwhile, for 1995-96, three-quarters of Battelle's rating depended on its performance in six categories.

Another quarter depended on how Battelle set up a system for Battelle-Northwest, DOE, independent auditors and Battelle Memorial

Institute to evaluate how problems are identified and fixed at the Richland lab.

Battelle received a rating of "good" — the middle of five possible grades — on this "integrated assessment" program worth a quarter of the overall grade.

A letter from DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner to Battelle said the lab has a good integrated assessment plan in place but needs work in getting it fully functional. Madia said it would take one to two years to accomplish that.

The six categories accounting for three-quarters of the grade were:

■ Developing the Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory. The grade was "excellent."

■ Developing and deploying new environ-

mental technologies. The grade was "outstanding," the highest possible rating.

■ Science and productivity. The grade was "outstanding." Several national research awards received by Battelle scientists contributed to the ratings in the this category and the environmental technologies category. Improved cost efficiency also was a factor.

■ Environmental safety and health. The grade was "excellent." Improvements were noted in maintenance, lost work days and decreasing overtime.

■ Leadership and management. The grade was "excellent."

■ Economic development. The grade was "outstanding." Battelle helped in the creation of 10 new businesses with 37 new technology-based jobs.

Fluor Daniel sends 180 layoff letters

By the Herald staff

Fluor Daniel made its layoff plans official Wednesday, sending notices to 180 Hanford workers.

The notices — 60 days advance warning of the job cuts — were spread across most, if not all, of the 13 companies coordinated by Fluor Daniel Hanford.

It is the first group of approximately 500 layoffs Fluor Daniel expects in 1997. It is unknown when others will occur.

The other pieces of the jobs picture at Hanford include:

■ Battelle-Northwest, so far, anticipates no layoffs in 1997.

Battelle's non-Hanford work — about three quarters of its workload — is increasing, said director Bill Madia.

The Hanford portion is a question mark, pending Battelle receiving budget calculations from Fluor. Madia is optimistic Hanford-related job cuts will be avoided.

He noted some nuclear-related work has increased. The Fast Flux Test Facility staying in a standby mode, for example, means more work.

■ Bechtel Hanford sent 60-day layoff notices to 65 people in December.

It expects more layoffs later, but the numbers will depend on how much environmental cleanup work Bechtel has to tackle.

State cool to nuclear lawsuit

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Washington likely won't join a lawsuit contemplated by 27 other states to force the federal government to take ownership of commercial nuclear waste by next year.

The reason: The state doesn't want to spook the federal government into again looking at Hanford as a site for the dump.

A lawsuit could send Department of Energy officials on a wild search that could lead them to the already heavily contaminated Hanford reservation, said Jay Manning, senior Washington assistant attorney general.

The states want the federal government to build a dump for spent fuel from commercial nuclear power plants, or to stop collecting money to build one.

Hastings hears Fluor, contractor concerns

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Both sides are voicing cautious optimism Mid-Columbia construction contractors and Fluor Daniel can peaceably coexist after meeting Friday with U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings.

The Fourth District Republican joined Fluor officials, representatives from construction unions and contractors and Department of Energy officials at the meeting in Richland.

"There a lot of things we need to talk about. But we're talking now. They pretty much agreed with almost everything we had to say," said Peter McMillin, president of Zygotech Inc. of Richland.

Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel Hanford, the company that coordinates a 13-company team that recently took over

operating Hanford, said significant progress was made Friday.

Attendees Hastings, DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner, Hatch and Fluor Daniel Northwest president Stew Heaton.

Construction officials at the meeting represented at least 80 Mid-Columbia companies and several unions and construction associations.

The meeting was prompted by Mid-Columbia construction contractors voicing fears they are being squeezed out of Hanford work by the new "enterprise" companies at Hanford.

Six of the 13 Fluor team's corporations are "enterprise" companies — spinoff firms charged with growing independent of federal work at Hanford.

But these enterprise companies currently rely heavily on Hanford work until they can



Hatch

as a potential competitor with an unfair inside track on Hanford work.

But Hatch said Fluor Daniel Northwest won't compete with local construction firms, but hire local companies — such as Kaiser did when it filled a similar role.

Fluor Daniel Northwest's mission is to expand because its mandate is be a perma-

nean themselves.

The enterprise company with the highest profile is Fluor Daniel Northwest, which took over the architectural and construction engineering role at Hanford formerly held by ICF Kaiser Hanford Co.

Several outside contractors have viewed Fluor Daniel Northwest

as a potential competitor with an unfair inside track on Hanford work.

That means it must find work outside of the Mid-Columbia, with other Fluor Daniel companies worldwide among potential customers, Hatch said.

If that expansion occurs, even more work could be subcontracted to Tri-City firms, Hatch said.

But Mid-Columbia firms also worry about a shrinking amount of work open to competition at Hanford.

Hatch and McMillin gave slightly different figures on what is expected at Hanford.

Hatch said the potential work local construction firms can bid on will drop from \$45 million in fiscal year 1996 to about \$40 million in fiscal 1997.

McMillin said the estimates are for that work to decrease from \$38.3 million in fiscal

1996 to \$37.1 million in fiscal 1997.

A dispute still exists on Fluor's policy of awarding contracts based on closed bids. The construction contractors want open bids — a practice they had convinced Kaiser to accept.

With open bids, all bidders attend the bid opening, instantly know the amounts of all bids and get a good idea of why the loser failed. With closed bids, bidders don't know what the losing bids were.

Fluor's worldwide corporate policy is closed bids, which Fluor Daniel Hanford and Fluor Daniel Northwest will follow, Hatch said.

But Hatch said Fluor will make its debriefing sessions for bidders more detailed than in the past. McMillin said the construction firms will still push for open bids.

Report warns level of Hanford cesium higher than thought

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A draft report indicates the amount of radioactive cesium 137 beneath Hanford's SX tank farm could be five to 11 times greater than originally believed.

This means one major cleanup problem in central Hanford could be bigger and more complicated than originally thought.

Preliminary calculations by the Los Alamos National Laboratory show the volume of underground cesium could range from 56,000 gallons to 111,000 gallons, said Steve Agnew, project leader for the Los Alamos study commission by former Hanford contractor Westinghouse Hanford Co.

The estimate officially on the Department of Energy's books is 10,000 gallons of cesium 137, a figure dating back to 1965.

Agnew and Jackson Kinzer, DOE's assistant manager for the tank farms, stressed Agnew's draft report has not been reviewed yet by peer scientists or DOE.

"I wouldn't bet a week's pay on it until we have a chance to review it," Kinzer said.

Agnew said a final report should be ready soon for the proper reviews.

Also Agnew said he believes his computer models are sounder than

the assumptions made when the 10,000-gallon figure was calculated.

This means the underground cesium contamination is worse than DOE discussed in December when results from another study were announced, argued Tom Carpenter, an attorney with the Government Accountability Project, which represents whistleblowers.

And he said this created suspicions about the accuracy of the current technical data on the cesium contamination in the underground area between bottoms of central Hanford's underground radioactive waste tanks and the ground water.

So far, the cesium has been tracked to 130 feet beneath the surface. The ground water level is 210 feet deep.

Carpenter said more study is needed.

Kinzer agreed.

But Kinzer said the extra study needs to be mapped out methodically with cost-effectiveness in mind.

Kinzer said questions still remain on if the underground cesium is moving, how much is moving through ground and how much is moving through underground pipes, and the characteristics of the subsurface soil.

These questions need to be answered before an environmental fix-it plan can be created to tackle the contamination, Kinzer said.

Your review is requested on the ...

HANFORD

CLEANUP

Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis for the 233-S Plutonium Concentration Facility

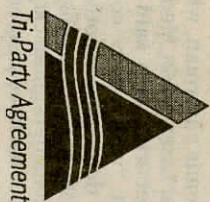
An Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis is being issued for public review that outlines the removal alternatives for the 233-S Plutonium Concentration Facility. This facility was used for plutonium production. The preferred alternative for the facility is to decontaminate and demolish the structures and dispose of associated wastes. This alternative is protective of human health and the environment. Public review begins January 27, 1997 and ends February 25, 1997.

To request a copy of the ESD or for further information contact:

Pamela Innis
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
712 Swift Avenue, Suite 5
Richland, WA 99352
(509) 376-4919

OR CALL TOLL FREE:
Hanford Cleanup Line
1-800-321-2008

The Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis may be reviewed at:



RICHLAND
U.S. Department of Energy Reading Room
Washington State University, Tri-Cities
100 Sprout Road, Room 130 West
(509) 376-8583
Attn: Terri Traub

Public review period ends February 25, 1997

PNNL program hopes to attract new businesses

By MELISSA O'NEIL

Herald staff writer

It's an industrial-strength incentive to buy into the Tri-Cities.

Manufacturing and technology companies that announce formal plans to move to the Tri-Cities will now get three hours of technical services for each full-time family-wage job they create.

The program is courtesy of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, operated by Battelle-Northwest for the Department of Energy. The services are valued at about \$90 per hour.

That's 225 hours — worth about \$20,000 — for a company like Precision Castparts of Portland, which announced in December its plans to build a metal castings finishing plant this year in north Richland.

Tri-City business recruiters believe PNNL's proposal could give the Tri-Cities an edge in the fight to lure businesses.

"We're definitely taking them up on the offer," Dick Greenberg, Tri-City Industrial Development Council president, said Monday. "I think it could be a critical difference.

This just helps us be a lot more competitive."

TRIDEC is in the business of recruiting businesses, with the goal of building a more stable and diverse Tri-City economy in the aftermath of cutbacks in the Hanford nuclear cleanup effort. After an estimated 500 pink slips are delivered this year, Hanford's work force will have dropped by about 5,900 jobs in two years. In late 1994, the site employed about 18,700 people.

Free use of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory engineers and scientists might convince some companies to move to the Mid-Columbia, said Adrian Roberts, PNNL economic development office director. "I think we're seeing some really big progress being made in the recruiting area. This now provides another element of attack."

Criteria for the program include a company siting commitment verified by TRIDEC, city or port officials, with permanent jobs paying at least \$26,000 a year — about \$12.50 per hour.

And technical support doesn't mean hooking up a phone line.

Please see PNNL, Page A2▶

Northwest

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Tuesday, Jan. 28, 1997 Tri-City Herald

Get rid of DOE land faster, report says

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The General Accounting Office believes the Department of Energy is not moving fast enough to get rid of its nonessential lands — including a third of Hanford.

However, the recently released GAO report is vague on what DOE should do with two specific segments of Hanford — Wahluke Slope and Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve.

Two options being considered are turning the land over to private owners or to the Department of Interior.

The GAO — Congress' investigative arm — looked at DOE's lands at Hanford, Oak Ridge, Tenn., and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

The GAO concluded DOE has no use for 216 square miles of Hanford, which totals

about 560 square miles. Also, the GAO said DOE has no use for 242 square miles at INEL and 25 square miles at Oak Ridge.

The GAO contends all these lands have a total potential sales price of \$73 million — based on fair market value estimates.

However, a DOE memo stated that estimate is too high — citing the lack of available irrigation water and the presence of sensitive species at the Hanford sites.

The Hanford sites include 122 square miles of Wahluke Slope's 139 square miles and 94 square miles of ALE's 120 square miles.

The GAO agrees with DOE that small parts of Wahluke Slope and ALE need to remain under DOE control as safety buffer zones for the handling and storage of radioactive substances in central Hanford.

Currently, DOE has decided to keep ALE but is arranging for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage it as a habitat refuge.

Wahluke Slope, including the Hanford

Reach, is the object of a major dispute on whether local governments or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should control that area.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., has introduced a bill to put the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in charge of the river corridor. The commissioners of Benton, Franklin and Grant counties have an advisory panel preparing a counterproposal.

The same dispute exists over Wahluke Slope. But no formal federal control plan has surfaced. In 1996, the three counties sent proposed legislation — for them to take over Wahluke Slope — to Murray, U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton and U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings. That proposal was never introduced.

Meanwhile, the GAO report concluded:

■ DOE hangs on to nonessential lands unless an outside agency or local community voices interest. The GAO report does not state how fast it believes DOE should dispose of nonessential lands.

■ DOE should get rid of most of ALE and Wahluke Slope.

■ If DOE got rid of 67 square miles of Wahluke Slope, that would reduce its annual payments in lieu of taxes by \$700,000. If DOE relinquishes ownership of 80 square miles of ALE, its annual PILT payment would drop by \$230,000.

■ The cost of the land-disposal red tape would be significant but is undetermined.

Meanwhile, DOE disagreed with many GAO conclusions.

Antonio Tavares, director of DOE's Office of Project and Fixed Asset Management, wrote a memo to GAO:

■ Disagreeing with what GAO considers good land management and with what GAO considers nonessential lands.

■ Contending DOE is in the process of disposing of legitimately nonessential lands.

■ Stating GAO has not considered the ecological assets of these lands.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1997

Energy secretary nominee invited to Hanford

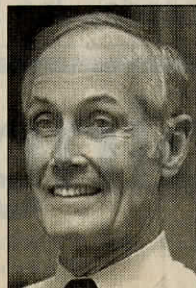
By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Federico Pena, the nominee for Secretary of Energy, has been invited to visit Hanford as soon as possible.

Pena indicated he would do so, although he did not set a date, said U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton, who extended the invitation.

Gorton, R-Wash., talked with Pena for about 30 minutes Tuesday to prepare for a Thursday confirmation hearing before the Senate's Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Gorton is a committee member.



Gorton

views on any of the subjects we discussed. He's still in the learning process," Gorton said in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C.

So far, Pena has not voiced any opinions on Hanford-related issues — such as the fate of the Fast Flux Test Facility and environmental cleanup in general.

"He has not expressed firm

Pena, a former mayor of Denver, was Transportation Secretary in President Clinton's first term.

Gorton's committee is tentatively scheduled in the second week of February to vote whether to confirm Pena. Gorton hopes the entire Senate will vote on Pena's appointment by Feb. 14.

Gorton is confident Pena will be confirmed.

There are some qualms in Washington, D.C., about Pena's lack of experience in energy issues, but no major opposition, Gorton said.

"I'm not certain if a lack of knowledge is a tremendous drawback.

There's at least a reasonable expectation that Secretary Pena will approach these challenges with an open mind. I don't mind him starting with an open mind," Gorton said.

He said Pena sees himself as an active cabinet member, not as a caretaker for a dying agency.

In the past, DOE has been routinely targeted for dismantling, especially by budget-trimming Republicans. Gorton does not expect serious attacks this year.

Besides the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Pena is expected to appear next week before

the Senate's Armed Services Committee, which tracks DOE nuclear weapons programs.

Pena could get questions thrown at him from across the political spectrum — especially on the FFTE and other DOE issues.

Gorton supports restarting FFTE, then using the reactor at first to produce tritium, a radioactive gas used to boost the power of nuclear weapons, and later as a source of cancer-fighting medical isotopes.

But Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., an opponent of resurrecting the FFTE, also is on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. And new Sen.

Gordon Smith, R-Ore., is on that committee as well. Smith has not taken a public stance on the FFTE. But Oregon's political leaders have been solidly against reviving it.

Two other Northwest senators, Conrad Burns, R-Mont., and Larry Craig, R-Idaho, also are on the committee.

Meanwhile, the Senate Armed Services Committee is chaired by Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., an influential opponent of reviving the Hanford reactor.

Thurmond supports building an accelerator to be a long-term tritium source in South Carolina.

Briefly

Washington Senate supports FFTF

OLYMPIA — The Washington state Senate lent its support Wednesday to a proposal for restarting the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford.

Both parties endorsed a measure declaring Senate support for the reactor's restart. The memorial — a resolution that doesn't change law but makes a statement — was introduced by state Sens. Pat Hale, R-Kennewick, and Valoria Loveland, D-Pasco.

Hale said the resolution sends a clear message to Congress. "It shows a political will and support," she said.

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings agreed. "Passing this memorial is really a significant step," he said.

The FFTF was targeted for closure until former Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary recommended earlier this month that the experimental reactor be kept on standby until Congress decides whether to restart it.

Last writes slated for Reach newsletter

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

The Hanford Reach newspaper has been providing Hanford workers with Hanford site news since 1990.

But no more. The sitewide weekly tabloid newsletter is going out of business, with its final edition scheduled for February.

The Reach began as a way for Hanford contractors to reach their workers with news about the site.

Its replacement — whatever it ends up being — will instead be targeted for delivery to — but not limited to — "opinion leaders" in Washington state and in Washington, D.C., said Nolan Curtis, chief spokesman for Fluor Daniel, the firm that has managed Hanford since Oct. 1. No funding has been provided yet for any replacement.

The change, Curtis said, is driven by the need for the Department of Energy to change how it communicates what progress is being made on the environmental cleanup at Hanford.

"Under the predecessor's contract, there was a need for a specific kind of communication vehicle, and the Reach did that job well. It grew from being a Westinghouse organ only to providing communications to employees sitewide," Curtis said.

"But in the context we find ourselves in now, DOE has the need and opportunity to present its Hanford story ... to say what we are about. We are tasked with assisting DOE with presenting the Hanford story in one voice," he said.

"We are looking at something that would be a journal of progress and of major issues," Curtis added.

Just exactly what that new communication tool will look like is evolving, said Karen Randolph, director of DOE's office of external affairs.

"We certainly will have employee communication ... It might be something that's monthly, and it most certainly will include greater use of our on-site electronic mail," she said.

"We are looking to save money," Randolph said. "And we are looking to have a more effective communication tool, and that's not to say the Reach hasn't been wonderful. It has been a first-class publication with good writing and good stories.

"But now it's time to look at a different mode of communication ... something we can do with fewer dollars."

The Reach became Hanford's official newsletter in 1990. Its name, chosen from 300 entries, was suggested by Carolyn Bellis,

who beat out such colorful suggestions as "How the Waste was Won," "Tanks for the Memories," "It's Saudi Duty Time," and "We've Got Our Ship Together."

Nolan didn't know what the Reach's budget was last year. But it costs about \$40,000 annually to print — a contract that will expire in February.

In addition, there have been 3½ full-time employees dedicated to putting out the Reach. Some of the Reach staff were laid off in Hanford's latest work force reduction.

The Reach has been one of the products produced by the office of external affairs, which Curtis now oversees for Fluor. He emphasized that "communicating with employees will remain an extremely high priority of this office and this organization. But we must look at other ways to do that in terms of being cost effective."

Experts mull sites for Hanford historical plan

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A draft master plan for historical research at Hanford is expected to be ready for public comment in March.

But it is undetermined if an actual public hearing will be held in the Tri-Cities on a proposal to consolidate Hanford's historical preservation research to approximately 180 buildings.

The final plan is expected to be released in four phases in late 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000.

A panel of Hanford historical experts met Wednesday in Richland with about 15 members of the public to discuss the plan.

Hanford has about 2,000 Cold War struc-

tures. Normally, historians research each site as it is decontaminated and destroyed.

This is an unwieldy and expensive — expected to cost \$26 million to \$46 million over 20 years.

The new plan is to concentrate historical research on about 180 buildings during the next four years, selecting the best cross-section of relevant sites. The new price tag is expected to be \$2.2 million.

Last year, the panel selected about 180 buildings in Hanford north of Richland.

But people at a November informational meeting protested the public never had a say in selecting those 180 buildings.

Federal laws require only a panel of historical experts need to be involved in this selection.

And it is too late to hold public sessions on trimming the 2,000 Hanford buildings to 180, said Tom Marceau, Bechtel Hanford Inc.'s cultural resources manager, and Dee Lloyd the Department of Energy's manager of its cultural resources program.

Meanwhile, DOE wants to add the 1100 Area — the finger of Hanford sticking into Richland — and the 700 Area — the handful of government buildings in downtown Richland near the Federal Building — to the consolidated historical research proposal. That is to prepare to eventually turn those buildings over to the federal General Services Administration.

On Wednesday, the panel discussed nine 700 Area buildings and selected one — a radiation-related surgery facility near

Kadlec Medical Center — to add to the 180.

The panel plans to discuss 34 sites in the 1100 Area at 10 a.m. Monday at a yet-unselected spot.

Barb Kubik, a self-employed Tri-City historian, voiced concerns DOE did not hold a public hearing before selecting the original 180 buildings.

She noted the most significant sites are in central Hanford and along the Columbia River. And Hanford's 700 and 1100 Area buildings are not at the same level of historical interest, she said.

When the draft historical plan is released in March, the public will have 60 days to submit written comments. If DOE receives a significant number of comments, it might hold a public hearing, Lloyd and Marceau said.

A public meeting is tentatively set in Tacoma in April because people in Puget Sound voiced interest in the plan, they said. They noted DOE held an informational meeting in Richland in late 1996, but that meeting did not include a building-by-building discussion, which Wednesday's meeting did.

The panel consists of Lloyd, Marceau, Battelle-Northwest historical and architectural experts Greg Kirk and David Harvey, and CH2M Hill anthropologist and historian Darby Stapp.

Westinghouse Hanford Co. historian Michelle Gerber originally was on the panel. But when Hanford's main contract was reorganized in October, DOE told Westinghouse's replacement, Fluor Daniel Hanford, it did not have a role on this panel.

State lawmakers listen while Fluor executives explain cleanup plans

By JASON HAGEY
Herald Western Washington bureau

OLYMPIA — The House Energy and Utilities committee got its first chance Wednesday to quiz the head of Fluor Daniel on plans for Hanford cleanup.

Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel Hanford, was joined by John Wagoner, manager of the Department of Energy's Richland operations, in efforts to update lawmakers on progress in cleanup efforts since last year's Legislature.

Committee members also heard about U.S. Ecology's low-level radioactive waste site at Hanford, the Washington Public Power Supply System and ways the state Department of Health and Department of Ecology are monitoring work at Hanford.

Getting results in cleanup and making the Tri-Cities less dependent on Hanford jobs are top priorities, Hatch said, noting part of his company's contract requires Fluor Daniel to help develop 3,000 new non-Hanford jobs. The arm's length relationship between Fluor Daniel, the pri-

mary Hanford contractor, and the five major subcontractors, will help achieve the goal, he said.

Wagoner noted plans this summer to open the \$230 million Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory. Universities, medical researchers and industry all are expected to use the new lab.

But the top priority, Wagoner said, still is to eliminate the hazards from about 1,400 waste sites at Hanford, including 450 billion gallons of liquid waste that has leaked into the ground, 200 square miles of contaminated ground water and five billion cubic yards of contaminated soil.

The goal of the Department of Ecology is to see Hanford meet normal industrial environmental standards, said Mike Wilson, program manager for the ecology department's nuclear waste program.

He said the relationship between the state and Hanford has improved in the last two years, partly because the Department of Energy better understands its cleanup mission, and partly because the Department of Ecology has taken a less adversarial approach to enforcement.

Hanford health contract rebid due

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy will rebid the occupational health contract held at Hanford since 1965 by the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation.

DOE has issued a draft request for bids and expects soon to formally ask private industry to submit offers to take over the job when HEHF's current contract ends June 30.

One sure bidder is HEHF.

"We are planning to bid on to this new contract because we are committed to making a difference in worker health and safety," HEHF President Sandy Matheson said Wednesday.

DOE to show Hanford its waste-to-glass plan

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy plans to publicly discuss Thursday how it plans to regulate two pilot projects to turn radioactive tank wastes at Hanford into glass.

The meeting is set from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Cavanaugh's Inn in Kennewick.

DOE will brief the public on how it plans to set up a special regulatory section for the so-called vitrification pilot projects. The section would supervise the projects until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission can take over.

Central Hanford has about 54 million gallons of highly radioactive liquid wastes in 177 underground tanks. DOE wants to turn that waste into glass logs for disposal in a deep underground repository.

To do that, DOE has awarded contracts to two rival corporate coalitions to design competing pilot plants by 1998 to turn the wastes into glass. Then those coalitions are to build the pilot plants by 2002 and glassify 6 percent to 13 percent of the

wastes by 2007.

At that point, DOE will select two ventures to build two competing major vitrification plants to glassify the remainder of the wastes.

Normally, the NRC would regulate this type of project. But the NRC does not have jurisdiction over Hanford because the reservation was a secret plutonium-making site — not conducive to the NRC's highly public way of regulating.

Consequently, Congress needs to pass legislation to allow the NRC to supervise this project on Hanford, which could take years. Until then, DOE would be the regulatory agency.

Because of that, DOE is setting up the specific regulatory office to supervise the pilot vitrification projects, said Tom Sheridan, DOE's acting director for that office. That office will supervise safety issues for the pilot projects until the NRC takes over, he said.

The new DOE section has set up a toll-free number at 800-253-2723, and it plans to have a World Wild Web site ready by March.

Its mailing address is: Regulatory Unit, Attn: Comments, P.O. Box 550, A4-70, Richland, 99352.

Pena confirms BPA, FFTF support

By LES BLUMENTHAL
Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — Federico Pena sailed through his confirmation hearing for secretary of Energy on Thursday, saying the Clinton administration has no plans to sell the Bonneville Power Administration.

On several occasions, Pena also noted the

tritium-producing potential of the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford.

Most members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, including Washington Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., indicated they probably would vote to confirm Pena even though he doesn't have a background in Department of Energy issues.

"I am not uncomfortable you don't have a

background in the energy field," Gorton said. "In fact, it may be an advantage because you have no preconceived notions."

Pena, who served as Transportation secretary over the past four years, was a last-minute choice for Energy as the White House sought to ensure one of its Cabinet nominees was Hispanic. Pena already had put his house on the market when Presi-

dent Clinton asked him to take the Energy job, just hours before his nomination was announced.

Since then, Pena has undergone a crash course on department issues, ranging from nuclear waste cleanup to energy efficiency standards for refrigerators to the Elk Hills petroleum reserve.

As a former mayor of Denver, Pena is familiar with the cleanup problems at

DOE's Rocky Flats site. Beyond that, however, he had little background.

The chairman of the committee, Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, said early on that Pena would face tough questioning, but neither Murkowski nor other members of the committee that have been critical of the department put him on the spot.

Please see PENA, Page A2 ▶



From left, Yong Wang, Sarah Burton and John Frye — scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland — hold corn-derived

liquid they process to produce chemicals for ink, paint and plastics. The process eventually could reduce our reliance on petroleum.

PNNL scientists find new use for corn

Discovery could reduce dependence on petroleum

By The Associated Press
and the Herald staff

four Department of Energy national labs involved in developing the process.

"The jobs that will be created are U.S.-based jobs in agriculture and the agriculture processing industry, as opposed to foreign jobs in the chemical industry," Donnelly said.

It costs about 20 percent less to produce the chemicals from corn than it does from petroleum, researchers said.

The challenge at Battelle came in converting succinic acid into other, more profitable chemicals.

The process involved a water-based environment, and many catalysts used in organic chemistry work in quirky ways in a water environment.

Battelle scientists on the team figured out which catalysts should be used in the water environment to produce specific chemicals.

Bechtel receives another top rating

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy's environmental restoration contractor at Hanford has received its fifth consecutive outstanding rating and a bonus of \$6.3 million.

DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner notified Bechtel Hanford President Mike Little late Monday that Bechtel will receive 89.32 percent of a potential \$7.05 million fee for the months from April 1 to Sept. 30, 1996. During the previous six months, Bechtel received a 90.55 percent rating.

Bechtel's work during the rating period "continues to exceed expectations in most areas, and strongly supports your fifth consecutive rating," Wagoner told Little.

"The bottom line clearly shows that (Bechtel) is concentrating the majority of each program dollar on field cleanup of the Hanford site," he continued.

Wagoner's praise was sweet to Little, who took over as Bechtel Hanford president last year.

"We are really very pleased with the results," Little said. "Each and every single employee of our team deserves to be justifiably proud."

Among Bechtel's accomplishments during the latest rating period was completion of construction and startup of operations of the Hanford Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility — a huge hole in which low-level radioactive wastes are being buried.

While Bechtel's overall evaluation was outstanding, which said Little, "is as good as you can get," there were weaknesses, Wagoner noted.

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Battelle-Northwest and Fluor Daniel Hanford are proposing to join forces in supervising the Fast Flux Test Facility reactor while it remains on standby for possible use in tritium production.

Fluor and Battelle signed a memorandum of agreement Monday that would define each corporation's role if they arrange a joint venture to oversee the Department of Energy reactor. DOE has to approve any such agreement, both at its Richland office and from

■ **WASTE:**
DOE plans
Thursday
meeting on vit-
rification plan.
Page A7.

Washington, D.C., headquarters, said spokesman Guy Schein.

The memorandum says Battelle plans to seek the assignment to operate the Hanford reactor if DOE decides in 1998 to restart it.

Battelle could seek that assignment alone or as part of a coalition of companies, said spokesman Greg Koller.

He described the agreement as a "proposed joint strategy," with more concrete planning awaiting DOE's approval.

On Jan. 15, former Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary put the FFTF in a standby mode until late 1998.

During that time, DOE is to study

Please see FFTF, Page A2 ►

Hanford tank farm budget improves

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy has found enough money to ensure that most of the essential work at Hanford's tank farms will get done this year.

By borrowing, delaying layoff costs and putting off nonessential work, DOE has come up with enough money to cover most of the \$57 million shortfall that was predicted in early January.

So now, the shortfall for the 1996-97 tank farm budget has been reduced to about \$11 million, and the scrimping next year isn't expected to jeopardize the goals set in the Tri-Party Agreement.

DOE officials presented the

INSIDE:

■ **HANFORD:** Fluor Daniel has until Sept. 30 to submit new safety plan. Page A14.

■ **REPOSITORY:** Nevada site won't be ready until 2010, DOE says. Page C7.

findings Wednesday to the Hanford Advisory Board's "dollars and sense" financial committee. The meeting was to prepare for a two-day Hanford Advisory Board meeting beginning at 9 a.m. today at Cavanaugh's Inn in Kennewick.

Along with an update on the tank-farm budget, DOE officials

Please see HANFORD, Page A2 ►

New date set to submit Fluor Daniel safety plan

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel has until Sept. 30 to submit a new and improved health and safety master plan for Hanford.

But even if Fluor beats that deadline, it can't recoup the estimated \$2 million it was denied after offering the Department of Energy a plan the agency deemed inadequate.

Fluor's original deadline for submitting an "Environment, Health and Safety Plan" was Nov. 1, one month after Fluor took over Hanford's management.

"We recognized that a month wouldn't even give them time to mobilize, so we moved the deadline to Dec. 31," said Paul Kruger, DOE director of environment, safety and health.

Fluor made the deadline, but the plan it offered lacked details and depth, Kruger said. As a result, DOE rejected the plan and confirmed this week that it had denied Fluor its fee.

PNNL reattires in tiff over togs

By MARINA PARR

Herald staff writer

Call it a clash of the closets.

Officials at Battelle-Northwest's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, issued a dress code memo Wednesday that prohibited, among other things, sneakers and jeans.

That didn't sit well with the scientific crowd at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, many of whom wear jeans and tennis shoes as everyday attire. They viewed the memo as a dressing down.

Their reaction Thursday: orange bell bottoms, plenty of sneakers and, in one instance, a kilt.

Battelle public relations personnel said a handful of workers turned the dress code message into a

clothes encounter of the weird kind. Most employees came to work in their usual duds, although one male employee wore a woman's skirt.

"It was more verbal than a mass costume day," explained Battelle spokesman Greg Koller, noting that in most cases water cooler carping took the place of playful apparel.

When workers did rebel, they generally dressed up or down, mocking what they normally wore to work.

Employees known to wear jeans instead knotted ties around their necks while the high-heeled, briefcase-clutching crowd slipped into a comfortable pair of Levi's.

"We have a very diverse population who dresses in all ways," said Paula Bippen, deputy director of human resources. "(The memo)

Please see **TOGS**, Page A2▶

Hanford budget steady

By JOHN STANG and LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald staff writers

Environmental cleanup money would remain steady at Hanford in 1997-98 under President Clinton's Department of Energy budget proposed Thursday.

The budget would keep a proposal on track to speed up part of Hanford's cleanup over the next 10 years.

Clinton unveiled his 1997-98 budget Thursday to Congress. And the bottom line for Hanford is DOE would get \$1.109 billion for environmental cleanup in fiscal 1998, compared with \$1.115 billion for the 1997 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

"That's good news," said Sam Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council. "Some of us were expecting some kind of cut."

"But now the battle is just beginning. Now we have to convince people in Congress to provide up to the requested levels. This won't be settled until the end of September,"

Volpentest said.

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said he expects "widespread support" in Congress for DOE's budget.

"I'm prepared to make the case that this funding is not only essential for cleanup, but that it is being efficiently administered at Hanford," Hastings said.

DOE Hanford Manager John Waggoner in Richland and acting Energy Secretary Charles Curtis in Washington, D.C., gave briefings on the budget request Thursday.

Here are the basic numbers: DOE requested \$1.448 billion in fiscal 1998 at Hanford, compared with \$1.479 billion to be spent in the current year.

The current budget has \$1.115 billion for cleanup and \$364 million for other programs — such as research, nuclear energy and defense work.

Next year's request calls for \$1.109 billion for cleanup and \$339 million for other programs.

DOE requested another \$427 million be set aside to pay contractors in the future to build privatized vitrification plants to convert Hanford's 54 million gallons of liquid radioactive wastes into glass logs.

That \$427 million would join \$170 million set aside this year.

Under the privatization concept,

Please see **HANFORD**, Page A2▶

Scientists face tough task at Chernobyl

By DON McMANMAN

Herald staff writer

Battelle scientists face the most daunting task of the nuclear age: opening the sarcophagus at the destroyed Chernobyl nuclear power plant and removing its radioactive guts.

This challenge was laid before scientists Friday by Ukraine's minister for environmental protection and nuclear safety.

Yuri Kostenko told Battelle executives that to leave the radioactive mess alone under the sarcophagus would be dangerous for two reasons:

■ The concrete and steel sarcophagus covering the corpse of the reactor could collapse under its own weight.

■ The radioactive mess under the sarcophagus is unknown and unstable. "There has been some kind of nuclear chain reaction in the nuclear masses twice in the past year," Kostenko said.

The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, operated by Battelle, has an office near Chernobyl and has been increasingly involved in attacking the huge environmental problems left from the nuclear meltdown.

Battelle officials approach the sarcophagus with trepidation.

First, no one knows how to handle the deadly mass lurking inside.

Then, there's the danger of radioactive exposure to workers.

"Some people reviewing it (the proposal) are very concerned it couldn't be done without a tremendous dose," said Laurin Dodd, who's leading Battelle's effort in the former Soviet Union.

"A lot has to be reviewed before a decision can be made, but, ultimately, the decision will be up to the Ukrainians."

"A lot has to be reviewed before a decision can be made, but, ultimately, the decision will be up to the Ukrainians."

— Laurin Dodd, Battelle scientist

The Ukrainians will do the work and take the dose.

It would be another sacrifice at Chernobyl, a nuclear power plant built by Soviets.

Eleven years ago this April, one reactor at the power station blew up, spewing 50 tons of radioactive fallout across Europe. Three dozen workers died immediately, and Ukrainians say 150,000 have died since from Chernobyl-related diseases.

The mess left is unlike anything experienced in the nuclear field.

At the best of nuclear plants, spent fuel rods emerging from the reactor are among the most radioactively hot materials humans regularly handle.

Even when the rods remain in neat bundles, carefully separated to stop a chain reaction, they are handled with great delicacy, shielded by foot-thick glass or in huge pools of water.

But at Chernobyl No. 4, after a gigantic steam explosion blew off the reactor's roof, and concrete, steel and fuel rods cascaded into a pile, where they melted into a glob.

The Soviets built the sarcophagus around the remains. It stands 225 feet tall and is as big as three football fields. Its steel and concrete walls are 16 feet thick.

Today, one of the four Chernobyl reactors remains operating — regardless of its shaky design and construction — because Ukraine is desperate for energy.

The economy of the former Soviet republic has been a basket case, Kostenko said. In 1993 alone, the price of energy jumped tenfold, he said.

Today, some plants are paid for only 10 percent of the power they produce, Kostenko said. In some instances, power stations have been reduced to barter — kind of like a farmer showing up at McNary Dam with a truckful of potatoes to pay his light bill.

Under such economic conditions, it's difficult to bank enough money to build new plants, or to pay for cleanup and decommissioning of the old ones, Kostenko said.

"It's very difficult to have energy reform without economic reform," he said.

Ukraine will close the remaining Chernobyl reactor as soon as industrialized nations pay for two new nuclear power stations, Kostenko said.

They would be built to Western safety standards and each would generate 1,000 megawatts, about the capacity of the Washington Public Power Supply System reactor north of Richland. Ukraine also wants money to deal with the sarcophagus and to decommission the other three Chernobyl reactors. Numbers are hazy, but the Chernobyl bill could reach \$4 billion — not counting the cost of the new power stations.

About \$65 million has been allocated by the U.S. government for planning work to be done at a research center in Slavutych, a city near Chernobyl where Battelle has its office.

Other pledges have been held up for a variety of reasons, but Kostenko hopes agreements signed in 1995 will provide a framework to attract new donations.

DOE to help Fluor revise health, safety plan

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel Hanford and the Department of Energy have formed a full-time team to revise a master health-and-safety plan for companies in the Fluor team, the Hanford Advisory Board was told Friday.

That revision should be done by late spring, said Paul Kruger, DOE director of environment, safety and health.

The team was created after DOE recently told Fluor its proposed safety master plan was inadequate. As a result, Fluor lost \$2.16 million of the maximum \$54 million performance fee it could earn in fiscal 1997.

"This is not a success for either of us to have this sort of failure," Kruger told the

board at Cavanaugh's Inn in Kennewick.

Kruger said the DOE and Fluor team will consult with the advisory board, senior managers, regulatory agencies and workers.

The universal safety plan would be for a Fluor-coordinated team of several companies with different safety procedures.

Merilyn Reeves, chairwoman of the advisory board, was disappointed in the plan's failure because when Hank Hatch, Fluor Daniel Hanford's president, first talked to the board in October, he said safety is Fluor's top priority.

In a phone interview Friday, Hatch said the Fluor team is regrouping with DOE.

"We have a very good joint 'path forward' to create a mutually agreeable and efficient document on safety performance on the site," he said.

He said Fluor has improved Hanford's

safety record when numbers of actual accidents are reviewed.

Fluor reports that injuries considered reportable by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration dropped by 40 percent and lost- and restricted-work days dropped 50 percent in Fluor's first four months.

Kruger said: "Just because there's been a glitch, that doesn't impinge on (Fluor's) commitment to make this happen."

Also Friday, the Hanford Advisory Board: ■ Learned 13 companies attended a preliminary discussion on the upcoming competition for Hanford's occupational health contract.

"Several of them seem interested" in pursuing the contract, said Walter Scott, senior technical advisor at DOE's environment, safety and health office and chairman of the

evaluation board for the contract.

DOE plans to issue a request for proposals Feb. 28. Interested companies must reply by April 15. The selection deadline is June 30.

DOE is thinking about splitting the contract into two parts — with each company able to bid on one or both parts. One part would be routine health-related work, and the other part would be research-and-advisory activities.

The Hanford Environmental Health Foundation has held the contract since 1965 and plans to compete for the new contracts.

■ Told DOE critical Tri-Party Agreement milestones — especially those pertaining to the tank farm — should not be delayed by expected shortfalls in the current Hanford budget.

The board also told the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington

Department of Ecology to be tough with DOE on making those milestones.

That shortfall is a still-evolving figure but is expected to be significantly less than an early January estimate of \$160 million.

The board contends much of the shortfall can be blamed on overhead costs being higher than budgeted. DOE is calculating those figures.

In addition, the transition between Fluor Daniel and former main contractor Westinghouse Hanford Co. appears more expensive than planned.

DOE budgeted \$20 million for transition, and the cost now stands at \$21.5 million with more bills expected.

Also, DOE did not budget for Westinghouse's expenses to tie up loose ends after its contract expired Oct. 1. That bill is about \$8 million.

Benton gets check from DOE for land

By JILL FITZSIMMONS

Herald Valley bureau

PROSSER — The federal money just keeps rolling in for some Benton County governments.

At Monday's Benton County commissioners' meeting, Treasurer Darwin Parker said taxing jurisdictions Friday received a \$1.5 million payment from the Department of Energy.

The payment is this year's tax payment for property on Hanford lands — land that was previously off the tax rolls.

It's the first annual "payment in lieu of taxes" payout from the DOE. County government agencies, including ports, schools and other taxing districts, will share from about \$1.5 million a year for what would have been paid in property taxes for Hanford land.

That's in addition to the lump of money the DOE agreed to give Benton County governments for 1988 to 1995. About \$12 million will be handed over in three installments.

The first payment — for \$5.98 million was paid in December.

The next payment, for \$2.6 million, will be paid in 1996; and the third payment, also for \$2.6 million, will be paid in 1999.

This year's \$1.5 million is broken down into the following payments: \$523,711 to the state schools fund; \$311,886 to the Richland School District; \$278,294 to the Benton County road fund; \$217,921 to Benton County; \$75,788 to Benton County rural library district; \$70,573 to the Port of Benton; \$48,060 to the Prosser School District; \$9,721 to the Kiona-Benton School District; \$5438 to the Prosser Hospital district; \$3,789 to the county human services fund; and \$1,712 to the county's veterans fund.

In other county business Monday, commissioners agreed to give \$15,000 to help build a viticulture center near Prosser.

However, deputy prosecutor Ryan Brown warned that state law prohibits the county from giving money to a private agency that would then own the facility.

The county could give money to be used to promote the center, Brown said.

The Prosser Economic Development Association, which is building the tourism center that will focus on the wine industry, has asked the county, Port of Benton and Tri-City Industrial Development Council each to give \$15,000.

Commissioners asked Brown to look into how the county could contribute legally.

Expert talks of Hanford morale

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Morale problems usually surface when corporations — or places like Hanford — go through major changes and layoffs, an expert in workplace morale contends.

"It's economically wise to focus on individuals' emotional well-being," said Jacqueline Miller, president of San Francisco-based Partnerships for Change, a nonprofit organization dealing with how companies and communities adjust to change.

Miller also is co-author of *Heart At Work*, a book on workplace emotional health.

She was scheduled to speak to almost 200 people Wednesday evening at a meeting of the Hanford chapter of the National Management Association in Richland.

Hanford has undergone massive layoffs in the past 18 months. And the internal corporate structure has vastly changed since three former Hanford contractors split into 13 companies coordinated by Fluor Daniel Hanford.

The changes have put workers under great stress, said Mary Korman, Fluor's project leader to study how the workplace changes are affecting employees' well-being. Fluor plans to hire an outside firm by Feb. 20 to design a survey to reach at least 6,000 workers.

Although the survey's questions have not been settled yet, Korman said they might address morale, how people cope and adjust, and other issues.

The deadline to finish surveying employees is June 30. Then the results are to be analyzed by Sept. 30 with accompanying recommendations.

In an interview Wednesday afternoon, Miller said the emotional health of employees has gained a foothold in corporate management practices.

"By the year 2000, the market will be saturated with this. That's all you'll hear," she said.

Layoffs and workplace changes contribute to stress, which contribute to health problems, anxieties, pilfering, concerns in updating resumes and other factors that hurt efficiency, Miller said.

Miller suggested companies should be more open with their employees as they address changes and layoffs. A company opening its balance sheets to employees might get suggestions that could fix problems and head off layoffs, she said.

Also, Miller suggests if changes and stress loom, workers should find support with each other.

"Find a person you really like and hang around them once a day," Miller said.

Briefly

Ex-Hanford engineer's suit rejected

Franklin County offered winter aid

Franklin County residents can receive money for damage incurred from the harsh winter.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Thursday that Franklin County and its residents are eligible for public assistance and hazard mitigation aid. The public assistance will be available for removing debris and repairing storm-damaged roads or bridges.

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

A federal judge in Spokane has dismissed a lawsuit filed by a former Hanford engineer who sought compensation for an idea he said was his and saved taxpayers millions of dollars.

"Yeah, I'm disappointed," Clark Hodge of Kennewick said Thursday when notified by the Herald that U.S. District Court Judge William Fremming Nielsen had ruled in favor of the Department of Energy.

"I wish I'd never brought this suit," Hodge said. "It has made my life miserable. It cost

rewarded for helping develop an idea that led to construction of a huge hole in the ground in central Hanford—a project called the Environmental Restoration and Disposal Facility.

The project is designed to hold about 30 million cubic yards of low-level solid wastes, primarily from former plutonium-producing areas, and over its 30-year life is expected to cut cleanup costs by \$686 million.

"I wish I'd never brought this suit. It has made my life miserable. It cost me my career and a lot of money and time."

— Clark Hodge, former Hanford engineer

the point because employees of Hanford couldn't own the ideas they develop for their employers," Davis said.

Hodge was an engineer for Westinghouse Hanford Co. when he helped develop the concept of the megatrench.

He argued he should have been entitled to an incentive bonus, which in his original lawsuit he set at \$14 million.

Nielsen disagreed.

the opportunity to introduce facts to support his claim.

"This case has taken a lot of time," Davis said. "We worked hand in hand with the U.S. attorney in defending this."

Initially, Westinghouse Hanford Co., for which Hodge then worked, was named as a defendant in the federal case. Westinghouse ultimately was dismissed but still is a defendant in a similar suit filed by Hodge in Benton County Superior Court.

"There were several tricky intricate intellectual property issues," Davis said. "There was a lot at stake. ... We are gratified by this ruling because we believe it to be right."

Briefly

Hanford Reach costs should be shared

Governor to visit Tri-Cities Wednesday

OLYMPIA — Gov. Gary Locke will be in the Tri-Cities on Wednesday for a town hall meeting at 5:30 p.m. at Columbia Basin College.

The visit is part of a swing through Central Washington that begins Wednesday morning in Yakima and winds up Friday at Wenatchee.

Locke starts his day Wednesday in Yakima and arrives in the Tri-Cities about 2:30 p.m. for a tour of the bilingual education program at Captain Gray Elementary School in Pasco, followed by a tour

Panel recommends state, 3 counties shoulder most costs for managing Columbia River stretch

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

MATTAWA — The state and three counties along the Hanford Reach should share most of the costs for managing the 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River that runs through the nuclear reservation, a group recommended Friday.

The nine-member panel, appointed by Grant, Franklin and Benton counties, also said the federal gov-

counties appointed the group and asked members to come up with counterproposal to Democrat U.S. Sen. Patty Murray's bill to put the river and about on a quarter-mile corridor on each side under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Her bill also calls for a federal study on lowering the Tri-City levees to aid rivershore development.

Meanwhile, the counties' panel proposes Congress create a seven-member commission to supervise a slightly wider river corridor.

The study panel is working out details so the three county governments can present a proposed bill to Republicans U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings and U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton.

County officials want their bill in Congress by the time the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds a hearing on the Reach's future.

Tentative plans call for holding the hearing somewhere in the Mid-Columbia this spring or summer.

— with the federal government paying 40 percent and the counties and state paying 60 percent.

The proposal would require the state and local governments to raise their 60 percent in cash or in-kind services before the federal government pays its 40 percent.

The panel decided to request the federal government set aside \$10 million for its share of capital costs — which could be paid out over several years.

But some panelists voiced concerns about making a request to Congress before the proposed commission can come up with a budget and a master plan for capital improvements.

Panelist Mike Spellman, representing Benton County, contended requesting federal money would not be out of line because Congress would have to allocate money anyway if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assumes control of the Reach.

The panel has not yet addressed how the counties would raise their share of the budget, other than saying they could provide services and equipment as in-kind payments.

Members also recommended splitting the annual operating costs with the counties and state footing 67 percent of the bill and the federal government paying 33 percent.

They suggested \$300,000 a year for the federal government.

By the Herald staff

The Hanford Reach newspaper has been given a reprieve. Of sorts.

The sitewide weekly newspaper that has provided Hanford workers with news since 1990 was to go out of business later this month.

Instead, Fluor Daniel has extended the contract it has with Triad Web Printing of Kennewick to print the Reach on a month-to-month basis while officials decide if there is a better way to keep workers updated on Hanford happenings.

"We are dedicated to effective communication with employees," said Fluor spokesman Nolan Curtis.

FFTF gains support

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Restart of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility has won yet another endorsement.

This one came from the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, which includes ports, shippers and a number of cities on the Snake and Columbia rivers in Washington and Oregon.

The PNWA's executive board was briefed recently on FFTF's future by Port of Benton Commissioner Hal Lindberg and Executive Director Ben Bennett.

As a result, the association adopted a resolution asking Congress to continue to adequately fund Hanford's environmental cleanup mission — an estimated \$57 billion project spread over some 30 years.

"PNWA recognizes defense waste cleanup is a long-term project that will be most cost-effective and most rigorously pursued if Hanford is a viable, operating site," wrote the group's executive director, Glenn Vanselow.

PNWA also has urged Congress to support a "complete, ongoing Hanford scientifically and technologically based research and operations program."

And, to that end, PNWA "supports the restart of the Fast Flux Test Facility for the joint missions of interim tritium production to meet national

defense goals and for medical research and isotope production to meet the demands for more effective cancer treatments," Vanselow said.

PNWA's support for FFTF restart follows similar approval from commissioners from Washington's 39 counties, from statewide port association members, the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, which has been designated as the community voice on Hanford matters, and from Washington Gov. Gary Locke.

One of Hazel O'Leary's last acts as Energy Secretary was to order FFTF kept in a ready-to-restart condition, pending a final DOE decision by the energy department in mid-1998 about where tritium will be produced. Tritium, an isotope used to boost the power of nuclear bombs, is in dwindling supplies.

DOE's other options include building a new accelerator in South Carolina for tritium production or using an existing light-water reactor.

A Richland-based consortium — Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems — is trying to win a contract with DOE to use FFTF and the adjacent Fuels Materials and Examination Facility on a short-term basis to meet national tritium needs, and long-term to produce cancer-killing medical isotopes.

Likewise, Battelle and Fluor Daniel want that same opportunity. They have proposed to join forces to supervise FFTF while it remains on standby.

2-20-97

Isotope pioneer Tri-Cities' top eng

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

A Richland man whose work has saved scores of lives — and probably will save many more — received the Tri-City Engineer of the Year Award on Friday night.

Darrell Fisher of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory was honored, in part, for his pioneering work with medical isotopes.

He has been a leader of a team developing new techniques that have saved lives of those once thought incurably ill from such diseases as leukemia and lymphatic cancer.

"He's devoted himself to developing and designing molecular systems, just as an engineer designs a bridge or an airplane," said Bob Schenter, deputy manager of the Hanford Isotopes Program.

Fisher's name is known around the world for the quality and vision of his work, said another Tri-Citan, Alan Waltar, director of international programs of Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems.

"He's not only is a first-rate scientist, but also a first-rate communicator. He has tremendous credibility," Waltar said.

Fisher's work with medical isotopes has helped create a technique that aims radiation directly at cancer cells.

Traditional radiation therapy uses a scatter-gun approach. Radiation is focused on the general area of a cancer growth, harming the malignant cells but also killing

healthy cells around a tumor. Such exposure to healthy tissue limits the amount of radiation that can be delivered to the cancer.

Fisher's research relies on molecules to deliver the dose directly to the tumor.

Scientists marry radioactive isotopes with enzymes created in laboratories to be attracted to specific types of cancer cells. These so-called "smart bullets" are injected into a patient and seek out — and latch onto — cancerous cells.

Smart bullets concentrate vastly more radiation on a cancerous cell,

"Darrell's work with smart bullets has saved lives of leukemia and lymphoma patients."

— Bob Schenter,
Hanford Isotopes Program

while the technique is still in clinical research stages, but when tried on those with no hope of life, it works, often saving about 90 percent of those in the studies, Schenter said.

"The promise of saving lives from other forms of cancer is enormous. We're dealing with 1.7 million new cancer cases every year," Schenter said.

Fisher's drive arises from more than curiosity and professionalism. When he was 11, he had a bone tumor removed from his leg. It was benign.

Four years ago, Fisher's mentor — University of Utah researcher Charles May — died from toxic shock when taking chemotherapy for lymphoma.

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Four years ago, Fisher's mentor — University of Utah researcher Charles May — died from toxic shock when taking chemotherapy for lymphoma.

s bill requires OK for AIDS class

■ IT'S YOUR CALL: Should parental consent be required for AIDS and sex education in public schools? Page A3.

mp, told the Senate schools have slowly ents' roles in their lives. Some said contributing to a line by teaching multiculturalism "age" approaches. nents said parents ve ample opportu ew all curriculum children from any objectionable. They safety may be jeopardized to track down parfore offering coun-



selling or giving health and AIDS courses. The legislation is favored to pass the Republican-controlled Legislature, but Democratic Gov. Gary Locke is expected to veto it. Lawmakers then could choose to send an identical bill to the November ballot, bypassing the governor.

"This puts parents back into the driver's seat when it comes to their children's education," Stevens told her colleagues.

Some districts have "strayed so far" from

the Legislature's intent that sex-education classes stress abstinence, they are using graphic materials that include directions on how to use condoms, she said.

Kemp, director of the Bellevue-based Washington Family Council, said the "common sense" legislation would empower parents to take a greater role in education.

Senate Bill 5555 would reverse the procedure for classes about AIDS prevention, human sexuality, alcohol and drugs, and course units on suicide and health-related topics. Currently, parents have to inform schools when they don't want their children to take such classes.

Under the bill, they would have to sign a

permission form for their children to receive the education. Currently, only about 1 percent of students are withdrawn from such classes, the committee was told.

Critics of the bill said it would be a huge burden for schools to have to seek out parents or guardians, some of whom work long hours and aren't involved in their children's education very much.

Dr. Martin McCombs, representing the Northwest AIDS Foundation, told lawmakers that young people are the fastest-growing segment to test positive for the AIDS virus. Instruction on prevention, stressing both abstinence and safe sex, is literally a matter of life and death, he said.

2-21-97

Bechtel ends IT Hanford contract

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Bechtel Hanford Inc. has terminated its subcontract with IT Hanford Co., effective April 29.

Ending the pact will cost Bechtel about \$500,000 but save some \$5 million through 1999 when IT's agreement would have ended.

In a message to employees late Thursday, Bechtel President Mike Little said jobs will be offered to 25 or 30 of IT Hanford's current work force of 55, a labor force that earlier had been projected to dip to 28 by Sept. 30. Those job offers may be extended by Bechtel as early as next week.

IT Hanford workers not offered jobs will be given 60-day layoff notices.

The news hit Wade Ballard hard. Ballard, who runs IT's Hanford program, said he was "surprised and disappointed" by the contract closure, which was driven by IT's reduced work responsibilities and an ever-declining federal budget.

"We have had discussions (with Bechtel) about ways to reduce costs,

and we thought we had reached accord," he said. "Obviously, we did not, because Bechtel made this decision."

When Bechtel won the five-year, \$800 million first-ever Environmental Restoration Management Contract at Hanford 2½ years ago, its team included CH2M Hill, IT Corp. and Thermo Analytical Inc.

IT Hanford was assigned environmental cleanup in Hanford's 200 Area and 300 Area and CH2M Hill was responsible for the 100 Area.

During the past two years, however, events have changed, Little said.

IT Hanford's work force has been completing its responsibilities, funding levels continue to drop, and the focus of cleanup has shifted from the 200 Area to the 100 Area, where defunct reactors dot the Columbia River.

"This decision was a difficult one because it affects employees," Little said. "However, it furthers the cleanup mission by allowing more funds to be applied to direct cleanup and that, overall, provides more stability to the project."

That's little comfort to Ballard

and other IT workers. "I don't know what will happen to all the IT people at this point," Ballard said. The firm will maintain, at least for now, its Richland corporate office, and workers may be transferred there.

"To be honest, I just don't know. This caught us by surprise ... we haven't had a chance to sit down and figure this out," Ballard said.

IT Hanford has a small contract with Fluor Daniel, but it's not enough to sustain the firm's Tri-City operations. Likewise, IT Hanford is a shareholder in an analytical laboratory operated in Richland by Quanterra Inc. but is not involved in day-to-day operations.

When Bechtel won the \$800 million ERM contract, IT Inc. had a staff of 170, its share of the pact was worth a third of the total, and its primary job responsibility was investigative work that would lead to cleanup.

"During the next year or so, this site moved from doing site investigations into moving dirt, into re-cleanup," Ballard said. "So the scope went down, and so, too, funding."

2-21-97

Hanford environment meetings set for March

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Limits on radioactive rubble and plans for environmental studies at US Ecology's Hanford site will be the topics of a March 5 public meeting in Kennewick.

This will be the first of four public hearings in Washington regarding state regulation of US Ecology.

The Kennewick meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Washington Department of Ecology's office at 1315 W. Fourth Ave. Similar meetings will be March 6 in Spokane, March 11 at Sea-Tac and March 13 in Portland.

The meetings are prompted by state reviews of US Ecology's low-level radioactive waste disposal site.

These examinations address:

- Renewing the site's 5-year operating license, which expires in May.

■ Plans for covering and monitoring waste trenches. US Ecology submitted a preliminary plan in 1995 and has revised it since.

■ Adopting a limit on how much slightly radioactive rubble US Ecology can accept.

■ Beginning an environmental impact study to address the ramifications of these issues.

Such a study could delay the licensing and planning decisions several months, state officials said. US Ecology's license will be kept in place until the study is complete.

"We believe practices at the site today provide a high degree of protection to the public and the people who work at the facility. But we must decide how we will ensure very long-term human and environmental safety," said John Erickson, director for the division of radiation protection for the state Department of Health.

US Ecology's site at Hanford is on 100 acres of land subleased from the state. It serves 11 states and gets much of the wastes from

"We believe practices at the site today provide a high degree of protection to the public and the people who work at the facility. But we must decide how we will ensure very long-term human and environmental safety."

— John Erickson,

director for the division of radiation protection for the state Department of Health

hospitals and nuclear plants. The nation's only other operating low-level radioactive waste site is in South Carolina.

The wastes are buried in trenches that usually are 45 feet deep, 1,000 feet long and about 150 feet wide. So far, wastes are buried in

20 trenches, with four still accepting wastes.

The plan for covering the trenches includes how the site would be monitored through the duration of US Ecology's 99-year lease, which ends in 2063.

Meanwhile, the state health department has recommended increasing the state's limit of "Naturally Occurring or Accelerator Produced Material" — or NARM wastes — to 100,000 tons a year.

These wastes are dirt and rubble from mining and industrial sites slightly tainted with uranium and other radioactive substances. US Ecology can accept NARM waste from all 50 states.

In 1995, the state put an 8,600-ton annual limit on the amount of rubble that can come to Hanford, but US Ecology sued to stop the limit. The company dropped the lawsuit in exchange for the state's plan to raise to limit to 100,000 tons a year.

But the proposed higher limit has

drawn fire from environmental groups. For now, a temporary limit of 100,000 tons is in place until the state makes a final decision.

US Ecology collects a surcharge of \$6.50 per cubic foot of waste it brings in. Benton County gets \$2 per cubic foot from the surcharge, and a locally controlled Hanford Economic Diversification Fund gets the rest.

In 1996, US Ecology took in 105,178 cubic feet of low-level radioactive wastes, compared with 204,981 cubic feet in 1995, according to preliminary figures.

And in 1996, the site accepted 12,837 cubic feet of low-level rubble, compared with 77,418 cubic feet in 1995. The site operated under the 8,600-cubic-foot limit in early 1996.

The state will accept written comments about the waste site through March 27. They should be addressed to Geoff Tallent, Washington Department of Ecology, P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, 98504-7600. Or send electronic mail to gtal461@ecy.wa.gov on the Internet.

Book links Nez Perce, Hanford area wildlife

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A lot of people look at Hanford as a barren desert.

But the reservation's shrub steppe is filled with abundant wildlife that people often overlook, said former Hanford biologist Dan Landeen, now a wildlife biologist with the Nez Perce Tribe.

Landeen and the Nez Perce recently published a 96-page book with information on about 300 species of birds, animals and reptiles at Hanford — mixed in with Nez Perce history and legends.

The book is *Wetes pe m'e wes*, which means "I am of this land."

The Nez Perce is one of several tribes that fished and gathered roots in the Hanford area before the whites arrived. And the Nez Perce and other tribes have kept fishing and gathering rights in this area under the Treaty of 1855.

The idea for the book germinated several years in the mind of Landeen, who worked for 16 years as a biologist for Rockwell Hanford Co., Westinghouse Hanford Co. and CH2M Hill. He joined the Nez Perce environmental restoration and waste management program in 1995.

Landeen said he and tribal member Jeremy Crow compiled the book to educate people on:

- The Treaty of 1855, the pivotal document in relations between the Mid-Columbia's Indian nations and the U.S. government. The book

contains the text of the treaty.

■ On the animal life at Hanford.

■ On the Nez Perce's ties to Hanford, especially the importance of the land and animals to the tribe's culture.

Landeen consulted the tribe's ethnologist, Allen Slickpoo Sr., to add about 15 ancient Nez Perce stories to the book.

Ancient tribal history is filled with stories about the animals dominating Earth before people were created — with the animals talking and behaving like humans. The hero of most of these stories is the coyote, who also is a key figure in the Nez Perce tradition of how humans were created.

The tribe has printed 2,000 copies of the book. Most were distributed free to tribal members and employees, Hanford officials, libraries and schools near the reservation at Lapwai, Idaho, and in the Tri-Cities.

The tribe plans to sell the remaining books for \$10 each. Interested buyers can call 208-843-7375.

The tribe is considering doing a second printing of the book in two to four months to sell at bookstores in the Tri-Cities and Lapwai.

Landeen said he and the tribe are considering a second book on the plants and animals of the Nez Perce reservation and the tribe's ceded lands, which extend into Washington to near Dayton. Ceded lands are non-reservation lands where the tribes kept certain rights under the Treaty of 1855.

Hanford historian speaks March 10

Michelle Gerber, the principal historian for Fluor Daniel Hanford Co., speaks at 7:15 p.m. March 10 at Washington State University at Tri-Cities.

Her talk is one of a series of lectures exploring decades of Hanford's social and environmental history as part of a sociology, advanced topics class.

The public lecture will be in Room 240 West. WSU Tri-Cities is at 100 Sprout Road in Richland. For more information, call David Sonnenfeld at 372-7375.

Privatizing tank farm cleanup gathers steam at Hanford

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Plans to have private companies deal with Hanford's tank wastes got a green light Friday from a combined federal-and-state environmental study.

Friday's action also keeps in motion another study on what to do with 1,930 capsules containing radioactive cesium and strontium in central Hanford.

The Department of Energy and the state Department of Ecology jointly studied the environmental effects of several possible ways to deal with the 54 million gallons of liquid radioactive wastes stored in 177 underground tanks in central Hanford.

And that study confirmed that DOE's current long-term plan to turning the wastes into glass is the best choice for the environment, said Carolyn Haass, DOE's environmental studies document manager for the tank farm.

The decision announced Friday was a necessary step in moving forward with plans to build two competing, private plants to convert tank wastes into glass, said Maureen Hunemuller, DOE's deputy assistant manager for the tank farm.

If the environmental impact study had favored another alternative, DOE would have had to rethink its entire approach. And as the leading regulator of the tank farm, the state would have had to do the same, said Suzanne Dahl, the Ecology Department's tank farm project manager.

Sixty-eight of the 177 tanks are suspected leakers. And seeping contamination from the tanks toward the Columbia River is one of Hanford's biggest headaches.

The proposed private vitrification plants are the key to

DOE's plans. Two coalitions of several companies are already designing pilot plants to tackle low-level and high-level radioactive wastes at the tank farm.

Those plants are expected to convert 6 to 13 percent of the tank wastes into glass by 2007. After that, two huge, new competing plants are to be built to treat the rest.

The two coalitions are supposed to have their conceptual plans turned over to DOE by January 1998.

Then, DOE will have about four months to decide whether to approve those plans, and whether the two coalitions will build just low-level-waste pilot plants or a combination of low-level and high-level waste pilot plants.

The pilot plants are supposed to be operating by 2002.

After the pilot plants operate for a few years, the lessons learned will be incorporated in two competing sets of major high-level and low-level vitrification plants.

Also on Friday, state and DOE officials announced approval of plans transfer wastes to safer tanks, and to tackle separating high-level and low-level radioactive wastes that are mixed together in many tanks.

The decision also keeps a study going on what to do with cesium and strontium in 1,930 capsules — each about 4 feet tall and 2½ feet in diameter — that are stored in Hanford's 200 East Area.

That study is due to be done by September.

Options being considered include:

- Using the cesium and strontium in commercial or medical irradiation projects.
- Mixing the cesium with Hanford's surplus plutonium to make it more difficult to use the plutonium in nuclear weapons.

Spent fuel storage off-limits at Hanford

By The Associated Press and the Herald staff

WASHINGTON — Washington state officials like an amendment approved Wednesday that would keep interim storage for highly radioactive wastes out of Hanford.

"We've been against spent fuel coming to Hanford for years. There's been no change," said Dan Silver, who's in charge of nuclear waste management for the state.

On a 10-5 vote, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved the prohibition as an amendment by Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., to a broader nuclear waste bill.

"Using Hanford to park tens of thousands of tons of additional nuclear waste when they are not dealing adequately with safety there now is just unacceptable," Wyden said in an interview.

"They already are storing over 2,000 metric tons of high-level spent nuclear fuel in leaking pools that are about a quarter of a mile from our life blood, the Columbia River."

Silver agreed: There's no policy or environmental reason why that waste should come to Washington, rather than stay where it is," Silver said.

Two other Northwest members of the committee, Sens. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and Slade Gorton, R-Wash., joined Wyden in supporting his one-sentence amendment.

The panel is expected to take a vote on the overall bill today and send it to the full Senate, which could vote on it before the end of the month.

It calls for construction of an interim facility at the Nevada Test Site near the area known as Yucca Mountain, which has been proposed as the long-term repository for high-level wastes.

Under the bill, Clinton has the option of picking another interim site if the Nevada location proves unsuitable.

The suitability of Yucca Mountain as a temporary site is to be determined by September 1998. If found unsuitable, Clinton has 18 months to find another site, otherwise the choice would default back to Nevada.

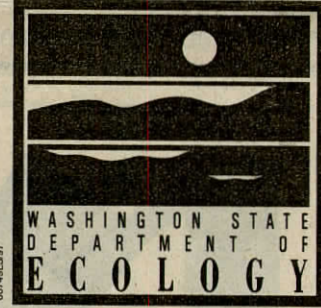
Energy Department officials have said Hanford could be a potential backup site.

Hanford at one time was considered a potential site for permanent disposal — much as Yucca Mountain is now — until intense political pressure extinguished that proposal.

The government also is to decide next year whether Yucca Mountain is suitable for permanent waste burial. Even so, a permanent site at Yucca may not be ready until 2015.

Wyden said he hadn't decided whether to support the overall bill on the Senate floor.

Get Involved in Hanford Cleanup Decisions!



If you would like material in an alternative format (large print, Braille, cassette tape, or computer disk), please contact Michelle Davis, Ecology (360) 407-7126 (voice), or (360) 407-2606 (TDD).

The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) proposes to terminate interim status and close the **324 Sodium Removal Pilot Plant** in Hanford's 300 Area located just north of Richland, WA. USDOE filed a Part A permit application based on the possibility that sodium waste might be brought to the facility for treatment. This did not occur, and there is no intent to operate the facility for that purpose. All components related to the 324 Sodium Removal Pilot Plant have been dismantled, removed, and managed according to the Washington state guidance for disposal or reuse.

USDOE has requested that the Department of Ecology close the facility under terms of the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement's procedural closure provisions. If approved, the unit would no longer be managed as a treatment, storage and disposal facility according to hazardous waste facility regulations.

How you can be involved

Ecology would like to hear your issues or concerns before deciding on this procedural closure. A 45-day public comment period will start **March 12 and end April 28, 1997**. No public hearing is planned, but a hearing will be scheduled if requested. Requests for public hearings should be submitted by April 1, 1997, to allow for timely notice to other interested Hanford stakeholders.

For more information, to submit written comments, or to request a hearing contact Greta Davis, Department of Ecology, Nuclear Waste Program, 1315 W. 4th Ave., Kennewick, WA 99336-6018, (509) 736-3025 or call Hanford Cleanup toll-free at 1-800-328-3008.

Information available:

The permit application and related information may be read and copied at the Hanford Information Repository:

All information in the repository, plus all data submitted by the applicants, may be reviewed at the Hanford administrative record:

WSU, Tri-Cities
USDOE Public Reading Room
Room 130 West
100 Sprout Road, Richland
(509) 376-8583

2440 Stevens Center Place
Suite 101, Richland
9 a.m.-noon, 1-3:30 p.m.
(509) 376-2530

HANFORD BUDGET



\$ Budget Workshop \$ March 13, 1997

The U.S. Department of Energy invites you to participate in the development of Hanford's fiscal year 1999 budget. An all-day workshop will be held March 13, 1997 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Red Lion Inn/Hanford House, 802 George Washington Way, Richland, WA.

Participants will include the public, state and federal regulators and tribal governments. The workshop will include presentations from DOE managers on the processes and priorities in developing the budget. There also will be opportunities for public participation in a series of smaller sessions focusing on Hanford's cleanup projects.

\$ Additional Meetings Include: \$

Spokane	March 18
Portland	March 19
Seattle	April 2

For More Information Contact
Gail McClure
DOE-Richland Operations Office
(509) 376-7501



3-9-97

Museum hopefuls seeking dollars

By MARINA PARR

Herald staff writer

Supporters of Richland's proposed science and history museum still are hoping Tri-City legislators can wrangle \$380,000 for the project.

So far the Columbia River Exhibition of Science and Technology proposal hasn't made the final selection of historical projects to get state money.

But supporters embraced the latest funding figures, gleaned from Gov. Gary Locke's budget, which makes room for the top 14 historic projects. That still leaves the Richland museum ranked 18 out of 69, a few places shy of obtaining the \$380,000 for architectural planning.

They say they're encouraged that the museum project is close. Also, the Tri-City's Republican legislators are pushing for the museum money in a Republican-controlled Legislature.

The city of Richland recently set aside space at Columbia Point for the proposed 49,000-square-foot history and science museum, which will focus on groups affected by the Columbia River, from Hanford scientists to American Indians. An interim facility at Howard Amon Park has not yet opened its doors.

"Our legislators can make a difference," insisted Sharon Atkin, executive director of the Environmental Science and Technology Foundation, the nonprofit group that oversees the museum. "What's between Locke's budget and where we are is just \$956,000."

That's the amount of money needed to stretch funding for historic projects through the 18th on the list. But even if Locke's budget included all 69 projects, there are no guarantees all would be funded.

The governor's budget is viewed as a starting point in Legislative budget negotiations. The state House and Senate hammer out their own versions and then work out the final figures by session's end.

The Senate's preliminary capital budget is expected to be released by March 23 and the House's two weeks after.

Local legislators have expressed their support for the museum in recent months, said Atkin, who hopes to fan the political fires a bit more.

Prosecutors reduce charges in DOE tool theft case

By STEFANO ESPOSITO

Herald staff writer

The evidence against Marvin Goodwin filled a pickup and a U-Haul trailer.

But what unraveled the prosecution's case Wednesday in Benton County Superior Court is all but invisible to the human eye.

The first-degree theft trial of a 50-year-old Pasco man accused of stealing dozens of Department of Energy tools from Hanford came to a premature end Wednesday after prosecutors found incriminating paint missing from key evidence.

Prosecutors had said Goodwin, a former heavy equipment operator with ICF Kaiser Engineers Hanford

Co., must have stolen the tools because all equipment that officially leaves the reservation is dabbed with paint that can only be seen under a black light.

Goodwin's tools were not marked.

Goodwin, who collects tools as a hobby, had no receipt for the dozens of tools, including wrenches, clamps and saws, he says he bought at garage sales and flea markets.

But prosecutors agreed to reduce the first-degree theft charge to third-degree theft, a gross misdemeanor, after Goodwin showed the court tools he bought legally last July. Those tools, for which he had a receipt, were not marked with the invisible paint.

Midway through the trial, Good-

win entered an Alford plea to the reduced charge, meaning he does not admit guilt but acknowledges there's enough evidence that a jury might convict him.

Under the plea agreement, Goodwin, who admits only to being "addicted" to collecting tools, was allowed to keep most of the equipment and he won't go to jail.

"I heard quite a number of facts (during the trial), but I have a certain sense about you—I don't think you stole them, either," said Judge Carolyn Brown at the sentencing.

Prosecutors filed charges one year ago, after Goodwin's foreman told police Goodwin took tool boxes from the Hanford site on almost a daily basis, according to court docu-

ments. The foreman also said he saw Goodwin take a refrigerator and load it into his truck.

But Goodwin's attorney, Eugene Schuster, said the foreman had a grudge.

The foreman was laid off "and Goodwin took his job," Schuster said after the sentencing.

Outside, the courtroom Wednesday, Goodwin, holding one large red tool box in each hand, wasn't anxious to speak to the Herald, but he said he was relieved it was all over.

"I'm satisfied, that's all I can say," he said.

Asked why he collects tools, of all things, his wife, Debbie Goodwin, said: "It's like people who are addicted to gambling — we're

addicted to flea markets."

She said the couple have traveled from Montana to Utah and beyond in search of various tools and antiques.

"He's just got tons of stuff," added Schuster. "That's what he does. He just keeps it."

Meanwhile, a DOE official questioned about improperly marked tools leaving Hanford said he wasn't aware of a problem but said the issue likely would be reviewed.

"I'm certain, based on whatever the findings were in this case, that we will investigate our procedures here at Hanford and ensure that we are doing the right thing," said DOE Hanford spokesman Guy Schein. "That would be something our security people will certainly be looking at."

Thursday, March 13, 1997 Tri-City Herald

LIGO construction right on track

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The wish list of projects for a gravity-wave observatory is growing as its construction continues on schedule at Hanford.

The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory — or LIGO — is to begin checking out gravity waves by late 2000.

Meanwhile, about 200 scientists have formed a "LIGO Research Community" to figure out how to tackle this new frontier in astronomy.

Consequently, the proposal list for LIGO project is growing, said Fred Raab, the LIGO's director.

"With the new technology, we're getting the theoreticians sharpening up their pencils and coming up with ideas of what to do with (the LIGO)," Raab said.

The LIGO will be an L-shaped vacuum tube, with each leg about 2½ miles long.

Researchers will shoot a laser beam — about the diameter of a big outdoor flashlight — between mirrors suspended in the tubes and look for changes in the time it takes for light to travel between the mirrors.

Gravity waves are expected to move the mirrors by infinitesimal amounts — one ten-trillionth the diameter of a human hair.

“With the new technology, we’re getting the theoreticians sharpening up their pencils and coming up with ideas of what to do with (the LIGO).”

— Fred Raab,
the LIGO's director

Albert Einstein theorized gravity waves exist, which are ripples in space and time.

No one has seen these ripples, but enough cosmic clues exist to make scientists certain gravity waves exist.

Scientists believe sources of gravity waves may be stellar explosions or black holes that suck in light and other radiation.

Or the gravity waves could be ripples from the Big Bang, the cosmic explosion believed to have created the universe.

Included in the growing list of possible projects is looking at different parts of the nature of gravity waves, black holes and their creation, births of neutron stars (small dense stars consisting of tightly packed neutrons), starquakes on neutron stars, and other stellar phenomena.

Raab compared the LIGO to a microphone picking up sounds with scientists analyzing the voice prints against what their mathematics and physics predict, or what tele-

scopes can observe.

Current theories on gravity waves could be right, or wrong, or improved over time, he noted.

"A lot will depend on what reality really is," he said.

The California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology jointly manage the project funded with federal money through the National Science Foundation.

The price tag is \$292 million for designing and building, with a future \$68 million for the final shakedown work and the first year of operations.

Caltech and MIT are building a sister LIGO in Louisiana to triangulate the sources of gravity waves and to factor out earthly vibrations. Similar projects are underway in Italy and Germany, and others are on drawing boards in Japan and Australia.

Meanwhile, the two 2½-mile legs of 49-inch-

wide stainless steel vacuum tubes and their protective concrete coverings are expected to be completed this summer. The lasers are expected to be installed in 1998, with the shakedown tests to begin in 1999.

Construction standards are ultrastrict with infinitesimal fudge factors.

The tubes are created and welded at the Port of Pasco. Then the sealed tubes have the air sucked out and are surrounded by helium. If any infinitesimal bit of helium trips the sensors connected to the tube's interior, the tube must be fixed. So far, those sensors have not been tripped.

Meanwhile, the construction crew must work to keep the tubes' interiors free from dirt as the legs are assembled in the dusty Hanford sagebrush.

The standard for particles in the air inside the "legs" is 150 to 200 cleaner than the air outdoors, said Richard Riesen, a Caltech project manager.

Dust in the air can cause the lasers to flicker, spoiling measurements.

Another feature to be added resembles shock absorbers to keep vibrations from jiggling the lasers. Even the gravitational pulls of the moon and sun can nudge the tunnel — and the laser beams — by a half millimeter over 2½ miles.

Raab said: "In our business, that's gigantic."

Hanford fights for 1999 dollars

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

If the Clinton administration has its way, Hanford won't have enough money two years from now to stay on schedule for cleaning up its most dangerous nuclear waste.

But Hanford Manager John Wagoner pledged Thursday to work to persuade officials in Washington, D.C., that Hanford needs all the money it requested for fiscal 1999.

"We have to convince them our numbers are good numbers," Wagoner said during a briefing in Richland attended by about 110 people.

The figures showed:

■ DOE's Richland office believes Hanford needs a \$1.26 billion cleanup budget for the fiscal year that begins Nov. 1, 1999, to meet its goals under the Tri-Party Agreement — a 40-year contract for Hanford cleanup signed by DOE, the state Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

■ DOE headquarters proposes about \$1.16 billion Hanford cleanup budget for 1998-99, or nearly \$100 million less than what the Richland office's estimates it needs to meet all Tri-Party Agreement targets.

■ The federal Office of Management and Budget calls for a little less than \$1.08 billion for Hanford cleanup in 1998-99, or \$185 million under Richland's projections.

WASTE:
Temporary nuclear waste site in Nevada clears a Senate hurdle.
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Herald/Tracy Montauk

Computing facility manager Robert Eades stands in front of the newest supercomputer at the Environmental Molecular Sciences Lab. The \$14.1 million 2.6-terabyte computer ranks as the sixth-most-powerful in the world.

Supercomputer to be tested before put to work at Hanford

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The world's sixth-most-powerful computer now is in place at the fledgling Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory.

Now, Battelle-Northwest has to install the system's software and test it before turning it loose on numerous Hanford problems by this fall.

The supercomputer's first section was installed at the EMSL in Richland in 1996. The bigger second and final section recently was added.

The computer's brainpower is contained in 31 linked, cabinet-sized "frames" filling one side of a vast computer room.

The power of the 2.6-terabyte, \$14.1 million supercomputer — created by IBM with Battelle's help — boils down to speed. It can store 2,600 billion bytes of data, and can perform 227 billion operations per second.

That is fast enough to calculate an Internal Revenue Service 1040 tax form for each of Earth's 5.8 billion people in one second.

The computer's vast capacity and speed are needed because Hanford's environmental prob-

lems are complicated, and the forces of nature have to be simulated to figure out solutions, said Robert Eades, manager of the Molecular Science Computing Facility for the EMSL.

These environmental problems include how contaminants bind to the soil or travel through it, analyzing tank wastes and separating different types of radioactive and hazardous wastes. Many problems will be broken down to the molecular level.

The new supercomputer should speed up tests and calculations tackling these problems, Eades said.

"This can do things we couldn't dream of five years ago," he said.

The new supercomputer is designed so it has redundancy features to keep it going and to preserve information when power problems or other glitches materialize, said Michael Valley, a senior Battelle employee on the project.

The supercomputer's basic software is expected to be installed by late March, with a 90-day test period to follow.

After that, operating procedures will be established.

The world's most powerful computer is at the national laboratory at Sandia, New Mexico. It is used to simulate nuclear explosions.

"This can do things we couldn't dream of five years ago."
— Robert Eades, manager of the Molecular Science Computing Facility for the EMSL

Food processors have eye on area

BY MELISSA O'NEIL

Herald staff writer

Agribusiness recruitment in the Tri-Cities has taken a new turn with the arrival of Hanford contractor Fluor Daniel.

That's because the international engineering and construction firm has a division that designs food processing plants.

And officials in the division's Chicago headquarters now are mentioning the Mid-Columbia to clients.

"We're all interested in the same thing," said Peter Clark, vice president of technology for Fluor's food and beverage operating company. "Our company is interested in helping the region develop and is interested in doing business there. We are sincere about wanting to help the area."

Fluor's client list includes well-known brands Frito Lay, Nabisco and Dole. "When you think of the food products you buy from them, think of the factories we've made for potato chips, soft drinks, crackers," Clark said.

Food processing projects typically range from \$10 million to \$50 million, Clark said, adding food safety is the priority in designs.

Fluor Daniel won the Hanford cleanup contract in part because of its pledge to help diversify the Tri-City economy. Considering the area's strong agricultural resources, it's a natural link to Clark's division.

"I don't believe we've yet constructed a food processing plant in the state of Washington," Clark said in a phone interview Monday. "The

"I don't believe we've yet constructed a food processing plant in the state of Washington."

—Peter Clark, vice president of technology, Fluor food and beverage operating company

thing I always say is, if it makes sense, it will happen."

Clark visited the Tri-Cities recently.

"We were talking to a potential client about a project, a cold storage facility, and we weren't able to point to any local projects yet," he said. "It's our intent to correct that, of course, as soon as we can."

Tri-City Industrial Development Council officials plan to return the favor with a visit this spring to the Chicago division.

Clients and prospective clients often ask Fluor Daniel to help pick a plant site.

Clark said companies' criteria usually include utility costs, transportation, availability of raw materials and ability to deal with wastes or byproducts. Easy access to raw materials is a higher priority than the labor force available in the area, he said.

"Typically a company says, 'We need to be in the West,'" Clark said. "California is becoming more expensive to build in, so people have been migrating north and east."

"It's only a matter of time before they look to Washington."



Herald/Tracy Montauk

Checking out the tube at LIGO

Ron Fenn exits one of two stainless steel vacuum tubes being built for the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) at Hanford. Once completed, LIGO will be used to measure gravity waves from outer space by shooting laser beams down the 2½-mile-long tubes and measuring the ripples. See story, Page A3.

College to get Hanford trailers and \$15,000

The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland on Friday donated four office trailers and \$15,000 for student scholarships to Heritage College in Toppenish.

The trailers will add 4,748 square feet of classroom space to the college's campus. Heritage has had a five-year partnership with the laboratory, which includes a computer system to link students and faculty to the Department of Energy's Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory.

Heritage was opened in 1982 to serve the American Indian and Hispanic populations in the Yakima Valley and help those students enter careers in science, math and technology.

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DOE signs \$160.3 million steam plant contract

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy expects to save \$108 million over 25 years with a long-range steam plant contract signed Friday.

The overhaul of Hanford's steam plants in the 200 and 300 Areas is expected to trim the work force from about 100 people to 17 within the next couple of years.

DOE's Hanford Manager John Wagoner expects some of the trimming to come through attrition, with some layoffs possible.

DOE signed the performance-based con-

tract with Johnson Controls Inc. of Milwaukee, expecting to pay \$160.3 million over the next 25 years.

The contract covers Hanford plants that provide heat for many buildings and steam for a process that removes water from liquid wastes.

Currently, the 200 Area and 300 Area each have an antiquated steam plant dating from World War II. Many of the plant parts are World War II surplus material, and one compressor was taken from a 1926 locomotive, Wagoner said.

Under the new contract, Johnson Controls will replace those two plants — and a third

defunct plant — with 44 smaller boilers scattered about the 200 Area and 300 area by the end of 1997. The capital costs are estimated at \$31.5 million.

The contract calls for Johnson Controls not to get paid until the new boilers are up and running.

Then Johnson Controls would be paid monthly — with its pay docked if it does not meet specific energy-efficiency goals.

The monthly payments would start out high for the company to recoup its capital costs, and then shrink as construction costs are paid off.

If the company is not penalized, it expects

to receive an average of \$555,657 a month over the final 24 years of the contract after construction is complete.

The new system is expected to be more efficient in producing steam and being maintained — leading to the predicted \$108 million in savings, Wagoner said.

That leads to the expected drop in the work force. DOE, Johnson and Hanford unions are discussing union involvement in the construction and subsequent operation of the plants, he said.

Currently, the steam plants' managers are employed by Dyncorp Tri-Cities Services, and the workers belong to unions coordi-

nated by Fluor Daniel Hanford.

The contract between Johnson Controls and DOE allows Johnson to propose energy-saving measures for other parts of Hanford in the future, in return for a negotiated percentage of that savings.

"This is a real benchmark for a public-private partnership," said Tom Kruger, vice president for government operations at Johnson Controls at a Friday press conference in Richland.

DOE thinks similar contracts could be created and applied to other Hanford functions, Wagoner said.

DOE chief reminded of FFTF

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — Energy Secretary Federico Pena was reminded Tuesday that Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility is not the only solution to the nation's looming tritium shortage.

Just moments after Pena assured Northwest members of the House interior appropriations subcommittee the Energy Department was taking a close look at the Hanford research reactor, a congressman from Tennessee told Pena that light-water reactors owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority also could do the job.

"I, too, am going to be a little parochial about this," said Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn. "A lot of people are pulling on you from all corners, and all I'm asking is that you keep your powder dry. There are assets all across the country which could produce tritium."

The department is considering using either a light-water reactor or a linear accelerator to produce tritium, a radioactive gas used to boost the power of nuclear

weapons. But the department also has decided to keep FFTF, its newest and safest reactor, on standby as it decides whether to use FFTF to produce tritium temporarily until an accelerator or a reactor is completed.

While the interior appropriations subcommittee has jurisdiction over only a small part of DOE's budget dealing with energy efficiency, weatherization and alternative energy sources, the hearing gave Reps. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., and George Nethercutt, R-Wash., an opportunity to ask Pena about FFTF.

Dicks, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said if a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is negotiated with Russia, the U.S. may be able to reduce even further its nuclear stockpile. That also could reduce the demand for tritium to the extent FFTF might be able to meet all needs.

"We might be able to meet all the tritium demand with FFTF, and that could save us billions of dollars," Dicks said. He added that critics who say restarting the reactor would take money away from

the Hanford cleanup are wrong. "The best way to ensure cleanup is to save \$12 billion by not having to build an accelerator or a new reactor."

Pena had no comment on Dicks' suggestion FFTF could produce all the nation's tritium but reiterated DOE is interested in the reactor.

"FFTF is clearly an option we will evaluate very closely," Pena said.

Dicks said after the hearing that the Russians have shown an interest in a new round of START talks.

However, he said the summit in Helsinki later this week between President Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin likely will focus more on NATO expansion, though arms control could be discussed.

Dick also pointed out that while an existing light-water reactor could be used to produce tritium, restarting FFTF still would be cheaper.

Nethercutt told Pena FFTF also could be used to produce medical isotopes.

"I am aware of that," Pena said. "Your new governor and the congressional delegation have been very successful in bringing that to my attention."

Fluor focus shifting to controlling costs

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel has increased its federal government business five-fold in the past two years.

Now it has to digest that big bite.

In two years, Fluor has seen its government-related business increase from \$300 million to about \$1.5 billion, said Ron Peterson president of Fluor Daniel's Government Services Operating Co. in a speech in Richland. He spoke to about 200 people attending a meeting of the National Management Association's Hanford chapter.

Fluor's recent growth includes a five-year Hanford contract and a seven-year contract to provide engineering services to the Department of Energy's national defense work at Los Alamos. Both contracts were awarded in late 1996.

"We know how to target the market. We know how to bid, and we know how to do it effectively," Peterson said.

But Fluor's ability to control working costs has not kept up, he said. That reflects recent Wall Street analyses of Fluor.

"The last 24 months, I put 90 percent of my efforts into marketing. Now, it'll go into reverse. Now, we'll be doing a lot of things to execute (the contracts)," he said.

One reason for the super-fast growth is that several DOE multiple-

year contracts have been put out for bids recently. If Fluor does not bid when contracts are open, it won't get those chances again for several years, Peterson said.

"If you want to be a player in the marketplace, you've got to follow the timing of the marketplace," Peterson said.

Another factor is the number of companies able to handle DOE work probably will shrink, he said.

DOE is demanding more from its contractors, including that they assume greater risks, more liability and put more of their fees on the line.

Only very big companies can face those greater responsibilities he said. Smaller companies will either not tackle major DOE contracts, or they will join forces with other companies to form teams. Fluor's Hanford contract is handled by a seven-company team.

Peterson speculated this eventually will lead to DOE's big contracts being divided among three major companies. He speculated Fluor and Bechtel will be two, with possibly Raytheon or some other company being the third.

He noted DOE's defense and environmental budget is about \$11 billion this year. And if three corporations or teams divide an \$11 billion pie into thirds, that means each player would get about \$3.6 billion worth of business — an increase over Fluor's current \$1.5 billion, he said.

DOE overpaid Westinghouse

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy has overpaid the Westinghouse Hanford Co. by up to "several million dollars" in performance fees, internal DOE reviews have concluded.

The overpayments resulted because work was incomplete or substandard, DOE oversight was weak, or performance goals were too easy, DOE's Hanford Manager John

Refund sought from former Hanford contractor

Wagoner said at a Wednesday press conference.

In one case, Westinghouse received a \$225,000 performance fee for a project that cost only \$24,766 to complete.

DOE is trying to recover the overpayments from Westinghouse, which was replaced Oct. 1 as the main Hanford contractor.

"Some of it Westinghouse agrees with, but some of it Westinghouse doesn't," Wagoner said.

Westinghouse spokeswoman Mimi Limbach echoed that assessment.

Other than saying it could be "several million dollars," Wagoner declined to be specific on the amount DOE hopes to recover

because negotiations with Westinghouse are under way.

The amount is at least \$1.86 million, DOE officials said.

Limbach said Westinghouse identified one overpayment in December and has offered to return \$411,000 on that one item. She declined to comment on how much

Westinghouse is willing to repay overall, citing the ongoing negotiations.

DOE is withholding \$2.1 million in fees from fiscal 1995 and fiscal 1996, while pursuing recovery.

The overpayments date back to the 1995 fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, 1994.

That is the first year DOE used a "performance-based incentive" program to pay

State delegation lobbying for tank farm privatization

By the Herald staff

Washington's congressional delegation has begun lobbying a key committee chairman for money to pay for a Hanford tank farm privatization project.

Eight Washington representatives sent a letter Friday to U.S. Rep. Floyd Spence, R-S.C., chairman of the House's National Security Committee, to authorize enough money to be set aside in the Department of Energy's fiscal 1998 budget for tank farm privatization.

The eight include Republican Reps. Doc Hastings and George Nethercutt and Democrat Rep. Norm Dicks.

DOE is requesting \$427 million he authorized in fiscal 1998, which

begins Oct. 1, to be put in a set-aside fund to pay for glass logs to be produced by a pair of privatized vitrification plant ventures.

The concept calls for two corporate teams to build pilot plants and later larger plants to turn Hanford's 55 million gallons of liquid radioactive wastes into glass logs.

The idea is that the companies would not be paid with the set-aside money until they either produce logs, or DOE decides to otherwise terminate the project.

DOE set aside \$170 million in fiscal 1996, and tentatively plans to request another \$325 million for tank farm privatization set-aside funds for fiscal 1999, which begins Oct. 1, 1998.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 1997

DOE seeking money back from Westinghouse

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy paid Westinghouse Hanford Co. \$29.27 million in performance fees during the contractor's final two years at Hanford.

DOE now is seeking an undisclosed amount of that money back from Westinghouse, claiming overpayments for work that was incomplete, substandard or too easy to justify a performance-based fee.

Overpayments could range from \$1.86 million to several million dollars. DOE and Westinghouse declined to be more specific, citing the negotiations between the two on what should be repaid.

The overpayments date back to fiscal 1995, which began Oct. 1, 1994. That is the first year

DOE used a "performance-based incentive" program to pay Westinghouse.

That evolved into today's system in which all DOE fees paid to current lead contractor Fluor or Daniel Hanford are based on meeting performance goals.

Previously, Westinghouse had received a base fee and a subjectively judged "award" fee. The added "performance" fee tied some of the payments to meeting specific objectives.

Here is how the payments break down, according to DOE figures.

■ In fiscal 1995, Westinghouse could have earned \$41 million in base, award and performance fees. It actually received \$28.66 million.

It was eligible to receive \$14.32 million in performance fees, but actually received \$14.48 million — \$120,000 more than the maximum. This is part of what DOE is seeking reimbursement for.

■ In fiscal year 1996, which began Oct. 1, 1995, Westinghouse could have earned \$35.95 million in total fees. It actually received \$25.39 million.

It was eligible to earn \$22.95 million in performance fees, and actually received \$14.79 million. DOE is seeking reimbursement for part of this amount too.

Some of the fiscal 1996 figures were not available last week when DOE announced the overpayments.

DOE is withholding \$2.1 million in fees from fiscal 1995 and fiscal 1996 while pursuing recovery.

Last year, DOE's Richland office became suspicious that it had paid for some incomplete work and called in DOE's inspector general's office to investigate.

The inspector general's investigation and a follow-up Richland DOE office examination

found incomplete work, work that was too easy to justify the performance fees and weak DOE oversight.

In one case, Westinghouse received a \$225,000 performance fee for a project that cost only \$24,766 to complete.

DOE and Westinghouse said the problems showed up in a small portion of Westinghouse's overall work.

Both said part of the problem could stem from differing interpretations of what the objectives were.

DOE's inspector general's office declined to comment on if it is investigating whether Westinghouse committed intentional fraud. Westinghouse denies it did.

Energy Secretary Federico Pena has ordered a review of all current and future performance-fee contracts to ensure standards are well defined.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 1997

New timetable faces overseers of FFTF operations

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A possibly sped-up timetable faces a brand-new Fast Flux Test Facility standby operations office to be jointly run by Battelle-Northwest and Fluor Daniel Hanford.

The Department of Energy told Battelle and Fluor on Tuesday that it has approved a proposal by Battelle and Fluor to jointly oversee the reactor's standby operations and the studies on reviving it.

One wrinkle facing that joint venture is that new Energy Secretary Federico Pena told a Senate committee Thursday that a decision on the reactor's fate could be moved up from late 1998 to early 1998 or late 1997.

Pena told the Senate's Armed Ser-

vices Committee that the fiscal 1997 Defense Authorization Act requires DOE to select a tritium production option by April 15, 1997, instead of the originally planned deadline in late 1998.

DOE cannot make that April deadline, but it will speed up its tritium studies to reach a decision by late 1997 or early 1998, Pena told the committee.

And Battelle's Walter Apley, the new director of the joint Battelle-Fluor "FFTF Standby Project Office," believes the Hanford studies can be done by a moved-up deadline.

"The staff (at the FFTF) has already generated the core set of information. Now we have to package it, collect it and integrate it," Apley said.

Tritium is a radioactive gas that boosts the explosive power of atomic

bombs. But tritium has a 12-year half life, and the nation's supply is shrinking. The United States currently does not have a tritium-production source.

DOE is studying whether building a linear accelerator or converting a commercial reactor, both in the South, would be the better long-term tritium source.

In the same study, DOE is looking at the dormant FFTF to see if it would be an economical interim tritium source until one of the other projects gets on line. The FFTF scenario calls for a permanent medical isotope pro-



Apley

duction mission to be phased in as the tritium mission phases out.

These studies will be one task faced by the FFTF Standby Project Office, expected to be functioning in about a month.

Under this venture, Battelle and Fluor would supervise FFTF projects conducted by Fluor and Babcock & Wilcox Hanford Co. workers at the reactor.

Battelle and Fluor agreed to join forces in February. But they needed DOE's approval, which arrived Tuesday, to proceed.

Apley, who has been Battelle's associate laboratory director for operations, was selected as the new office's director. Trained as a nuclear engineer, he served in the U.S. Navy from 1971 to 1976, and joined Battelle in 1977. At Battelle, he has worked extensively with DOE and the

Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Fluor has not appointed a deputy director yet.

The standby projects office will supervise:

■ Maintaining the FFTF in standby.

■ Tackling deactivation work that will not affect the FFTF's potential to be resurrected.

■ Studying the technical and economic viability of using the FFTF to produce tritium and medical isotopes. Other studies will look at safety, environmental and regulatory issues associated with a restart.

DOE has allocated \$1 million to these studies in fiscal 1997, which began Oct. 1, 1996. Another \$6 million is allocated for fiscal 1998, which begins Oct. 1, 1997, close to the deadline for a sped-up series of studies.

Apley said representatives from Tri-City and Northwest interest

groups will be invited to study meetings for their feedback.

"This is clearly the future of the FFTF. Obviously, it has a lot of strong regional interests," Apley said.

If the FFTF is resurrected, Battelle will consider if it wants to try to become one of the operators — either alone or in a team, said Battelle spokesman Greg Koller.

But the memorandum of agreement between Battelle and Fluor to jointly supervise the standby projects does not address Battelle becoming a manager or co-manager of a revived FFTF.

Battelle's interest in the standby operations is prompted by its current research into medical isotopes, nuclear safety, and testing materials.

Hanford workshop in Richland

By the Herald staff

An all-day workshop on Hanford is scheduled for May 31 at the Shilo Inn in Richland.

Topics will cover the history and science of the site, and it includes visits to Hanford, the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve and the Hanford Reach.

The public workshop is sponsored by the Hanford Education Action League (HEAL) of Spokane. Cost is \$60, with an extra \$25 if a participant takes a boat ride up the Hanford Reach.

The workshop begins at 9 a.m. with overviews by James Thomas, research director of the Hanford Health Information Network and William Houff, a founder of HEAL.

Battelle already cut health costs

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer.

Battelle-Northwest already has done what Fluor Daniel is trying to do at Hanford.

Sort of. The Richland research company has taken steps to cut by 10 percent the cost of providing medical, dental and

vision care for its nonunion workers and retirees.

But Battelle didn't do this by addressing the core problem of above-average medical costs in the Tri-Cities.

It simply jacked up the out-of-pocket costs to its employees at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, which Battelle operates for the Department of Energy.

"We wanted our benefits package to be such that we could attract highly qualified staff, but at the same time it had to

The study found health benefits costs at Battelle were 19 percent higher than for other national labs.

Bippen said the consultant's report also recommended Battelle cut pensions to help control costs. "But we felt the pension and savings and loan programs were critical, so we left them alone and opted to look at health care costs only," she said.

Battelle's new medical benefits programs didn't increase premiums, but did increase deductibles and maximum out-of-pocket costs, Bippen said.

"And yes, the bottom line in many cases is employees will pay more to get the same," she added.

Formerly, Battelle workers paid about 21 percent of the total costs of their health care. Under the new plan, workers will pay about 31 percent of the total — still less than the national average of 40 percent, Bippen said.

Bechtel plans 15-percent cut

Bechtel Hanford Co. is looking at ways to cut its medical benefit costs by 15 percent this year.

Any change in Bechtel's current benefit package is not expected until about mid-summer, according to Rick Dale, spokesman for DOE's first-ever environmental restoration contractor.

"How we achieve this savings is currently being analyzed," he said. "What needs to be made clear, however, is that reducing costs does not necessarily mean reducing the level of benefits."

"Through discussions with the medical community and our insurers, we are working to provide an affordable and comprehensive benefits package that is at least equal, if not superior, to typical benefits in the commercial sector."

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SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1997

Radioactive solvents successfully removed from Hanford B Plant

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The toughest hurdle has been jumped in getting Hanford's B Plant cleaned up four years ahead of schedule.

Babcock & Wilcox Hanford Co. recently finished decontaminating and removing about 10,000 gallons of radioactive solvents in the plant.

Those solvents were the biggest obstacles in B&W meeting a revamped timetable to get major cleanup work done at B Plant by September 1998, said Dewey Robbins, B&W's coordinator for its B Plant canyon deactivation team.

Originally, the major cleanup work at B Plant was to be done by 2002. But speeding up the deadline to 1998 is estimated to save about \$100 million in surveillance and maintenance costs over four years — with most focusing on taking care of the 10,000 gallons of solvents.

The Tri-Party Agreement — the master timetable governing Hanford's cleanup — was revived to reflect the 1998 deadline. That revision called for the solvents to be removed by July. Consequently, the removal was completed four months early.

B Plant went on line in 1945 as one of Hanford's super-huge chemical separations plants involved in extracting plutonium from uranium irradiated in the site's reactors.

In the 1960s, B Plant was converted to remove radioactive cesium and strontium from tank wastes to be stored in capsules at the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility. The WESF was built next door B Plant, and is attached to it.

The 10,000 gallons of solvent were used in taking radionuclides out of the strontium and cesium in the wastes.

The hot, combustible, radioactive solvent was stored in two tanks in a six-tank system inside B Plant. If a fire broke out, danger existed that radioactive releases would escape from B Plant.

The heavy maintenance costs stemmed from operating and maintaining several systems to prevent and cope with fires and other potential dangers.

B&W's cleanup work reduced the highly radioactive solvent to 2,900 gallons that produces less than 5 millirem per hour. Millirems are a measure of radiation damage to human tissue. A chest x-ray produces 50 millirems.

The solvents are now in a tank outside of the plant.

Hanford will look at sending the solvent to an incinerator in Tennessee, or putting it in cement-like blocks, or storing it until better disposal technologies are invented, Robbins said.

Meanwhile, B&W still has some shutdown and cleaning-out work left before it can turn the plant over to Bechtel Hanford Inc.

Bechtel will tackle the slight contamination left in the building and the eventual disposal of the 124-foot-tall, 69,000-square-foot structure.

Although B Plant will shut down, the attached 15,000-square-foot WESF still will function as an indefinite storage site for 1,930 capsules containing radioactive cesium and strontium.

Hanford is studying what to do with those 4-foot-tall capsules. That study is to be done by September.

2 Tri-City hospitals agree to reductions

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Fluor Daniel Hanford and its major subcontractors at Hanford have negotiated deals with two Tri-City hospitals to slash health care costs and are negotiating a contract with the third.

Administrators at Our Lady of Lourdes Health Center in Pasco and Kennewick General Hospital won't say by how much they agreed to cut their charges. But the Herald learned the Fluor team asked for reductions ranging from 16 to 18 percent

for treating the Hanford work force.

Officials say the agreements could drive down medical costs for all Tri-Citians, and could make the area more attractive to new businesses by letting them offer more affordable health coverage.

There is little such competitive edge currently, according to studies that indicate Tri-City health care costs are about 30 percent higher than national averages.

Ironically, the push to drive down health care costs is coming from the very agency some blame for the current situation — the Department of Energy. Critics say that by offering excessively generous, taxpayer-funded benefits to Hanford workers, DOE for decades has sanctioned

On Page A6



BENEFITS: Hanford tries to cut costs.
BATTELLE: Reductions already in force.
DOCTORS: Blame for high costs can be spread around.
SOLUTIONS: Tri-City group searches for answers.

Cost of care in Tri-Cities higher than most cities

By WANDA BRIGGS
Herald staff writer

Group Health Northwest paid the three Tri-City hospitals \$13 million last year to care for the health maintenance organization's members and their dependents.

Those same services for the same number of people would have cost only about \$8.5 million in Spokane and just slightly more than that in Yakima or Walla Walla, said Bob Burden, director of

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Please see **HEALTH**, Page A2 ▶

Price being paid now for past Hanford generosity

By WANDA BRIGGS

Herald staff writer

Decades of generous health benefits at Hanford, where the government allowed substantial fees to be passed on to taxpayers, may be one reason for high Tri-City medical costs.

And with the next-biggest town about 2½ hours away, Tri-City doctors and hospitals have a geographical monopoly that some officials say contributes to disparity.

The fact the community's three hospitals sometimes duplicate costly services — such as maternity programs or diagnostic equipment — is another likely contributor.

Whatever the cause, the high cost of Tri-City medicine has drawn together community leaders, doctors, hospitals, federal contractors and union representatives to make health care more affordable.

"Over the course of time, going back to the days of the Cold War, we have had a rich set of benefits on this site compared to private industry," said Dom Sansotta, DOE's manager for contractor work force programs.

In the late 1980s, when private industry began to take steps to control spiraling medical care costs, Hanford lagged behind, Sansotta said. "We were a posh

site with solid budgets ... and not so much in danger of survival like some in private business."

For a private company, the cost of providing worker health care coverage comes out of the bottom line. But for Hanford workers, the majority of the cost of employee medical costs is shouldered by taxpayers, who paid \$90 million of the \$135 million total paid for Hanford contractor employees last year.

But with federal budget deficits and the advent of contract reform, DOE has told its new management contractor, Fluor Daniel Hanford Co., to cut the health care bill at Hanford.

"It's our responsibility as a government agency here to give a reasonable cost to taxpayers for services rendered," Sansotta said. "We have to be representative of industrial norms."

Fluor has a strong incentive for Hanford to be part of the solution.

The company pledged to DOE it would cut the cost of providing medical, dental and vision care for Hanford's current work force by 15 percent, and to reduce those same costs by 5 percent for Hanford retirees — all by Sept. 30.

If Fluor fails, it will lose part of its \$20.5 million incentive fee from DOE this year. It's the first time a Hanford contractor has been offered a meaning-



ful carrot to cut health care costs.

"There has been an emphasis to contain health care costs at Hanford for a long time, but this latest effort by Fluor is the most serious," Sansotta said.

He said DOE has given Fluor a "free license" to make changes. Fluor hopes for a minimum \$10 million to \$12 million in annual savings.

Sansotta said he doesn't think Hanford can be blamed for the high cost of health care in the area, but he said "the government does have to bear responsibility for providing excessively generous benefit programs throughout the DOE complex."

"But if we are blamed, then we must

also be credited now with turning the tide," he said. "We are accepting the responsibility to try and lower health care costs."

Although no specific amount of Fluor's fee is tied to reducing health care costs, this includes two of the 84 goals Fluor must accomplish to win the entire \$20.5 million pot. Performing 76 or fewer of those 84 goals means Fluor gets none of this fee.

That special \$20.5 million pot — called the "mega fee" in Hanford jargon — is part of the overall \$54 million Fluor can earn this fiscal year in performance fee if it does nearly everything right.

"DOE has told us to bring commercial practices to this site in a lot of ways, such as how we do procurements and how we provide benefits," said Michael Yates, Fluor's executive vice president and chief operating officer.

What Fluor manages to save in indirect health care costs can be spent directly on environmental cleanup, Yates explained.

Yates said Fluor expects soon to offer cafeteria-style benefits to employees, which means workers can pick and choose their benefits.

He said people who use the system most will pay more, in the form of co-payments. Those who use the benefits less can opt for less coverage — and less cost to themselves.

If Fluor's actions drive down the area's health care costs, Tri-Citians will benefit, Yates said.

"We can have a ripple effect here," he said. "When businesses are looking to relocate here, they look at labor and benefit costs. If we can help bring those costs

more in line with commercial standards, it will make this area more attractive for economic diversification."

While Hanford may have contributed over the years to higher-cost health care by passing along the bulk of its costs to taxpayers, it's not the only factor.

Jim Watts, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and Hanford's biggest union, says costly duplication of medical services also is a culprit.

In 1977, a state health agency, urged the Tri-Cities to build a single new hospital, preferably at Vista Field in Kennewick. It should have happened then and should happen now, Watts said.

"I'd like to see the medical community here get real," Watts said. "I know there are some advances being made ... But there must be more."

"The dialogue in the Tri-Cities about cutting health care costs — driven in part by the union's message to Fluor that health care overcharges would not be borne by employees — is a step in the right direction."

Watts and other delegates of the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council, the umbrella agency representing 15 unions at Hanford, are negotiating with Fluor Daniel about a variety of key labor issues — including medical benefits.

They applaud Fluor's efforts to drive health care costs down at Hanford, Watts said, they just don't want it to be on the backs of workers.

"This isn't just a Fluor issue, a union issue or a Hanford issue," Watts said. "This is a communitywide problem and it will take all of us to solve it."

Reactor

Continued from Page A1

radioactive materials that have spread in varying levels throughout the complex.

This work is done by scraping, scrubbing, chipping, lasering, blasting, burning or otherwise zapping a thin layer off the surfaces of contaminated walls and floors.

Spray-painted red and green crosses are gradually spreading through the complex — showing where decontamination is complete.

The slightly radioactive ashes, dust or rubble are then shipped to Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility — a super-sized dump in central Hanford that holds contaminated dirt.

The more hazardous and the non-

contaminated debris will go to other Hanford waste disposal sites.

Later, crews will demolish the complex. The roughly 65,000-square-foot complex — which includes auxiliary buildings, the main building — will be reduced to about a fifth that size. A single huge chamber containing just the reactor will remain, covering about 13,000 square feet.

Finally, Bechtel plans to seal the remaining "pillbox" for 75 years.

The 4-foot-thick concrete walls of the main reactor chamber will become the outer walls. A slanted metal roof will be added. One remaining door would be welded shut, opened only once every five years for the interior to be inspected. Sensors and a television camera would guard the interior the rest of the time.

Each cocooned reactor is expected to cost \$30,000 a year to watch and maintain, instead of the \$200,000 it

now costs each year.

Meanwhile, Eidam's staff will test about 20 new technologies for DOE. These include new types of protective clothes and air packs, several radiation measuring and detection devices and some new methods to remove radioactive surfaces, such as microwaves and pulses of light.

Anything that speeds up work or cuts costs will be kept for the next cocooning, Eidam said.

Eidam's goal is to use the experience gained at C Reactor to cut its \$18.2 million cost by \$5 million for the next cocooning.

No timetable is set yet to cocoon all eight of Hanford's nine plutonium-production reactors destined for demolition. DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology will have to negotiate that schedule.

The ninth reactor is B Reactor, which is being eyed as a museum. It

was the world's first production-scale nuclear reactor. Plutonium from B Reactor was used in the bomb dropped on Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

After 75 years, the cocoons will probably be torn apart and big girders placed underneath the reactor blocks, which weight between 12,000 tons to 16,000 tons.

Then monstrous frameworks with gigantic treads would hook to the girders to slowly roll the reactors several miles inland for burial.

Special roads would be built. Travel speeds would be measured in feet per hour, not miles per hour. The moving costs are expected to be at least \$60 million.

Bechtel believes that during the 75-year wait, new ways and equipment will be invented to help out.

And Hanford officials would have plenty of time to decide if the reactors should be moved at all.

Hanford to 'cocoon' C Reactor

Contaminated complex
to be sealed for 75 years

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Hanford's C Reactor is where the reservation's nuclear engineers once tested nuclear innovations before installing them in the other reactors along the Columbia River.

New fuel mixtures. New fuel casings. New instruments — C Reactor was where they were first checked out.

So, it's fitting that C Reactor is the prototype for the master plan to dispose of eight of Hanford's nine defunct reactors.

Right now, about 90 Bechtel Hanford workers are converting the C Reactor from a sprawling, leaky and contaminated hulk into a massive, but simple leakproof concrete box.

Official government jargon calls this "Interim Safe Storage."

The common Hanford slang for it is "cocooning."

The idea is the "cocoon" will seal off the contaminated reactor from the outside world for at least 75 years while Hanford officials decide on a permanent solution.

For now, the plan is to move the eight reactors inland after 75 years. But even if officials eventually decide to go ahead, they need more time to figure out how to get the huge, highly radioactive cores to a permanent disposal site in central Hanford.

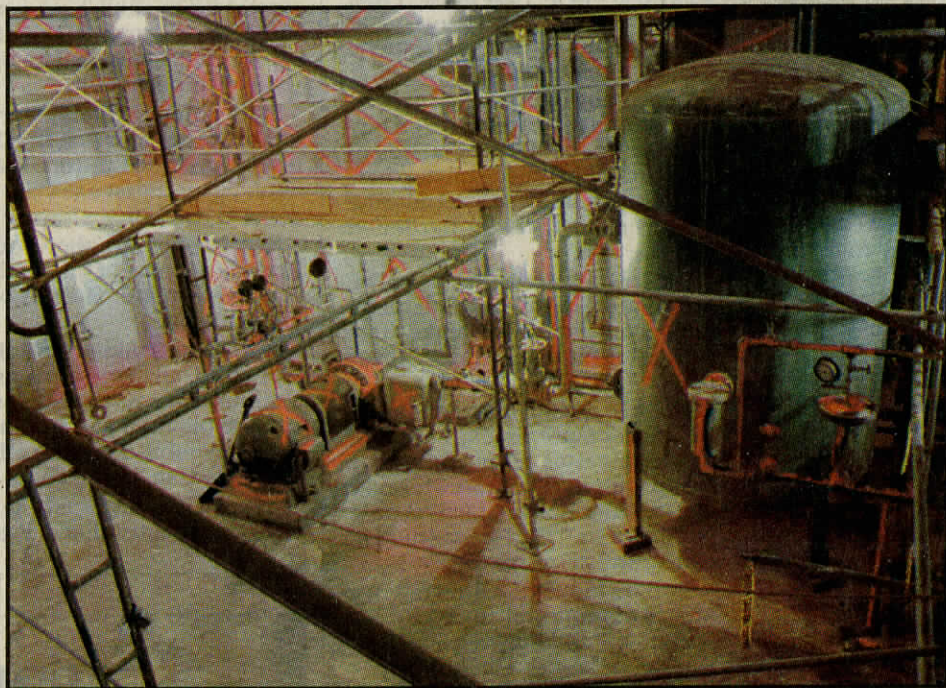
Bechtel plans to finish the 21-month cocooning project at C Reactor by July 1998 for a cost of \$18.2 million.

At that point, Bechtel will begin cocooning another site — possibly F Reactor or D Reactor.

C Reactor operated from 1952 to 1969. After 1969, the 65,000-square-foot complex sat and rotted.

Its innards are a spooky labyrinth of gray concrete hallways and chambers spread across several stories and wings sticking out here and there.

The rotten roof leaks. Rainwater drips into puddles several floors below. The complex is packed with electrical panels and



Herald/Tracy Montauk

Spray-painted neon-red X's mark parts of Hanford's C reactor that are decontaminated and ready for demolition. Bechtel Hanford workers are currently "cocooning" the reactor, which has been dormant since 1969, by disposing of what they can and sealing the rest off from the outside world.

loose wires, making any standing water potentially dangerous.

Power was cut to the complex, and now outside generators and portable lamps give the interior a slightly eerie-looking mix of light and shadows.

This winter, 6-foot snow drifts piled up in the rooms and corridors. Each snow pile had to be checked for radioactivity, although none turned up hot.

Asbestos was used extensively in the reactor, creating another hazard. Small critters and birds easily work their way in. And Greg Eidam, Bechtel's project manager for C Reactor, worries about whether the complex's doors are enough to keep curious people out.

The only major work done since 1969 was the removal of 50 tons of contaminated sludge from a fuel storage basin in 1985.

It costs about \$200,000 a year for Hanford

to watch and maintain the complex.

In the early 1990s, the Department of Energy and former contractor Westinghouse Hanford Co. studied possible solutions for the string of defunct reactors:

The cocooning concept evolved from that effort.

Meanwhile, DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., was looking for a big project to test a series of new technologies.

Those tests were married with the C Reactor project. Bechtel began the field work in October.

A first step was kicking out seven rattlesnakes.

Another task was to spread a net over the huge main reactor chamber to catch falling chunks of rotting ceiling.

Workers at C Reactor are busy removing

DOE memo criticizes FFTF costs

By The Associated Press
and Herald staff

WASHINGTON — Boosting the Fast Flux Test Facility's tritium-producing capabilities would lead to costly extra tests to ensure it would operate safely, an internal Department of Energy memo said.

The concerns were outlined in a memo written about eight months ago that is expected to provide ammunition to those who want Hanford's FFTF to be shut down as previously planned.

However, a top DOE official said Monday that the study was based on projections that would have the FFTF producing more tritium than proposed by the project's Hanford backers — and more than is supported by Washington state political leaders.

A copy of the memo, which expressed the views of the defense programs office within the Energy Department, was provided Monday to The Associated Press by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, a private group that has been critical of the Hanford facility's use in future tritium production.

"They're saying it would be very expensive and very dangerous to use this reactor," said Ajun Makhijani, a nuclear physicist and president of the Institute in Takoma Park, Md.

The memo was part of the package reviewed by the JASON group, an independent scientific panel that looked at the technical feasibility of reviving the FFTF.

Kaiser seeks Hanford money

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

ICF Kaiser International Inc. contends it still is owed about \$10 million for work done at Hanford.

And six months after leaving Hanford, company officials are losing their patience waiting for payment.

The \$10 million is for work ICF Kaiser Hanford Co. did as a subcontractor for Westinghouse Hanford Co. from late 1993 to 1996.

During that time, the Department of Energy paid Westinghouse to run Hanford, which in turn paid Kaiser as a subcontractor.

Kaiser CEO James Edwards said Tuesday that he isn't sure whether to point his finger entirely at DOE or Westinghouse or both.

He said, "We've done a lot of auditing and scrubbing (of the financial figures) on our own to be sure. We're pretty sure they owe us."

But a DOE official said the dispute is a matter solely between Kaiser and Westinghouse because DOE's contract was with Westinghouse, not with Kaiser.

Briefly

Seahawks stadium squeaks by Senate

Victims still critical from Easter wreck

The mother and daughter who survived a head-on collision Easter Sunday remained in critical condition Wednesday, hospital officials said.

Sharon Click, 31, Kennewick, was in the intensive care unit at Kadlec Medical Center with a compression fracture of the spine. Her daughter, Danielle, 13, was still at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital and Health Center in Tacoma with bruised lungs, severe head injuries and skull fractures.

They were injured Sunday when Henry C. Hartley, 78, of Benton City, drove his car into the Clicks' vehicle while he was driving the wrong direction on Interstate 82.

Hartley died at the scene. Dennis Click, 10, died Tuesday morning from massive head injuries.

Sharon Click is the daughter of Frank and Judy Click. Her hus-

By The Associated Press

OLYMPIA — The Washington Senate on Wednesday narrowly approved a funding package for a new Seattle Seahawks stadium,

apparently deciding that saving the team outweighs the financial risk of building "a playhouse for millionaires."

Backers described the proposal to let state voters decide whether to approve a \$425 million stadium and exhibition center in place of the Kingdome as a last chance to accept billionaire Paul Allen's offer to buy the NFL franchise and keep the team in Seattle.

The special election would be June 3. The Senate vote was 25-23, the minimum needed for approval. The victory enabled Allen to redirect the focus of his lobbying



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Construction budget proposed. Page A12.

HOTELS:
Panel hears arguments for hotel tax. Page A13.

King County OKs Mariners bonds

By The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Financing for a new ballpark for the Seattle Mariners was approved Wednesday by the King County Council, and members said they hoped it would be their final vote on the project.

The tally was 8-5 on four stadium measures, including terms of the \$336 million bond sale, appropriation of the bond pro-

ceeds and land transfers, after little debate.

Proceeds from the bond sale won't be available immediately. The money is being placed in escrow pending a state Supreme Court ruling on an appeal by opponents of the \$414 million project. Arguments are set for May 13.

With a favorable ruling by the end of May, the 45,000-seat ballpark with a retractable roof could be ready to open at the All-Star break in 1999.

blitz on the more conservative House, which is expected to vote on the plan next week.

"It will be scary," Bud Coffey, chief lobbyist for Allen's Football Northwest organization, said as he made his way through the Senate wings thanking lawmakers who voted for the bill. "We'll be looking for every single vote and try to get to 50 (the House minimum)."

Before the vote, senators rejected amendments to offer a renovated Husky Stadium as an option to tearing down the Kingdome.

funding a new stadium by taxing the millionaire players, the media and wealthy fans.

The proposal, SB5999, is a mix of public and private funds, including a \$100 million pledge from Allen, a co-founder of Microsoft. The public portion, capped at \$325 million, includes new lottery games, a 5-percent wholesale tax on licensed sporting goods and clothing, a King County sales tax credit and taxes on Seahawks admissions and parking.

Indians sue over Hanford releases

By The Associated Press and the Herald staff

SEATTLE — A lawsuit filed Wednesday by two law firms alleges American Indians were deliberately exposed to radiation released from Hanford as part of secret government radiological tests during the Cold War.

The suit filed in U.S. District Court here seeks to be classified as a class action on behalf of individual Indians who lived near the nuclear reservation.

The suit was filed by Chamberlain, Neaton and Johnson of Minneapolis and Baker, Donelson, Bearman and Caldwell of Memphis, Tenn.

A statement announcing the suit did not say what compensation was being sought. There was no answer after business hours Wednesday at either firm's offices.

Lawyer claims Indians targeted

By DON MCMANMAN
Herald staff writer

The lawyer in a new Hanford downwinder suit said Thursday that the federal government deliberately used American Indians as guinea pigs.

The federal government and its Hanford contractors released radiation intentionally in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, said Charles Walker of a Memphis law firm that filed the case this week in federal court in Seattle.

The allegation in itself is not new. Thousands of other downwinders have made the charge against Hanford operators in suits over the past decade. The government has admitted to at least one such intentional release of radiation.

However, the latest suit goes further. "The government knew how these releases affected the plants and animals — and especially the fish — the Native Americans relied on so heavily," Walker said Thursday in a telephone interview.

And were the releases made specifically to measure effects on American Indians?

"Today, we believe that," he said. The suit was filed by Walker's law firm and another based in Minneapolis on the behalf of five members of the Yakama Indian Nation against several federal agencies and a host of Hanford contractors that have worked on the nuclear reservation for about half a century.

The Department of Energy, the agency now running Hanford, disagrees strongly with Walker's allegation.

Regulators fault Fluor for few words

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Hanford's regulators say communications have deteriorated between their agencies and the site's contractors since Fluor Daniel Hanford took over.

And that bothers Fluor's top Hanford official, who said he thought his company had solid lines of communications with the Washington Department of Ecology and the

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the lead regulators of Hanford's cleanup.

"I was satisfied with it until I understood the other side was not. Therefore, I'm not satisfied," said Hank Hatch, Fluor Daniel Hanford's president.

Fluor took over as Hanford's lead contractor Oct. 1 and coordinates six major subcontractors that tackle the cleanup work.

The regulators say they had solid relations between their staffs and the contrac-

tors' lower-level managers during the final couple of years of Westinghouse Hanford Co.'s tenure as lead contractor.

"Since the new contract, that relationship has not been as good. There seems to be less staff-to-staff communication," said Mike Wilson, director of ecology's nuclear waste program.

"We've actually had (contractor) people at staff level tell our people they are not supposed to talk to us," Wilson added.

Doug Sherwood, the EPA's Hanford man-

ager, added, "At the staff level, there seems to be less and less contact with the people doing the work."

The regulators prefer direct communications between people in the trenches at the regulatory agencies and Hanford subcontractors. That type of relationship solves problems before they grow into bigger ones, Sherwood and Wilson said.

But the regulators see the lines of communications now going through the Department of Energy — which then talks to Fluor,

which talks to its subcontractors' managers, who talk to the people in the field.

"Anytime you put a great number of people in the communications chain, the message you send may not be the one the person in the field receives," Sherwood said.

An example of how lack of communication can cause problems that was cited by Wilson and Sherwood was the recent public

Please see FLUOR, Page A2

Museum receives \$30,000

By MARINA PARR
Herald staff writer

A group working on a new Hanford museum has received \$30,000 in donations from three Hanford contractors.

The Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology got the money from Bechtel Hanford, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Fluor Daniel to finish a temporary facility. They each provided \$10,000.

"These contributions will provide a major boost to finance the balance of the building renovations and exhibit development," said Gwen Leth, museum director.

The museum is currently housed in the former Fast Flux Test Facility Visitor Center, provided by the U.S. Department of Energy in 1996, in what's considered to be a temporary facility behind the Richland Community House off George Washington Way.

PCBs found in K Basins

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Because someone dumped contaminants into Hanford's K Basins in the past, taxpayers probably will pay up to \$28 million more for cleanup at the nuclear reservation.

Trace amounts of PCBs have been found in sludge at the bottom of the covered basins, said Eric Gerber, manager of the spent fuel project for Fluor Daniel Hanford Co.

Polychlorinated biphenyls have been proved to cause cancer. That even trace elements have been found means sludge from the K Basins must be handled under rules much more stringent than once thought, said Craig Kuhlman, a spokesman for Fluor Daniel Hanford.

That probably will mean a new storage tank must be built at a cost of \$20 million to \$28 million.

Hanford changing approach to waste

Scientists investigating ways to aid waste removal efforts

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The remote-controlled mechanical arm pushed radioactive gunk out of a narrow tube into a trough inside a hot cell at central Hanford's 222-S lab.

The brown gunk looked like a sickly, mushy Tootsie Roll — almost 19 inches long.

A videotape shot through the room-sized chamber's protective glass captured the texture and color of the wastes sucked from underground tank T-112.

A technician deftly manipulated remote-controlled arms inside the huge glass-and-steel chamber to grab a knifelike spatula and scoop the goop into jars the size of baby food containers.

It's a chemical gunk so radioactive it eventually will turn the clear glass jars black.

Eventually, scientists will study the wastes, one

step in tank-waste "characterization" — the springboard for the high-priority work of removing and neutralizing 55 million gallons of wastes in Hanford's 177 underground tanks.

Hanford officials are revamping their basic approach to waste analysis in an effort to speed up and focus a program that has trouble meeting timetables.

"We've got to be a lot smarter about what we are doing," said Maureen Hunemuller, the Department of Energy's deputy assistant manager for the tank farms.

That boils down to being more selective about which tanks to sample to keep from slipping farther behind the schedule set by the Tri-Party Agreement — the 40-year Hanford cleanup timetable agreed to by DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology.

Meanwhile, a costly, top-priority Hanford project

will soon need information from the studies.

Two corporate teams are supposed to submit part of their designs in 1998 to build two pilot plants by 2002 to test turning the wastes into glass logs to be stored underground for 10,000 years.

That glassification program ultimately will stretch over a couple of decades. The pilot-phase contracts to glassify 6 percent to 13 percent of the wastes by 2007 are expected to cost \$4 billion to \$6 billion. Then, bigger plants are to be built to glassify the rest.

DOE and the two coalitions need to know the chemical makeup of the wastes to design and build the plants.

"We want to get good, solid glass that won't break," said Fran DeLozier, vice president for operations for Lockheed Martin Hanford Co.,

Please see WASTE, Page A2

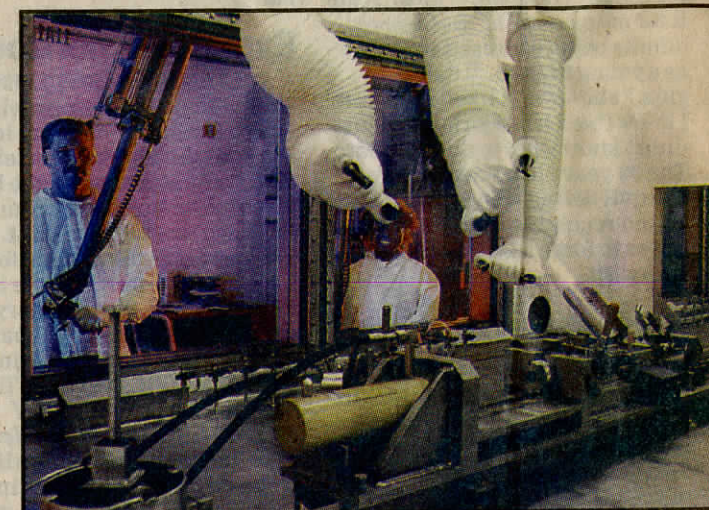


Photo courtesy the Department of Energy

Fluor Daniel Hanford nuclear process operators work with waste samples inside a hot cell at Hanford's 222-S lab.



Herald/André Ranieri

Hanford director gets personal invitation

Hank Hatch, director of Fluor Daniel, gets an invitation to a weekend event of music, dancing and gaming by casino hostesses, from left: Kathy Gregory, Jacquie Hays, Tiffani Harker, Angela Dillon and Amy Tilton in his office Tuesday morning. The event, which will benefit the American Heart Association, will be Saturday night at the Columbia Basin Raquet Club in Richland. A party with a pizza buffet will begin at 6 p.m. and will cost \$6 per person or \$10 per couple. Casino games, including blackjack and roulette, run from 7:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

HEAL, others blast DOE's input process

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Public input is being short-changed as the Department of Energy develops a nationwide 10-year plan to speed up waste cleanup, a national coalition of DOE watchdog groups charges.

The coalition, the Military Production Network, made the charge in an April 4 letter to Energy Secretary Federico Pena. It was signed by 23 groups next to DOE sites in 11 states, including the Hanford Education Action League.

The letter contended:

■ DOE is not releasing sufficient information for its various citizen advisory boards — and the public — to give meaningful feedback on crafting the 10-year plan.

■ Little public input has been

sought so far as DOE prepares its first draft of the plan.

■ Al Alm, DOE's assistant secretary for environmental management, has not stressed public involvement as much as his predecessor, Thomas Grumbly.

Grumbly, who recently resigned from DOE to join ICF Kaiser International Inc., was a key player in increasing public involvement in Hanford matters.

"We request that you evaluate whether Mr. Alm can successfully fulfill the mission of the (environmental management program) and create a program that is based on public involvement and has community support," the letter said.

HEAL supports an accelerated 10-year cleanup plan, said Todd Martin, HEAL's staff researcher. But HEAL believes extensive and early public scrutiny is needed to

make the plan work, he said.

Pena received the letter and plans to respond soon, said DOE spokeswoman Ann Elliott.

"As a former mayor (of Denver), he understands the importance of public participation," she said.

DOE's Washington, D.C., headquarters has not formed replies yet to the letter's other points.

Alm unveiled the 10-year plan a few months ago, with the idea being for DOE to draw up a master plan for all of its sites to speed up many projects so they can be completed in 10 years. However, much cleanup at Hanford and elsewhere will remain after the 10 years are up.

The plan is prompted by DOE trying to convince Congress — which is intent on trimming money to balance the national budget by 2002 — that waste cleanup nationwide would be more effective with a

steady flow of cash over 10 years.

DOE plans to unveil its draft national plan in late April, with the final plan due in September.

HEAL's Martin said that is not enough time for the public to study and comment on the plan, especially with no public meetings so far scheduled on the topic.

A major potential issue is whether the draft 10-year plan will call for transferring nuclear wastes between DOE sites. The letter said that is one issue where no national consensus has been reached.

Last week, Hanford Advisory Board members voiced concerns that the 10-year plan could call for other sites' wastes being shipped to Hanford. But the board decided not to make a formal statement to DOE until the draft plan's details are announced.

Hanford tests of technologies mostly successful at C Reactor

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

A Hanford test of new technologies is batting four out of five so far at the experimental "cocooning" of C Reactor.

The jury still is out on a sixth technique. And about a dozen are waiting on deck to be tested at C Reactor.

As Hanford tries out a new way at C Reactor to dispose of eight defunct reactors, it also plans to test at least 20 cleanup technologies on the same project.

Department of Energy and Bechtel Hanford Inc. officials discussed the first results Thursday at a press conference.

Right now, Bechtel is converting the C Reactor from a sprawling, leaky and contaminated hulk into a massive but simple leakproof concrete box.

The common Hanford slang for it is "cocooning."

The idea is the "cocoon" will seal off the contaminated reactor from the outside world for at least 75 years while Hanford ponders a permanent disposal solution.

DOE hopes to eventually cocoon eight of Hanford's nine defunct plutonium production reactors. The exception would be the historically

significant B Reactor.

Meanwhile, DOE picked C Reactor as a big project to test a series of new technologies.

These technologies are equipment or techniques that have not been used at DOE sites.

The new techniques are tested side-by-side with normal Hanford methods to see which are more efficient. The more efficient ones will be used in future cocooning or similar projects on DOE sites.

A panel looked at 203 potential technologies and picked 15 so far.

More will be added to that list during the 21-month project, said Linda Bauer, DOE's assistant manager for environmental restoration and Julie Erickson, DOE's deputy assistant manager for science and technology.

Six have been tested so far. Four were judged better than existing techniques. One was not. And the evaluation is under way on the sixth, Erickson said.

The successful systems include ways to quickly survey walls and floors to map out radioactive spots on computers, cleanup related software, and a portable power and light system. Another survey method is still to be studied.

The unsuccessful technology was battery-operated power shears for cutting pipes. While the shears

worked well on narrow pipes, it was not versatile enough to efficiently tackle clusters of narrow and wide pipes bunched together in the reactor buildings, said Greg Eidam, Bechtel's manager for the project.

Other technologies expected to be tested this year include a diamond-tipped chain saw, respirators and suits for working in hazardous areas, and ways to blast and laser away contaminated surfaces from walls.

Even knowing a new technology is not as good as a current one helps DOE plan future projects, Erickson said.

The new techniques tested at the \$18.2 million C Reactor project should trim costs when other reactors are cocooned, DOE officials said. Bechtel plans to finish C Reactor by July 1998. Then it will cocoon another site. It costs about \$200,000 a year to maintain C Reactor, which shut down in 1969. Cocooning should drop that to \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year.

Workers are removing radioactive materials that have spread in varying levels throughout the complex. Later, crews will demolish the complex. The roughly 65,000-square-foot complex will be reduced to about a fifth that size. A single huge chamber containing just the reactor will remain, covering 13,000 square feet.

Museum sells 110 bricks on first day

By the Herald staff

A campaign to raise money for the Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology got off to brisk start Thursday.

Make that a brick start.

Museum supporters announced 110 donors had purchased bricks, which cost between \$75 and \$5,000 apiece.

"We're 110 and rolling," said Sharon Atkin, executive director of the Environmental Science and Technology Foundation, which operates the museum.

All told, close to \$10,000 in donations flowed toward the museum, which will celebrate the Columbia River and incorporate highlights of the former Hanford Science Center.

The campaign, called "Pave the Way," features engraved bricks to pave the main walkway leading to the museum's entrance at its temporary home at 95 Lee Boulevard, between the Community House and Howard Amon Park in Richland.

DOE seeks FFTF dollars

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — The Department of Energy was preparing a request to Congress on Thursday seeking spend \$1 million to study using the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford to produce tritium.

The study would be aimed at resolving, once and for all, technical and safety questions about using the experimental reactor at Hanford to produce tritium, at least on a temporary basis. FFTF proponents at Hanford hope that will allow time to develop a long-term mission for the reactor to produce medical isotopes.

Hearing to focus on Hanford future

A public hearing at 1 p.m. Monday in the Prosser courthouse will focus on what parts of Hanford should be set aside as permanent wildlife habitat in Benton County after the federal government pulls out.

Protected areas could include wetlands, areas prone to landslides and fish and wildlife conservation areas.

The Department of Energy plans to turn much of Hanford over to Benton County as cleanup projects are completed.

Legal access by student disputed in FFTF case

By The Associated Press

ELLENSBURG — A Central Washington University student accused of possessing documents stolen from a Hanford company was never given access to those papers, his former supervisor testified Friday.

Randall Bonebrake is charged with illegally leaking controversial details of a Richland company's plans to restart the reservation's Fast Flux Test Facility. Prosecutors maintain he never had legal access to the documents.

Dick Thompson, Bonebrake's supervisor at Advanced Nuclear Medical Systems, testified one of the documents found in Bonebrake's possession was the draft contract between ANMS and a German firm to import plutonium.

"It goes to the very heart of our business," Thompson told a Kittitas County Superior Court jury. "It's an extremely sensitive document."

Bonebrake's defense lawyer argued his client had legal access to nearly all the papers when he worked for ANMS.

Thompson's testimony Friday also focused on a second document, which was described as a record of the company's financial performance.

"This is the financial backbone. The strategic plan of our entire business," Thompson said. "It goes through every aspect of how we put the deal together (with the German firm.)"

Thompson's cross-examination is scheduled for Tuesday, when the trial is set to resume.

Thompson placed a value of \$50,000 on each of the documents, saying competitors could have used the records as a way to undercut his company.

Bonebrake, 29, was arrested at his Ellensburg home last fall.

He was accused of giving the environmental group Greenpeace and the German news magazine Der Spiegel some documents about how ANMS was trying to import surplus German plutonium to power the test reactor.

FFTF ad was accurate, Ecology says

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A controversial newspaper advertisement that opposed reviving the Fast Flux Test Facility was factually accurate, the Washington Department of Ecology contends in a letter to West Richland Mayor Jerry Peltier.

"We believe the advertisement — while deliberately provocative — does not misrepresent facts," wrote Tom Fitzsimmons, Ecology's director.

Fitzsimmons was responding to protest letters from the Tri-City Industrial Development Council and Peltier that challenged the accuracy of a recent Heart of America Northwest ad in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

The ad contended people should attend a Hanford budget hearing in Seattle to oppose

reviving the dormant FFTF, arguing \$31 million in cleanup money would be lost to resurrecting the reactor.

The ad included a notice that an Ecology grant partly paid for it.

That rankled FFTF supporters in the Tri-Cities, who contended several parts of the ad were inflammatory or inaccurate — including a photo of an exploding atom bomb and downplaying that the hearing was to address the entire Hanford budget, of which the FFTF is less than 3 percent.

And it prompted Peltier to call for Ecology to revoke a public participation grant it gave to Heart of America because "you're not supposed to mislead the public with public funds."

Peltier said he is disappointed with Ecology's response, but does not plan to pursue the matter. "I made my point," he said.

The \$31 million issue is a major point of contention between the two sides. As the FFTF was shut down and kept dormant in recent years, its budget was slotted in the environmental management portion of DOE's overall budget.

DOE recently decided to keep the FFTF on standby until late 1998 while it studies whether to shut it down permanently or study it further for short-term production of tritium and long-term production of medical isotopes. That decision included shifting the FFTF's budget from the "environmental management" umbrella to the "nuclear energy" umbrella.

FFTF opponents contend this means cleanup money is being shifted to eventually make tritium for nuclear bombs.

FFTF backers and DOE contend no money originally planned for cleanup is taken

away. The FFTF money would be used for the same standby purposes, no matter if it is labeled "cleanup" or "nuclear energy" on the budget sheets, they said.

Each side is steadfast in its interpretation.

The controversy then extends to a \$32,000 public participation grant Heart of America received from Ecology.

The state's Model Toxics Act of 1988 includes annual allocations to citizen groups to boost public participation on waste issues. The grants can be for up to \$50,000.

Heart of America has received some of these grants in the past. And it and about 20 other groups were awarded grants for fiscal 1997, which began Oct. 1, 1996, according to Ecology. A few years ago, the strongly pro-nuclear Hanford Family was awarded a \$10,000 grant under the program, but it never spent the money, according to Ecology.

Under the program, a group submits a bill to Ecology for reimbursement.

When the controversy surfaced a few weeks ago, some Tri-City members of the Hanford Advisory Board discussed the matter with Gerald Pollet, director of Heart of America, who also is a HAB member. Pollet decided that Heart of America would not seek state reimbursement for the ad. But he insisted it was accurate.

In his letter, Fitzsimmons wrote the grants sometimes cause controversy.

He added: "The Department of Ecology may not support the opinions of the grant recipient in all situations, but the department supports the rights of these organizations and citizen groups to openly debate the issues. ... Such open debate is crucial if the public is to have confidence in the final cleanup of the Hanford site."

Hanford health, safety plan up for 1st review of revision

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A preliminary draft of a revised Hanford health-and-safety master plan is scheduled for review by the Hanford Advisory Board at its May 1-2 meeting in Richland.

It will be the public's first look at the revision.

The board's agenda says the briefing will take place at 10:45 a.m. May 2 at the Hanford House in Richland.

Fluor Daniel Hanford and the Department of Energy are working together to overhaul the proposed Hanford environmental, safety and health plan, which DOE rejected in January as inadequate.

Inside Energy, a Washington, D.C., newsletter focusing on the Department of Energy, last week quoted Paul Kruger, DOE's Hanford director of environment, safety and health, as saying DOE may have asked too much of Fluor too soon.

On Friday, Kruger said Inside Energy left out his remarks in the same interview that DOE and Fluor had mutually agreed on the original goals, including

the level of detail DOE wanted in the safety plan that Fluor subsequently was penalized for not providing.

DOE Richland set a target of July 1 to have the revised plan ready to send to Washington, D.C., headquarters and to seek final public comment.

Then, DOE expects Fluor to have the new plan in place in September.

Although the master plan ran into trouble, Fluor has noted that lost-work accidents have decreased since it took over at Hanford on Oct. 1.

Fluor coordinates a team of several companies with different safety procedures. The environmental, safety and health plan is to be a universal safety plan for all members of the Fluor team.

Because DOE rejected Fluor's original proposal, the firm is expected to lose part of its performance fee for failing to meet an objective.

The amount in jeopardy is undetermined. It could easily be several hundred thousand dollars or more, according to DOE officials.

Witnesses dispute FFTF plan access

By The Associated Press

ELLENSBURG—Three witnesses against a man accused of possessing documents stolen from a Richland company testified Wednesday that he had no legitimate access to the papers.

Randall Bonebrake, 29, a Central Washington University student, is accused of taking documents that detailed plans by Advanced Nuclear Medicine Systems of Richland to restart the Fast Flux Test Facility at the Hanford nuclear reservation for private use in producing tritium and, later, medical isotopes.

The papers were given to the environmental group Greenpeace and the German news magazine Der Spiegel.

ANMS president William Stokes told a Kittitas County Superior Court jury Wednesday that Bonebrake had no legal access to the documents found at his home here.

Bonebrake's lawyer, Ken Buckley, has argued his client had access to nearly all the papers while he worked as marketing director for ANMS vice president Dick Thompson.

Prosecutors were expected to rest their case today, at the conclusion of Stokes' testimony.

Among defense witnesses expected to take the stand are representatives of the Government Accountability Project, a nonprofit group that defends whistleblowers, who say they obtained some of the ANMS documents from the Energy Department under the Freedom of Information Act.

Judge Michael Cooper has indicated the case will go to the jury by Friday.

Two other prosecution witnesses also testified Wednesday — Abrann Harris of Royal City, who worked with Bonebrake at the World Marketing Alliance, which was to provide human resources to ANMS, and Kurt Witkowski of Antwerp, Belgium, who had served as an adviser to Thompson on food management for a proposed Stone River golf resort.

Harris and Witkowski testified Bonebrake's association with ANMS was minimal and he had no legitimate access to the documents in question.

Witkowski, who stayed at Bonebrake's home while working with Thompson, also testified about Bonebrake's use of marijuana and hashish.

Bonebrake faces misdemeanor drug charges for a small amount of hash found at his home. He denies the drugs belonged to him.

■ **POLITICS:**
Hanford officials grilled by Congress.
Page A8.

Hanford officials talk cleanup with Congress

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — The two top officials from Hanford faced tough questioning at a congressional briefing Wednesday.

John Wagoner, who heads the Energy Department's Richland Operations Office, and Hank Hatch, president of Fluor Daniel Hanford Co., were grilled on issues ranging from privatization of tank waste cleanup to Fluor's sometimes rocky start as Hanford's new project manager.

Despite questions at the closed-door briefing for House members and staff, Wagoner and Hatch said there seems to be a growing understanding progress is being made.

"They were not as skeptical as last year," Wagoner said.

The briefing was one in a series sponsored by a House task force focusing on cleanup of DOE's defense sites and chaired by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., whose district includes Hanford.

"I thought it went well," said Hastings,

adding that staff members from such key committees as Appropriations, Commerce and National Security attended.



Hatch

In addition to the briefing, Wagoner and Hatch also met privately with several House members to discuss the situation at Hanford, where overhead costs are up \$26 million this year with the Fluor takeover, after declining by \$200 million annually over the last several years.

The takeover also has caused unease in the

Tri-Cities, with some labor contracts unresolved, nagging questions about local procurement practices and doubts whether some of the new Fluor subcontractors will create additional jobs as promised.

"Basically, there is a lot of anxiety in the community," said Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., a supporter of Hanford.

"But DOE Richland is strongly behind

(Fluor) and believes they will achieve their objective. I have my fingers crossed. DOE Richland and Fluor have a job to do in convincing the local community that their approach is the right way."



Wagoner

Wagoner, in an interview, said he thought the cleanup program at Hanford was headed in the right direction after some not unexpected bumps in the first days of the Fluor contract.

"Am I satisfied with where we are? Yes," Wagoner said. "Am I satisfied with the costs yet? I'd like to get them down faster."

But Wagoner added he especially was satisfied the cleanup schedule hadn't slipped, even with the change to Fluor and 13 subcontractors.

Hatch, in a separate interview, said his management team has submitted a new plan that would reduce overhead costs to

\$270 million, compared with \$319 million in the last year of the Westinghouse Hanford contract.

"DOE had its eyes wide open, and they knew initially there would be a bubble," Hatch said of the increase in overhead, adding the new management structure would help control costs.

Wagoner and Hatch said they emphasized during the briefing that management had been overhauled and progress was being made in the actual cleanup.

"Basically, I told them all the pieces of the puzzle are in place," Wagoner said.

Hatch said he could point to such projects as the stabilizing of PUREX (the Plutonium-Uranium Extraction Plant) as a sign of the effort to cut costs and speed up the schedule.

"When you show them some results, they realize it's not a bottomless pit," he said.

The administration's proposal to spend \$1 billion on privatizing various cleanup projects — including \$420 million on vitrifying

the tank waste at Hanford — drew a lot of attention, Wagoner said.

The privatization issue seemed of particular interest to staffers on the Appropriations Committee, which will decide whether to spend the money.

"They support privatization, but they don't want to hand DOE a blank check," Wagoner said. "I don't sense they are turning thumbs down."

Earlier this week, Hastings met with Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., who as chairman of the procurement subcommittee of the National Security Committee has great influence over the DOE cleanup budget.

Two years ago, Hunter considered cutting the budget by \$2 billion, and this year he has expressed displeasure over DOE's privatization plan.

"His position is that he is trying to find dollars to fund the military," Hastings said. "But I told him we have a commitment to clean up Hanford and have made important structural changes. He seemed open to what I had to say."

Hanford tank waste removal delayed more

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Safety issues have delayed by several months removal of radioactive waste from one of Hanford's most troublesome underground tanks.

Consequently, a Tri-Party Agreement deadline is expected to be missed. The Tri-Party Agreement is a pact among the Department of Energy and its regulators governing Hanford cleanup.

The agreement calls for the transfer of the 197,000 gallons of radioactive wastes from the single-shelled Tank C-106 to one or two safer double-shelled tanks, beginning in October.

That probably will be delayed to the summer of 1998, said Jackson Kinzer, DOE assistant manager for Hanford tank farms.

The cost of operating the tank, studying it, installing transfer equipment and pumping the waste is about \$76 million.

The highly radioactive liquids and sludges in Tank 106-C heat up spontaneously. Therefore, Hanford workers must add 6,000 gallons of water a month to it to cool it down.

Hanford scientists hope that transferring the liquids — possibly split-

ting their volume among two tanks — could reduce the heat problem.

The tank is one of the biggest problems among the 177 underground tanks holding 55 millions gallons of radioactive wastes at Hanford.

Until last October, Westinghouse Hanford Co. was in charge of the tank farms. Westinghouse hoped to begin pumping wastes out of Tank C-106 last fall — ahead of schedule.

Then Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. took over the tank farms as a subcontractor of Fluor Daniel Hanford. And Lockheed did its own studies on the tank. Those studies showed pumping out the tank could create a gas pocket in the sludge, which could abruptly release in a dangerous flammable burp, Kinzer said.

That prompted Lockheed and DOE to decide to delay the pumping until more safety studies are conducted and precautions taken to prevent such gas bubbles.

Although 68 of Hanford's 149 single-shelled tanks are suspected leakers, Tank C-106 is not one of them, Kinzer said.

"It's painful to let the (Tri-Party Agreement) schedule slide like this. But it's the correct thing to do. We have to keep this thing safe," Kinzer said.

DOE studying private FFTF proposal

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy expects to finish reviewing in May an unsolicited proposal to privatize the dormant Fast Flux Test Facility.

After that, it is unknown how soon DOE will decide whether to reject the idea or study it further.

"We will contact you on the completion of the review," Terry Lash, director of DOE's office of nuclear energy, science and technology, wrote April 14 to Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems of Richland.

Meanwhile on April 10, Gov. Gary Locke wrote to Energy Secretary Federico Pena to repeat his support for resurrecting the FFTF — DOE's most modern research reactor — with an interim mission of producing tritium as a bridge to a permanent mission of making medical isotopes.

"I feel that privatization could facilitate an

expeditious transition to medical isotope production," Locke wrote.

He added: "While I do not endorse any single firm, I urge you to meet with representatives of Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems (ANMS) at your earliest convenience to discuss the potential of privatization, and I trust such a meeting can be arranged."

Locke's letter also voiced concerns about rising costs, declining funding and work delays at Hanford. And Locke worried about the possibility of off-site wastes being shipped to Hanford.

ANMS President Cliff Stokes has not heard from DOE whether a meeting with Pena has been set. Stokes said ANMS has not been able to set up an in-depth meeting with top-level DOE officials in Washington, D.C., to discuss its plan.

The appropriate DOE officials in Washington, D.C., were unavailable for comment late Thursday.

ANMS' proposal is to lease the FFTF from DOE and subcontract the actual operations —

believing the economics of that proposal eventually will persuade DOE.

If the proposal is rejected, "that will be a difficult stumbling block to overcome," Stokes said, indicating ANMS would still pursue the project.

DOE is keeping the FFTF on standby while it studies whether the reactor should be revived for short-term tritium and long-term isotope missions.

The FFTF would be an interim or backup tritium source to DOE's plans to convert a commercial reactor or build an accelerator in the South as the long-term sources. Tritium is a radioactive gas used to boost the explosive power of nuclear weapons.

Sometime in 1998, DOE expects to decide whether to shut down the FFTF permanently or to conduct additional studies.

In a related matter, ANMS was invited to speak on privatization in general — but not specifically on the FFTF venture — to DOE's Environmental Management Board's privatization committee at a May 8 conference in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

APRIL 25, 1997

CALENDAR: E1



Friday

Partly cloudy with a high of 72 and a low of 45. **Weather, A5**

Cinematic

Tri-Cities Arts Film Festival set to begin May 2.



INSIDE

JFK: U.S. takes formal possession of Zapruder assassination film. **A16**

Sports: Kamiakin boys tennis team leading Big 9 race. **B1**

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Panel faults Hanford safety control

By **JOHN STANG**
Herald staff writer

In January, a Hanford electrician burned his hand on a live 480-volt power cable that was supposed to be turned off.

An investigation showed workers did not adequately prepare for the job, including not using the proper electrical drawings.

The accident is one symptom of a Hanford-wide problem with "configuration management," according to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, a safety

oversight panel that advises the Department of Energy.

The safety board has sent a memo outlining its concerns to Al Alm, DOE's assistant secretary for environmental management. The memo says the concerns are prompted by "a succession of events and near misses" at Hanford in recent months.

The memo cites a wide variety of incidents that show documentation and management problems that could lead to safety hazards.

"Configuration management" is a Hanford term that refers to supervision of construction and maintenance work, keeping

technical documents and drawings available and up-to-date, and making sure proper procedures are followed.

Charles Hansen, DOE's assistant manager for waste management at Hanford, said the proper documents, document modifications and work-planning procedures are mostly in place.

But he said problems exist in getting workers to obtain and look at all the pertinent documents and drawings and to follow all procedures.

"We have good procedures in place at Hanford. The problem is work control, people

not following administrative procedures," Hansen said.

Here are several incidents the safety board memo cites:

■ Electrical power to some tank farm fans supposedly was turned off in June for maintenance work. But the fans turned on as people prepared to work on them. Inadequate drawings and labels were blamed.

■ A backhoe struck a live underground electric cable in October near Battelle-Northwest. Technical drawings gave the wrong depth for the cable.

■ In January, a tank farm worker mistakenly operated what he thought was an "isolation valve" as noted in a technical drawing. In actuality, there was no such valve. The mistake resulted in an underground radioactive waste tank losing the ventilation system that prevents flammable gas from building up inside it.

■ Improvements are needed in verifying the accuracy of technical drawings and equipment labels throughout Hanford.

Please see **HANFORD**, Page **A2** ▶

DOE asks Congress to 'reprogram' funds for FFTF

By **LES BLUMENTHAL**
Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — In a request designed to avoid the powerful South Carolina delegation, the Department of Energy asked Congress to redirect \$31.1 million to keep the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford on standby.

The government would "reprogram" money to a different budget account to be used by the government to study whether FFTF could provide tritium. The department also asked for permission to redirect

an additional \$1 million to complete the actual study.

In the Senate, the letter requesting the reprogrammings went to New Mexico Republican Sen. Pete Domenici, chairman of the energy and water appropriations subcommittee, and Alaska Republican Sen. Frank Murkowski, chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

House chairmen receiving the request included Pennsylvania Republican Rep. Joseph McDade, who heads the energy and water appropriations subcommittee, and Wisconsin Republican Rep. F. James

Sensenbrenner Jr., who chairs the Science Committee.

Because of the departmental accounts involved, it takes the refusal of only one committee to deny a reprogramming request.

Two other committees, the Senate Armed Services Committee, chaired by Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., and the House National Security Committee, chaired by Rep. Floyd Spence, R-S.C., will likely not play a role because of the way the reprogramming request was structured.

The South Carolinians have opposed proposals to use FFTF to

produce tritium, a radioactive gas used to increase the power of nuclear weapons. Instead, they support the possible construction of a linear accelerator at DOE's Savannah River complex in South Carolina, one of two possibilities the department is considering. The other is to convert an existing light-water reactor so it could produce tritium.

Backers of the FFTF proposal say it could be used to produce tritium until an accelerator is completed or a light-water reactor converted.

The reprogramming request

involves shifting money already appropriated to another account.

To keep FFTF on standby, the department proposed using \$31.1 million from Hanford's advanced reactors transitions program. The money would be used for surveillance and maintenance at FFTF and the neighboring Fuel Materials and Examination Facility.

"Actions which would irrevocably preclude restart of the facility would be deferred until a decision on the feasibility of using FFTF for tritium and medical isotope production has been made," said the letter

sent Friday from Elizabeth Smedley, DOE's acting chief financial officer.

Although the Advanced Reactors Transitions Program is part of the Office of Environmental Management's nuclear materials and facility stabilization program, the letter emphasized the reprogramming would not affect actual cleanup at Hanford.

The study would be aimed at researching the various "technical, cost and safety issues" involved in using FFTF to produce produce tritium and medical isotopes.

Hanford advisers meet in Richland

The Hanford Advisory Board will meet all day Thursday and Friday at the Hanford House in Richland.

Thursday's session is to begin at 9 a.m. Topics include the upcoming draft Department of Energy 10-year cleanup plan, plans to privatize tank waste vitrification and the proposed fiscal 1999 budget.

Friday's session begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes a presentation on the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and discussions on tank waste vitrification, Hanford's environmental safety and health plan and the K Basins spent nuclear fuel removal.

Illness stalls jury in trial of Hanford ex-employee

By The Associated Press

ELLENBURG — Jury deliberations in a Hanford whistleblower case were postponed for a week when one of the jurors became ill with the flu.

The Kittitas County Superior Court jury will reconvene Monday to resume deliberations. The prosecution agreed to continue deliberations with only 11 jurors, but the defense declined.

The case of a former nuclear-medicine research company employee accused of possessing stolen documents went to the jury Friday.

Randall Bonebrake, a 29-year-old Central Washington University student, is accused of possessing documents belonging to Advanced Nuclear Medicine Systems.

Prosecutors contend Bonebrake illegally leaked controversial details of the Richland company's plans to restart the Fast Flux Test Facility at the Hanford nuclear reservation for private use in producing tritium and, later, medical isotopes.

In closing arguments, Bonebrake's lawyer told the jurors the documents dispute is a civil matter and did not belong in criminal court.

Foley named to HEHF board

By the Herald staff

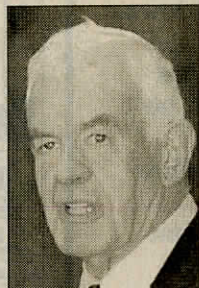
Tom Foley, the former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, has been appointed to the board of directors of the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation.

The nine-member board develops policy and oversees operations of the foundation, which has provided occupational health services at Hanford since 1965.

"Mr. Foley brings a public policy viewpoint" to the board, said Sandy Matheson, president of the foundation. The board is balanced with people with a spectrum of backgrounds and areas of expertise, including business, labor and medicine.

Foley, 68, served as congressman for Washington's 5th Congressional District from January 1965 until 1994. He was majority leader from 1987 until his election as the 49th Speaker of the House in 1989.

Since he left the House, he has



Foley

worked as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C., and maintained homes there and in Spokane. Matheson is planning an orientation briefing at the foundation and will arrange a tour of Hanford at the same time.

Other board members include Cheri Catt, a Spokane banker; Bill Lampson, president of Neil F. Lampson Inc.; Dr. John N. Lein, recently retired from the University of Washington and its medical school; Bobbie Berkowitz of the University of Washington; Vernon Rose of the University of Alabama; Dr. Cecile Rose, National Jewish Medical and Research Center; and Rick Hillier of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers. Foley has been rumored in recent weeks to be President Clinton's choice for ambassador to Japan, according to The Associated Press, but no official announcement has been made.

Representatives at HEHF said his participation on the board would compliment his other Eastern Washington activities.

The Ralph E. and Helen Higgins Foley Center Library, which opened in 1992 at Gonzaga University in Spokane in honor of his parents, houses the Hanford Health Information Archives.

In addition, the Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service at Washington State University is dedicated to fostering

The administration is seeking to replace former Vice President Walter Mondale, who left the post in December.

I.G. report says DOE left offices unused

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy leased more space in 1996 than it used at five sites, including Hanford, according to an April DOE Inspector General's Office report.

The I.G. review looked at about 25 percent of DOE's total leased office areas — and found 249,000 square feet of vacant space costing about \$5.6 million annually.

The \$5.6 million is part of the \$136 million DOE spent in 1996 on leased facilities.

Vacant areas included 73,897 square feet at Hanford — about 12 percent of Hanford's total leased space in mid-1996.

That has dropped to about 10 percent today, and DOE is working with Fluor Daniel Hanford to reduce that percentage further, said DOE spokesman Mike Fergus.

Meeting set on Hanford releases

By the Herald staff

The Hanford Health Information Network will have a meeting in Pasco on May 8 for people who may have been exposed to radioactive releases from Hanford between 1944 and 1972.

At the session, which will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Red Lion Inn, 2525 N. 20th Ave., an informal discussion will address the releases, studies and health effects. For more information, call 800-522-4446.

The network provides information about possible health effects of exposure.

Hanford site studies to resume

By The Associated Press

A 1994-95 survey that resulted in discoveries of previously unknown species on pristine lands at Hanford is resuming this spring, a conservation organization said Thursday.

New studies this year will build on the previous work and add studies of small mammals, The Nature Conservancy of Washington said.

Previous work has focused on providing a more complete picture of the nuclear reservation's native plants, animals and ecosystems.

Scientists also will survey an area on the central portion of the 560-square-mile reservation that was not included in previous surveys, the nonprofit organization said.

The work is being funded in part by a \$200,000 grant from the Department of Energy, which will use information gained through the studies in guiding land-use decisions.

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Whistleblower council gets investigation ball rolling

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A council set up to resolve Hanford whistleblower cases has drastically cut the costs to settle such matters, the council announced Wednesday.

The Hanford Joint Council for Resolving Employee Concerns unveiled on Wednesday its first report on its activities.

The report states the council:

- Resolved at least six whistleblower cases that could have erupted into highly public, costly and messy legal fights.

- Trimmed potential costs of resolving whistleblower complaints by at least several hundred thousand dollars and perhaps by millions of dollars.

The council was a joint effort by Westinghouse Hanford Co., Heart of America Northwest, whistleblower groups and the state Department of Ecology to resolve whistleblower matters before they went to court.

Fluor Daniel Hanford, which took Westinghouse's role as lead contractor Oct. 1, is working on an arrangement to continue participating with the joint council.

The council is chaired by Jon Brock, a professor of public policy and management at the University of Washington. It had seven other members, including two Westinghouse senior managers, a former whistleblower, two representatives from activist groups and two at-large members with no relationship to Hanford.

The council can tailor its approach

to each case. Actions range from referring a matter to the most appropriate manager to tackling a complaint as an entire council. Brock said a key to its success is using traditional opponents on such cases to handle investigations jointly.

"The joint council eliminates the old and costly paradigm of litigate, litigate and litigate some more until someone loses. In this process, everyone wins," said Energy Secretary Federico Pena in a press release.

The council's report covers mid-1995 to late 1996, when Fluor took over for Westinghouse.

During that time, the council received 30 requests for help. Most were referred to appropriate offices, with some council help on resolving the complaints.

Meanwhile, the entire council tackled eight "significant" cases, of which it believes six had the potential to escalate into full-blown legal fights, the report said.

Brock declined to elaborate on specific issues in the individual cases, saying the council tries to keep specifics confidential.

Brock said: "The main patterns were massive misunderstandings or massive miscommunications, or the lack of recognition of the most effective channels or processes to resolve an issue."

The council handles safety and health matters, referring complaints about wages and working conditions elsewhere.

The council reached unanimous or near-unanimous agreement on all eight cases. The council made rec-

ommendations to Westinghouse's president. He was then bound to "presumptively implement" those recommendations.

That means Westinghouse's president could overrule a recommendation only if it violated his fiduciary duties as a Hanford contractor or created a safety hazard. The council's jurisdiction covered just Westinghouse and Boeing Computer Services, and it received no complaints on Boeing.

Brock expects to work out a similar arrangement with Fluor Daniel. Fluor spokesman Nolan Curtis said Fluor has a contractual obligation with the Department of Energy to do this. One issue to resolve is which Hanford companies would be covered by the revised agreement, Brock said.

Meanwhile, the report stated:

- It costs Hanford about \$40,000 to resolve a single case before the council. Previously, each whistleblower case cost \$500,000 or more to resolve. The council's annual budget is \$500,000.

- The council resolved cases in six to eight months, compared with a two-to-three-year average for previous whistleblower cases.

- The council's approach typically involves about 25 people for a few days. The workloads on previous whistleblower cases could take up thousands of hours from possibly 100 people.

Brock said people are preparing to file new complaints in the near future. The council's Kennewick office phone number is 783-0688.

DOE pays \$6 million to settle tax dispute

By JILL FITZSIMMONS

Herald Valley bureau

Years of haggling with the Department of Energy for compensation for a long-dead research project ended Wednesday with a \$6 million settlement for Benton County taxing jurisdictions.

The settlement, called payments equivalent to taxes, or PETT, comes 10 years after DOE ended the Basalt Waste Isolation Project, a study of whether highly radioactive spent fuel from the nation's commercial nuclear reactors could be safely stored underground at Hanford.

Benton County contended the federal government owed the county money because of the burden of the studies on county jurisdictions. For instance, project employees drove on county roads and their children attended county schools—though no county taxes were paid on the federal property.

The settlement was signed Wednesday in Washington, D.C., by attorneys for both sides, said Ryan Brown, Benton County deputy prosecutor.

The \$6 million settlement is to be divided among 12 taxing jurisdictions in the county, and includes a \$770,000 payment DOE made in the late 1980s.

The remaining \$5.25 million is to be paid in two payments of \$2.25 million by May 30 and \$3 million by the end of January 1998, Brown said.

Benton County is to get the largest portion—\$3.42 million, according to assessor's office.

The rest of the settlement is to be broken down into the following payments: about \$41 to the mosquito district; \$115,114 to the rural library district; \$1.03 million to state schools; \$1.31 million to the Richland School District; \$135,400 to the Port of Benton; and \$9,468 to Richland, according to the assessor's office.

Unlike the recent "payments in lieu of

taxes" settlement between DOE and county taxing jurisdictions, the PETT settlement is a one-time payment.

In 1986, DOE chose Hanford as one of three sites to be studied for possible disposal of spent nuclear fuel. The government spent nearly \$500 million on the project at Hanford before it decided to focus on Yucca Mountain in Nevada, Brown said.

The dispute was sent to the Office of Hearings and Appeals in Seattle in 1995 after DOE offered \$400,000 and the county countered with a bill for \$20 million, Brown said.

The hearing board ruled late last year

that DOE could be charged for the project, and told DOE and the county to reach an agreement within 90 days or one would be made for them.

Benton County Commissioner Leo Bowman, who in March began working with other county officials on the settlement, called the agreement fair. "I'm really proud to have this thing completed," he said.

Benton County plans to allocate \$2.9 million of its share to the current expense fund, \$499,636 to county roads, \$12 million to a general obligation bond, \$6,867 to the health district and \$3,112 to the indigent soldier fund, according to the assessor's office.

Glassification plans being readied

Pair of firms offer different ideas

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

A looming multibillion-dollar plan to turn Hanford's wastes into glass has the two main players backing different ways to tackle the first phase.

A corporate team led by British Nuclear Fuels Inc. (BNFL) believes the first phase should be handled by one plant to convert low-level radioactive wastes into glass—not two plants as proposed by the Department of Energy.

But a corporate team led by Lockheed Martin Advanced Environmental Systems believes tank farm privatization can work only with two competing plants.

These views surfaced at Thursday's Hanford Advisory Board meeting in Richland. The BNFL and Lockheed teams are preparing preliminary designs and financial packages for the glassification project's first phase to turn into DOE in January.

DOE wants to have one team running a small low-level waste plant and a small high-level waste plant from 2002 to 2007. A second team would run another low-level plant

that same period. This is to glassify 6 to 13 percent of the 55 million gallons of wastes stored in Hanford's 177 tanks. Then huge versions of the first plants would be built to finish the job.

The idea is DOE will pay the teams only for the glass logs. So they assume all financial risks until glass logs materialize. The teams then would recoup their investments and make profits.

Now, DOE is concentrating solely on the first phase. And the vast amount of needed money dominated Thursday's discussions. Bill Taylor, DOE's manager of the tank waste disposal division, said DOE expects to pay \$4 billion by the end of the first phase.

DOE has been requesting extra money from Congress each year to set aside to either pay that eventual bill or reimburse the contractors for their expenses if the plan is terminated.

DOE's Richland office wants \$427 million set aside in fiscal 1998 and \$325 million set aside in fiscal 1999. Several Hanford board members said they hear rumblings in Congress that it has doubts about setting aside such huge amounts of money, and might trim the requests.

That ripples into other major fundraising concerns.

The two teams must invest some of their own money in the projects. The

BNFL team expects to invest 30 percent of the total, and the Lockheed team expects to invest less, but has not arrived at a figure yet.

Then the two teams must convince financial institutions to loan the rest. Trimming federal set-aside allocations will make financial lenders queasy about DOE's commitment to follow through, company leaders said.

BNFL's preliminary price tag is \$3.2 billion to build and run a high-level and a low-level plant through 2007. Lockheed's preliminary price tag is \$3.9 billion for the same two plants. Lockheed's debt service when its plants open in 2002 would be \$1 million a day, said Jack Dickey, the Lockheed team's manager.

Taylor said one of those two price tags will drop drastically because DOE will pick only one high-level plant because there won't be enough high-level wastes for two plants. And the two low-level plant estimates are expected drop as the teams' proposals are fine-tuned, he said.

The vast costs prompted Maurice Bullock, head of BNFL's team, to contend having one initial low-level plant makes better sense because Congress and the financial institutions will be more likely to buy into the cheaper costs of just one plant. "The cost of two plants outweigh any competitive benefits," Bullock said.

Gradually adding new plants later

would be financially more attractive to everyone, Bullock said.

Meanwhile, Dickey argued that having only one low-level plant would put DOE at the mercy of one company, which could control the costs and work flow. "Competition is what privatization is about. The guy who makes the best product makes the most money," Dickey said.

Dickey and Bullock painted different pictures of how risky the venture is.

Bullock said glassification technology slated for the BNFL plants has a proven track record elsewhere. And BNFL tests show Hanford wastes can be glassified with that technology. Bullock argued against calling the first phase a "demonstration phase" because that makes investors nervous over a proven technology.

But Dickey portrayed glassification as a risky venture—especially since Hanford wastes have not been glassified on a major scale. "We don't know what is going to happen when we put these waste processes to work. That's why it's called a 'demonstration' plant," he said.

Taylor noted the conflicting arguments, speculating the teams are jockeying for positions next January when DOE begins studying their packages and negotiating contracts. DOE is to make up its mind by May 1998.

Study seeks answers to cesium leak

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Hanford is mapping out a new plan to determine how much radioactive cesium 137 has spread underneath the tank farms.

The plan should be ready in a few weeks, said Maureen Hunemuller, the Department of Energy's deputy assistant manager for the tank farms.

Liquids containing cesium have leaked out of some of Hanford's underground radioactive waste tanks and apparently are seeping through the soil.

DOE does not yet have a grasp on how far horizontally or how deep the cesium has spread through the soil, or how fast it is seeping. However, the agency says there is no immediate health risk from the contamination.

Hanford foundation's contract to expire

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

The Hanford Environmental Health Foundation's contract will expire June 30, but the Department of Energy does not expect to award a new health services contract for Hanford by then.

However, "We're not going to let occupational medical service lapse after the 30th," said Paul Kruger, DOE's Hanford assistant manager for environment, safety and health.

Kruger and DOE contract officer Ted Turpin declined to say if the HEHF's contract would be extended for a short time to cover the upcoming gap — citing federal procurement regulations.

But an April 8 letter from DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner to Hanford Advisory Board member Dick Belsey talked about "the need to extend the existing contract to allow resolution of the problem (of the upcoming expiration date)."

HEHF President Sandra Matheson said DOE has not notified the foundation of any extensions. But she said HEHF is operating under the assumption the current contract will be extended until a new

"Our purpose is to protect and ensure the health of the workers. Regardless of the bid or extension situation, that's our primary focus, and that's where our energies are focused."

— Sandra Matheson,
HEHF president

contract is awarded.

The nonprofit HEHF has been Hanford's occupational health contractor since 1965. It is the site's smallest main, independent contractor. Its current contract began as a 5-year agreement in 1989 and was extended to the June 30 expiration date.

DOE has not issued its final request for bid proposals yet and is not sure when it will. That request is the step before receiving and evaluating bids.

The delay is because DOE has been thinking about changing how the health services contract is set up.

Proposed changes include switching to a system in which the health services contractor is paid for work actually done — instead of a fixed annual fee — and splitting the contract into two segments, with possi-

bly one or two companies handling the work. One possible segment would be the hands-on work involving patients. The other segment would be occupational health programs that address workplace problems affecting health.

In February, DOE met with prospective bidders to discuss the proposed contract and received numerous questions.

"We haven't wrestled all those to the ground yet," Turpin said.

They declined to discuss the unresolved technical issues in detail, citing procurement regulations. But they said one major issue is pinning down the volume of work a prospective bidder can expect.

They hope to resolve the technical questions soon.

A dozen prospective bidders showed up at the February meeting,

but it is difficult to tell how serious any of them are, Kruger and Turpin said.

Matheson said HEHF intends "to bid on the contract and on both pieces, unless something in there would cause us to think it would not be feasible."

Because of the procurement regulations, HEHF has not discussed proposed details of the new contract with DOE, Matheson said.

HEHF employs 123 people. The federal government appropriated about \$12.5 million in fiscal 1997 for its operating costs. Then DOE will pay the foundation a \$300,000 fee this year for its services.

Hanford is the HEHF's sole client. But it is thinking about submitting bids for contracts elsewhere. It was a subcontractor in Westinghouse Electric Corp.'s unsuccessful bid to build a chemical weapons incinerator at the U.S. Army depot in Umatilla.

Matheson said there is some tension among the HEHF employees because of the uncertainties in the contract picture.

But she added: "Our purpose is to protect and ensure the health of the workers. Regardless of the bid or extension situation, that's our primary focus, and that's where our energies are focused."

Hanford solid waste processor operating on part-time basis

By the Herald staff

Hanford's first solid waste processing facility recently began partial operations.

The Waste Receiving and Processing Facility (WRAP) in the 200 West Area started up March 12, beating a Tri-Party Agreement deadline of March 31.

The \$89 million project's purpose is to examine barrels and boxes contaminated with low-level radioactive wastes, transuranic wastes or mixed wastes — and then sort them and repackage faulty containers. Transuranic wastes contain plutonium, uranium and americium.

Initially, the plant is processing five to 15 barrels of waste a day — and is just inspecting containers and determining the amount of radioactive materials they contain. That rate is expected to increase.

Hanford officials expect repackaging operations to begin later this year.

There are now 38,000 barrels of waste in trenches and warehouses at Hanford.

Environmental cleanup operations are expected to increase that number, and Hanford expects to eventually process 79,500 barrels of radioactive wastes through the WRAP and ship them to New Mexico for permanent underground storage.

Erosion uncovering ancient remains

By MIKE LEE
Herald staff writer

Rapid erosion along the Hanford Reach is uncovering ancient American Indian bones, prompting the Department of Energy to seek ways to limit the damage.

DOE is calling a conference of tribes and agencies to discuss how to protect Locke Island. No date has been set, but DOE officials say it will be within two months.

"In the last two years, we've had extremely high flood stages and a tremendous amount of erosion," said Dee Lloyd, manager of DOE's Cultural and Historic Resources Program.

He said the approximately 150-acre island has lost 44 cubic meters of sand and soil in the last two years. That translates to about two acres dropped into the Columbia River.

DOE's Keith Taylor said a bluff is sloughing into the river because of irrigation above the cliffs. The sloughing narrows the river channel and speeds up the water velocity, which then eats away the island.

While such sediment is bad for spawning salmon, DOE's imminent problem is dealing with American Indian remains and archeological

sites that are washing into the river. Nanci Peters, who works with DOE's Indian Nation Program, said, "We have lost remains ... in the high water of the last month."

DOE officials won't specify the location of the erosion this spring because they want to keep the site protected from pillagers. Lloyd said human remains have not been washed off Locke Island — but, "It's only a matter of time."

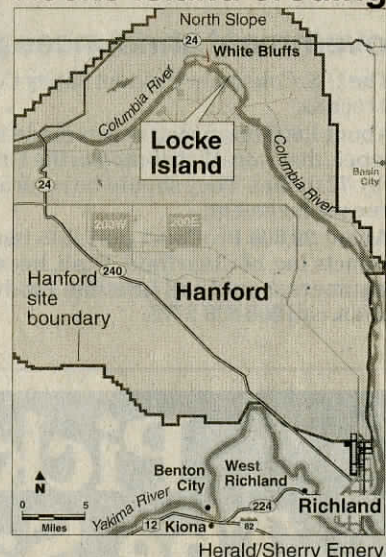
American Indians lived on the island for thousands of years before the federal government closed it as a buffer for the Hanford site. But millennia of habitation — and subsequent protection by DOE — left behind one of the best preserved representations of American Indian life.

Locke Island was used by American Indians as a fishing spot, grazing area and village, complete with 80 pit houses. It's listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1979, aerial photos of the island showed no erosion. Two years later, the White Bluffs across from the island began sloughing into the river and narrowing the channel. By 1990, said Lloyd, a "full-fledged landslide" occurred on the Bluffs.

That cut the 495-yard-wide chan-

Locke Island eroding



nel in third in some places and increased the velocity of water going around the big bend, Lloyd said.

DOE is stymied by the complexity of the ecosystem and the vested parties.

"We're not really quite sure we can do anything," Taylor said. "You've got to get a lot of endorsements before taking any action."

The parties to be invited to the conference include Mid-Columbia tribes, the Army Corps of Engineers, the state Department of Natural Resources, state and federal wildlife agencies and the Bonneville Power Administration.

As for what will happen at the meeting, "We really haven't established anything yet," Lloyd said.

"The issue is very complex," Taylor warned. "If we were to take action to divert the river's friction against the island, that could endanger the thriving salmon spawning area and require an expensive environmental impact statement."

Until a plan is established, the island will continue to erode. Bob Mazurkiewicz, manager of Contract Generating Services for BPA, is hopeful the Columbia won't get any higher this spring. He said water behind Grand Coulee Dam was drawn down as much as possible in anticipation of heavy spring runoff.

"We're just standing around right now and waiting for the water to start moving," he said. "If we started to get up in the higher flows ..., I imagine it could aggravate the situation" at Locke Island.

At Hanford

2 workers suffer injuries at Hanford

By JOE HARWOOD

Herald staff writer

Two employees of a Fluor Daniel Hanford subcontractor were injured in separate accidents Tuesday and Wednesday, and one remained at Kadlec Medical Center in Richland Thursday with a fractured pelvis.

The two are employed by Mowat Construction Co. of Kirkland, which won a \$4.19 million contract to build a storage building in central Hanford that will hold 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel now stored in the K Basins.

On Wednesday, a Mowat worker in the 200 Area working on the canister storage building was hurt when he was pinned by a rolling I-beam, said Guy Schein, spokesman for the Department of Energy.

The heavy beam fractured the man's pelvis, and he was taken to Kadlec for treatment.

"The good news is that the injury wasn't as serious as it could have been," Schein said.

On Tuesday, a Mowat employee fell off a scaffold 24 feet above the ground, Schein said.

He said the worker was in one of the vaults inside the storage building when he fell.

"His safety belt broke his fall, but he either bumped or cut his head," Schein said.

The man received stitches at Kadlec, then was released.

Schein did not have the names of the two, and Fluor Daniel Hanford officials could not be reached for comment.

Schein said both accidents are being investigated.

"What's real important is that the investigation is going on to find out what happened, why it happened and what we have to do to prevent it from happening again," Schein said.

DOE hopes to begin moving the spent fuel in the K Basins to the canister storage building in May 1998.

The K Basins consist of two huge indoor pools — K East and K West — that hold spent nuclear fuel a few hundred feet from the Columbia River.

Lawmakers push for cleanup funds

Letter to key chairmen stresses progress made

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — Forty-one House members — including the entire Washington and Oregon delegations — urged key committee chairmen Thursday to provide full funding for the administration's budget request to clean up Hanford and other Department of Energy sites.

"We are certainly cognizant of the difficult budget environment that you face in these times of fiscal constraint," the lawmakers wrote in a letter to the chairmen and ranking Democrats on the House Budget Committee, the House National

Security Committee and the energy and water appropriations subcommittee.

But the lawmakers said the department has made strides in streamlining its cleanup program, reducing costs and switching gears from studying the problems to actual field work.



Hastings

and the associated red tape and delay, the department seems to have turned a corner," they wrote.

The letter, circulated by Rep. Doc Hast-

ings, R-Wash., was signed by members from 12 states and had bipartisan support from 23 Democrats and 18 Republicans.

The administration has requested \$5.05 billion for environmental restoration and waste management at the department's defense production sites.

Hanford's share for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1 would be \$1.1 billion, virtually the same as in the current fiscal year.

In arguing for full funding of the administration's request, the congressmen argued "we need to remember that adequate funding now means less spending later. These environmental risks will not solve themselves. If left unanswered, the problems will only spread, and the solutions will be more expensive to address than if we tackle them today."

As part of its budget, the administration also sought to set aside \$1 billion for various privatization projects, including the disposal of high-level nuclear waste now stored in underground tanks at Hanford.

The need for the \$1 billion set-aside already has been questioned by some of the committee chairmen.

But the lawmakers urged the chairmen in the letter to support "adequate" funding of the privatization program.

"Properly managed, privatization of major departmental tasks will allow us to take advantage not only of private sector know-how, but also private sector financing," the lawmakers wrote.

"In most cases, this will mean lower government expenditures, initially and over the long run," the letter stated.

Two downwinder projects in cleanup budget

All 3 studies hope to answer questions about illnesses

By JOHN STANG

Herald staff writer

Three new projects are cranking up to look at the health of people who once lived downwind of Hanford.

But two of those projects have ended up in Hanford's cleanup budget, prompting calls they should be separated from the Department of Energy's environmental management money.

The two projects could cost \$109 million through 2007, said Lloyd Piper, DOE's acting Hanford manager. He briefed the Hanford Health Effects Subcommittee on Thursday in Kennewick.

This committee of tribal, state and public representatives advises the federal Centers for Disease Control and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry on downwinder health matters.

These health issues stem from Hanford radiation releases from 1944 to the early 1970s. While many suspect the releases have caused various health problems, direct links have not been proven.

But these three studies and another study by Seattle's Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center are expected to determine in the near future if connections exist between the releases and health problems.

The three projects are in their infancy, said Bob Spengler, assistant director for science in the Agency of Toxic Substances' division of health studies.

These are:

■ A 4-month-old study of baby and fetal deaths in eight Eastern Washington counties from 1940 to 1952.

The study looks at the death certificates of 4,000 babies and fetuses from this period.

They will compare the death information with radiation dose estimates compiled by the Hanford Dose Reconstruction Project, which was a study of how the radiation releases spread and entered the food chain.

This study should produce results by mid-1998, at the earliest, Spengler said.

■ Plans to start work in 1998 on a registry of 15,000 to 17,000 people who were living in Benton, Franklin and Adams counties from 1945 to 1951 and were 5 years old or younger at the time.

This would be an ongoing program that

would track about 35 health problems and correlate that information with iodine-131 dose figures for children in that area from 1945 to 1951. Children absorb iodine 131 faster than adults.

This project could last indefinitely, and people would be checked every few years. Spengler speculated this project's first report would be ready by 2000.

■ A plan to set up in 1998 a long-term program of medical checkups for downwinders.

These three projects are separate from the Fred Hutchinson epidemiological study of 3,200 downwinders to see if iodine-131 exposure can be linked to thyroid cancer.

The center expects to reach its conclusion in late 1998.

Many people will simultaneously participate on more than one project, Spengler said.

The baby mortality study — which costs a few hundred thousand dollars — already is paid for by the Centers for Disease Control and the Agency for Toxic Substances.

But the estimated combined price tag of \$109 million for the proposed medical monitoring and iodine registry originally were

supposed to be handled by the energy department's headquarters in Washington D.C.

But cutbacks at headquarters shifted the fiscal responsibility for the two projects to the energy department's Richland office. And the money ended up in Hanford's environmental cleanup budget beginning in the 1999 fiscal year.

Piper noted the federal Office of Management and Budget proposes limits on Hanford's fiscal 1999 budget calling for less money than is needed to meet its cleanup obligations.

Meanwhile, the energy department wants to support the two health projects.

Consequently, the energy department's Richland office and the health effects committee want the \$10.5 million needed in fiscal 1999 for the two projects to be separated from the environmental management budget, where they clash with other jeopardized cleanup obligations.

Meanwhile, Congress already is debating the energy department's fiscal 1998 budget request.

An amendment asking for nearly \$12 million is to be made to get the two health projects going next year.

Hanford tour to be offered Saturday

A public tour of the Hanford site will be offered Saturday.

Tourists will visit retired nuclear sites, old townsites of Hanford and White Bluffs and the Hanford site central plateau where underground waste storage tanks and chemical separations are located.

Participants must be at least 16 years old, be a U.S. citizen, and have valid identification such as a driver's license, passport or military or student ID card.

People will visit the sites on a bus starting at 8:30 a.m. at the corner of Mansfield Street and Jadwin Avenue in Richland. The bus returns to the Federal Building around noon.

Preregistration is required. For more information, call 376-8752 or 376-2292. Tours also are scheduled for June 21, July 19, Aug. 16, Sept. 20 and Oct. 4.

A4

TRI-CITY HERALD

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 1997

French ambassador to visit Hanford, schools

By ANNETTE CARY

Herald staff writer

The French ambassador will visit the Tri-Cities on Monday, touring Hanford and spending time with French citizens drawn by Hanford to the Tri-Cities.

Francois Bujon de l'Estang has split his career between government service and work in the nuclear industry.

He launched and was the first president of the U.S. subsidiary, Cogema Inc., which is part owner of one of the new Hanford companies, Numatec Hanford Corp.

He was invited to visit by Colette Lewiner, chairwoman and chief executive officer of SGN-Eurisys Group in France, the other owner of Numatec. She also will visit the Tri-Cities.

Bujon de l'Estang, along with Lewiner and four embassy officials, will arrive at 9 a.m. at the Tri-Cities Airport, then tour Hanford.

He'll have lunch with community leaders,



Bujon de l'Estang

officials from Hanford and French citizens. Numatec has brought 15 French families to the Tri-Cities. It's created a French American Club and started a French-American school program in partnership with the Kennewick School District.

In the afternoon, the ambassador will see how the program works, visiting Ridge View Elementary School and Desert Hills Middle School. At the middle school, students from France spend half of their day in American classes, such as science, reading, physical education and social studies, and the rest of the day with French teachers working on subjects like history and geometry.

The ambassador will leave for Paris about 4 p.m. from the Tri-Cities Airport.

Bujon de l'Estang, who lives in Washington, D.C., has been ambassador to the United States since 1995. He began his career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1966 and was assigned to the Elysée Palace as a special adviser of the staff of the President of the Republic. Bujon de l'Estang worked for General de Gaulle until his resignation in 1969.

He then was posted to the French Embassy in the United States, where he covered the Vietnam dossier and U.S. policies in Asia until 1973.

In 1975, he started his work in the nuclear field, holding various energy-related jobs for the Ministry of Industry, including chief of staff, and for the Atomic Energy Commissariat.

In 1982, he reorganized Cogema's activities in the United States. Since then, he has served as ambassador to Mexico and Canada, before being appointed ambassador to the United States.

He attended the advanced management program at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and has been president of the Harvard Business School Club of France.

Dump may have contaminated

By The Associated Press

RICHLAND — Federal environmental officials are studying possible soil contamination at an old pesticide dump that was given a clean bill of health by another federal agency.

But the officials cautioned it is too early to tell whether the pesticide dump on the Hanford nuclear reservation north of the Columbia River poses any threat to fish and wildlife.

The Army Corps of Engineers studied the site in July 1994 and found no evidence of contaminated soil where 10 dumptruck loads of contaminated soil were buried in the mid-1960s.

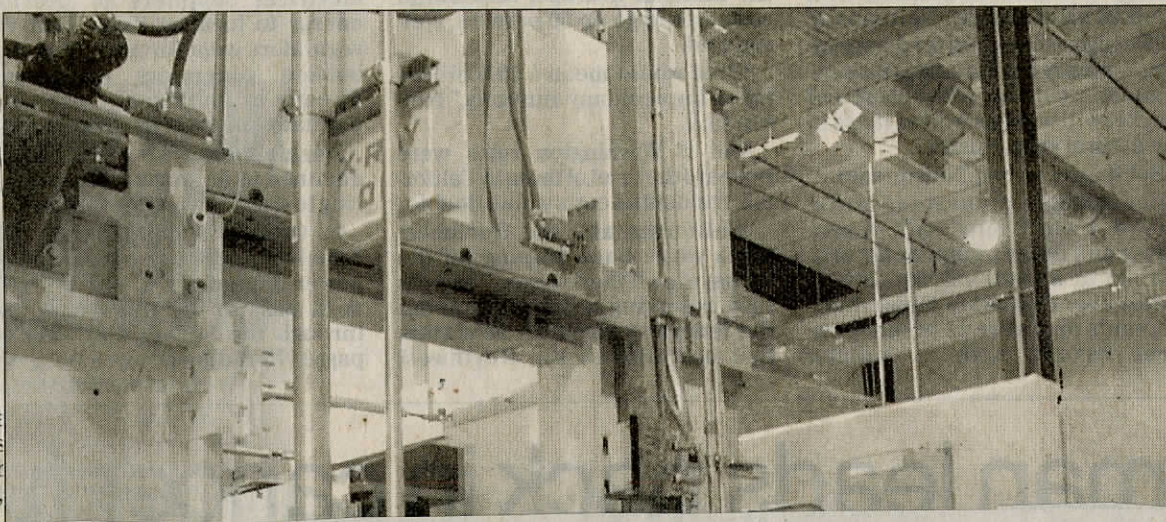
As a result, the corps recommended no further action was necessary at the site, which was then scheduled to be removed from the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priority List of toxic sites needing cleanup.

The new EPA investigation was

prompted by a report from the state Fish Commission. While hui saw signs of contamination, D had been

EPA investigated the site for a week and found

The site cleanup list was updated by 2,4-D,



look on life — what's a little pain?"
He was out of the hospital in
less than a week — doctors found
and he would undergo
action. If the cancer had spread,
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8 checked at Kadlec after blast at Hanford

By the Herald staff

Eight Hanford workers were being examined at Kadlec Medical Center early this morning after an explosion in a defunct plutonium processing plant blew out windows and a door.

Initial reports from Hanford officials said there was no evidence of a radiation release.

They believed there were no radioactive materials stored inside the room at the Plutonium Finishing Plant where the explosion occurred.

No alarms indicating release of radioactivity had sounded, they said.

There was also no contamination found on the clothing of Hanford firefighters sent in to inspect the building in the 200 West Area at central Hanford.

The eight workers, all reported to be electricians, were inside the building eating dinner when the explosion occurred about 8 p.m.

No evidence of contamination was found on any of them, but all reported they had metallic tastes in their mouths after the explosion, so they were being checked at Kadlec as a precaution.

Other workers inside the complex were kept inside nearby buildings to ensure they would not be exposed if any radiation had been released.

An alert was declared by the Department of Energy following the explosion, which ruptured a water line.

The explosion's cause was unknown as of 12:45.

The incident happened in the PFP's Plutonium Reclamation Facility, which once was used to recover plutonium from waste materials.

The PFP still contains 9.8 metric tons of the 11 metric tons of plutonium

Voluntary leaves considered at Hanford

By LES BLUMENTHAL

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — Hanford contractors are considering asking their employees voluntarily to take time off without pay to save money and avoid possible layoffs, a spokeswoman for Fluor Daniel Hanford said Wednesday.

Fears that the contractors were considering forced leaves during August had spread throughout Hanford this week, but Fluor spokeswoman Penny Phelps denied there ever was such a plan.

Fluor President Hank Hatch sent an e-mail message to employees Wednesday after hearing that Lockheed Martin Hanford had asked about 700 employees if they wanted to

take voluntary time off. He said the message was in response to the cutback rumors.

In his message, Hatch said there are no plans for involuntary leaves, and layoff predictions for the year still are at no more than 500 employees. So far this year, 150 have been laid off.

Hatch said he found out Wednesday Lockheed Martin had offered workers voluntary time off. "Prior to that, it was only a discussion among a variety of alternatives," he said.

Other contractors are also considering making unpaid time off a more visible option, Phelps said. "The rest are looking at voluntary furloughs ... but they haven't finalized any options."

But Hatch said late Wednesday he was

"not aware of any other contractor on this site that is planning to offer voluntary time off without pay to their employees."

Phelps said the firms are seeking ways to trim costs as Hanford's budget crunch has worsened.

"We are looking at everything we can do to reduce costs," she said. "The problem ... is partly a result of being under-budgeted and partly some high costs."

Hatch said voluntary time off is a standard way to cut costs and among the most "benign" options.

At Hanford's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory operated by Battelle-Northwest, spokesman Greg Koller said, "We have no plans to offer a reduction of force or furlough or anything like that at this time."

Battelle has about 3,500 employees.

Phelps said she doesn't know exactly how much money has to be saved by Fluor and its subcontractors, but she indicated Fluor has submitted a plan to lower costs to the Department of Energy. "I'm not able to find an exact budget figure," she said.

Congressional aides, however, suggested budget problems are widespread in the various cleanup programs at Hanford, with the tank farm program, managed by Lockheed Martin, among those in the worst shape.

The aides said the problems are caused by three major factors:

- The Energy Department failed to budget enough money to cover all the cleanup costs.

- Transition costs as Fluor took over from

Westinghouse Hanford were much higher than expected.

- Fluor, in general, has had high overhead costs as it tries to reorganize Hanford management.

A congressional aide said, "Some programs have cost overruns, some weren't budgeted enough. It varies program to program. But it's hard to blame Fluor. This is their first year on the job."

Phelps said Lockheed Martin is offering voluntary furloughs as part of existing personnel policy.

Republican Rep. Doc Hastings, whose district includes Hanford, said he was relieved there wouldn't be forced furloughs. "I'm pleased the rumors about mandatory furloughs turned out to be false," he said.

Investigation continues; workers OK, officials say

By MARINA PARR

Herald staff writer

Hanford officials continued their investigation Thursday night into the cause of an explosion in a 1,000-gallon tank that blasted down a door and sent water coursing through all four floors of a mothballed plutonium plant.

And they're investigating what other tanks near the ruptured one in the Plutonium Reclamation Facility might hold.

"We can't go back in there for cleanup until we know what's in the other tanks," said James Mecca, Department of Energy director of transition at Hanford.

After working through Wednesday night, officials Thursday restated their initial reports that no one was hurt and no radioactivity was released in the explosion.

"We found nothing wrong with the workers," said Dr. Larry Smick of the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation.

Four workers did have a strange

metallic taste in their mouths shortly after the explosion.

"Frequently, when someone is exposed to low-level irritants, there's a metallic taste," Smick said.

Smick was referring to hydroxylamine nitrate, which he described as "primarily a corrosive" and a "significant irritant of the upper respiratory tract."

Other Hanford officials have said other chemicals — including nitric acid — could be involved. Officials reported a brown-yellow plume was seen after the explosion. Results of tests on the contents of the exploded tank won't be available for several days.

The tank was one of 14 in a room atop the Plutonium Reclamation Facility, which, in its guts, holds a heavily reinforced "canyon" complex where scrap plutonium was retrieved for use.

The tank room — No. 40 — was used to supply the chemical mix used in the reclamation process. From the mid-1950s until the plant ended production in 1989, the tank room held fresh chemicals.

The tanks have held several different chemicals, said James McCracken, a DOE nuclear engineer.

The reclamation facility is part of the Plutonium Finishing Plant, which produced plutonium powder, ultimately for nuclear warheads. About 10.7 tons of plutonium still are at the plant.

The plutonium is stored 150 feet away from the tank room.

The explosion sent the lid of Tank 109 slicing through the air like a guillotine, severing a water pipe. Water gushed through all four stories of the building before emptying into a nearby parking lot.

There was no fire, and the building's radiation containment and ventilation systems remained intact, said Lloyd Piper, acting Hanford manager. Filters in ventilation stacks were checked and showed no signs of radiation or chemical contamination, he said.

Winston McCulley was nearby when the explosion happened.

Seven electricians and one laborer

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Television reporters videotape the exterior of the Plutonium Reclamation Facility where Wednesday night's explosion happened. Damage was contained inside the concrete building.

Tank was supposed to be dry

By DON McMANMAN

Herald staff writer

Despite years of cataloging the risks at Hanford, federal officials Thursday didn't know what caused an explosion at a moth-balled plutonium reclamation plant Wednesday night.

Nor do they know if a similar explosion could occur again at the Plutonium Reclamation Facility. And they can't agree on how much of what materials were in the 1,000-gallon tank that exploded.

Nor can they say what rests in 13 other adjacent tanks, some only inches away from the one that blew its top off in a "relatively violent explosion," said Jim Mecca, director of transition at Hanford for the Department of Energy.

"My understanding is some of the other tanks were empty and dry, but we'll have to make sure of that," Mecca said.

He also said the burst tank — No. 109 — was supposed to be empty and dry.

Thursday morning, Hanford's acting manager, Lloyd Piper, said the tank contained hydroxylamine nitrate, an organic compound used at times to help reclaim scrap plutonium.

But at noon, James McCracken, a DOE nuclear engineer at the plant, said the tank hadn't held hydroxylamine nitrate for at least six years. Rather, the tank held nitric acid, which also is used in the plutonium capturing process.

At 3 p.m., Piper couldn't say why DOE didn't have a simple, accurate inventory for the tanks in Room 40 of the plutonium plant.

"That's a good question. I can't answer it right now," Piper said.

Hanford blast leaves troubling questions

By KIM BRADFORD and RICK LARSON

Herald staff writers

The Hanford Plutonium Finishing Plant explosion left state and area emergency agencies with some gnawing questions Thursday:

■ Why did the Department of Energy take some three hours to notify them, when the agency is supposed to issue an alert within 15 minutes of identifying a hazard?

■ Why wasn't at least some kind of caution issued immediately after the incident — especially when security officials at the scene were investigating the incident as a potential bombing and using a bomb-sniffing dog to search for more possible bombs?

Emergency officials on Thursday avoided being openly critical until they had more information, but some said they are concerned it took so long for DOE to notify them after Wednesday's explosion.

"There is a major degree of concern that they should automatically be calling us," said John Scheer, Franklin County's emergency management director and the emergency manager Thursday morning at the bicoounty operations center. "But at this point, we do not have enough facts to criticize."

Mike McCaffree at the State Emergency Operations Center said his office wasn't notified until 11:22 p.m. — almost 3½ hours after the explosion and 1½ hours after an alert was declared. He pointed out DOE has to notify the state and counties within 15 minutes after identifying a hazard, and he was trying to determine Thursday afternoon if DOE complied with that timeline.

Richard Lathim, Franklin County sheriff and the law enforcement representative at the emergency center, said it was not until officials arrived and began operating the emergency center that they learned from DOE faxed statements that the explosion had happened hours earlier and an alert had been called an hour before many officials were notified.

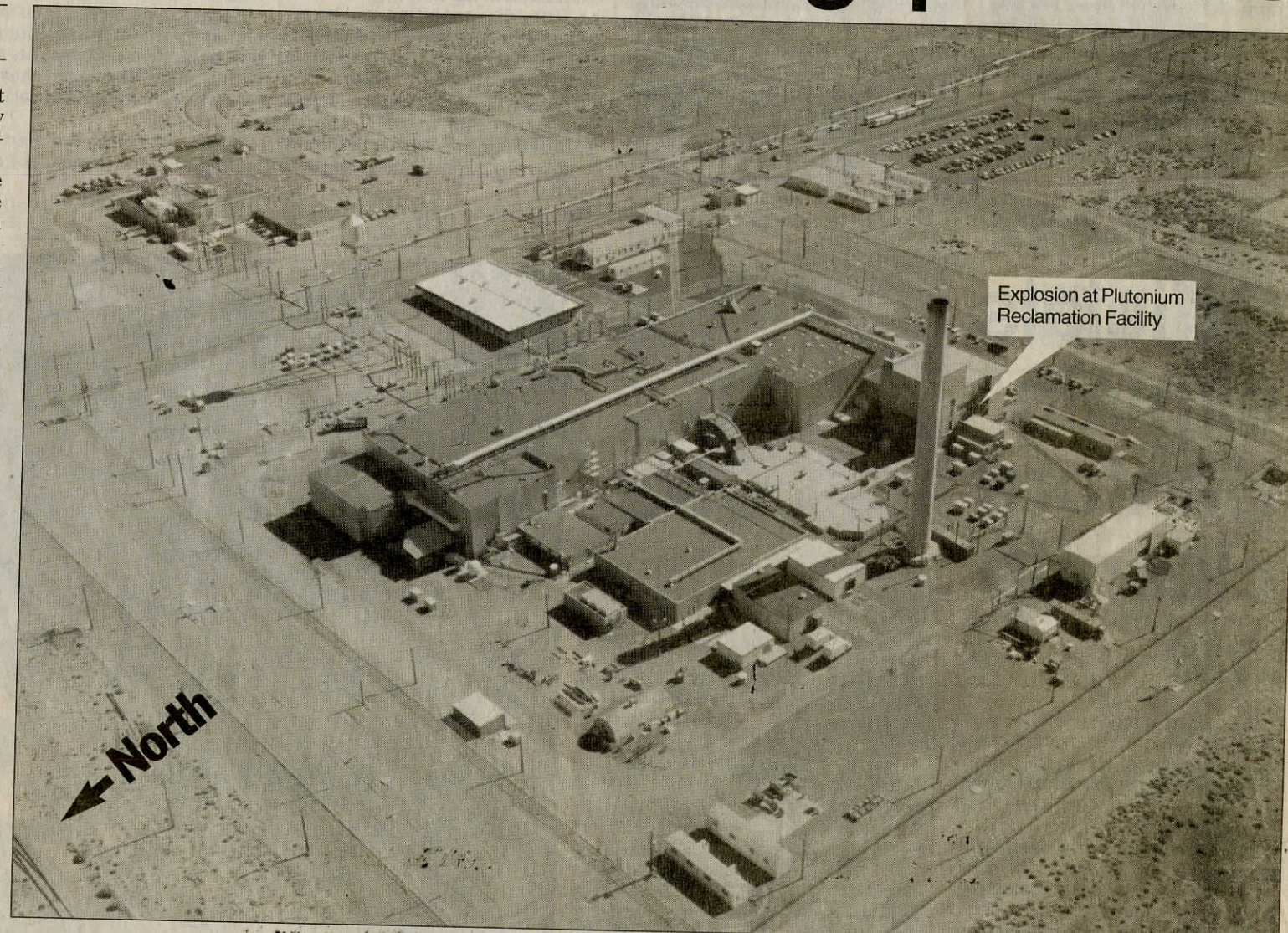
Lathim said DOE should have immediately classified the incident as an "unusual event," at which point top officials in both counties would have been notified but not required to act. Then, when the alert was called, officials would have been ready.

"Had there been a dangerous gas release, we would have lost three hours of time that could have been used to evacuate people," Lathim said. "We could have been in a real spot."

The first call to county emergency agencies went out at 10:45 p.m., almost three hours after the 7:56 p.m. explosion. Some agencies were not notified until about 11:30 p.m.

By the time Benton County dispatchers could round up public officials to begin the community's response to the explosion, it was after midnight.

Guy Schein, a DOE spokesman, said outside agencies weren't notified earlier because officials initially believed there was no hazard.



The Plutonium Finishing Plant in Hanford's 200 West Area, the site of Wednesday night's explosion, was where plutonium nitrate was con-

verted to metal, where scrap plutonium was recycled and where plutonium stocks were stored, analyzed and prepared for shipping.

Photo courtesy the Department of Energy

made by DOE's acting site manager, Lloyd Piper, about 10 p.m. when officials realized they couldn't be certain a second explosion would not occur. Schein described that decision as "ultraconservative."

Piper said Thursday night that the circumstances didn't merit the declaration of an alert status: No radiation was detected, no one was injured, and no chemicals were released.

Later in the night after the site had been checked out, officials decided to signal the alert status because they didn't know what set off the explosion or if another tank might blow.

However, even when the alert was issued, it turned out DOE could not meet the 15-minute notice requirement.

Schein said Hanford's own emergency operations center has to be staffed before officials could start calling outside agencies. That was accomplished by about 10:30 or 10:35 p.m. Wednesday, he said.

Benton County dispatchers received a call

Herald reporters began calling for information, beginning around 10:40 p.m.

Neither the Federal Emergency Management Agency nor the Environmental Protection Agency had heard about the incident before they were contacted by the Herald Wednesday night — though they are on DOE's first-call list.

"We have an open line between us and them, but they have not given us a call," FEMA spokesman Robert Clark said Wednesday night from Bothell. "I am surprised we have not been called if there has been an explosion."

Benton County Commissioner Max Benitz Jr., who was dispatched to the Joint Information Center at the Federal Building in Richland, was not willing to criticize DOE's actions. But he did say officials want to be called earlier in the future.

"It was a judgment call they had to make," Benitz said. "They fully understand that we

Officials who responded to the counties' emergency center said that after they arrived, the decision-making process went smoothly and DOE kept them informed. In the end, the counties determined no action was needed to protect the public and disbanded the emergency operations center after DOE lifted the alert at 6:41 a.m.

Benton Commissioner Leo Bowman, who acted as chairman for the group, said the event was a learning experience and taught officials what they can't learn in drills. Local officials practice emergency drills with DOE once a year. The next scheduled drill is June 19.

"Once in a while, we need a wake-up call to remind ourselves of our responsibilities," Bowman said.

Bowman, who was summoned at 11:10 p.m., said he understood the DOE timeline.

"There wasn't really a delay," he said. "They themselves didn't realize what they had. When they called the alert, they were

Hanford seeks input about study on risks to Columbia

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Hanford wants the public to help fine-tune its studies on radioactive and chemical threats to the Columbia River.

A recent Department of Energy report targets most of the river running through Hanford for additional studies.

The preliminary findings conclude someone would have to drink water and eat fish almost exclusively from the river for years to increase his health risks.

But before DOE decides how to conduct more detailed studies, it wants feedback from the public.

Public briefings are scheduled for May 15 at the Shilo Inn in Richland, May 20 at the Hood River Inn in Hood River, Ore., May 21 at the State Office Building in Portland and May 22 at the Mountaineers Building in Seattle. All will begin at 6 p.m.

DOE also will accept written public comments through June 17.

The Tri-Party Agreement, which governs Hanford's cleanup, calls for DOE to map out by July 31 how it will tackle future river studies.

Hanford has hundreds of waste sites oozing radioactive and chemical contaminants into the ground, with much of it either headed toward the Columbia River or already leaking into it.

That has prompted public concern about the health risks — especially

among the region's Indian tribes, which heavily use the river.

In 1995, DOE, several regulatory agencies and several tribes formed a team to analyze the 28 most dangerous Hanford contaminants and the potential risks they pose for people and the 52 animal species along the river.

The study used several years worth of existing information on ground water, soil, surface water and river bottom sediments to identify what any future studies ought to cover.

But major gaps exist in the current information on river contamination, said Mike Thompson, head of DOE's ground water cleanup and monitoring program, and Robert Stewart, DOE's project manager for the study.

Affected workers healthy after Hanford blast

By DON McMANMAN
Herald staff writer

Workers near a plutonium plant when a chemical tank exploded were in good health Friday afternoon, showing few or no symptoms from the accident.

"So far, they're doing well. We haven't identified any objective evidence of health effects," said Dr. Larry Smick, a physician for the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation who's in charge of the workers.

Six electricians, a laborer and a supervisor were on break outside the Plutonium Reclamation Facility when the tank

exploded about 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Officials are investigating why the tank blew up.

The workers saw a yellowish-brown plume of smoke drift up from a stack at the facility, which is part of the Plutonium Finishing Plant complex.

"We haven't found significant exposure. Our calculations are that the exposure is well below the point needed to produce effect," Smick said.

Officials say there is no evidence any radiation escaped from the plant, which once was used to recapture scrap plutonium and channel it back into nuclear warhead production.

"I have seen nothing to indicate that any-

thing (radioactive) was released. However, I will not commit until I analyze our own data," said Al Conklin, head of the Division of Radiation Protection for the state Department of Health.

After the explosion, four or five of the workers had a strange metallic taste in their mouths, while others had headaches or felt lightheaded, said Winston McCulley, the supervisor of the crew. He spoke to the Herald early Thursday morning.

By Friday afternoon, those symptoms had disappeared, Smick said.

Smick blamed the symptoms on exposure to a chemical or chemicals.

"It can be a simple irritant effect, which is

what I suspect if the dose is very, very low. It will go away in a few hours or a few days," Smick said.

Smick and his team focused on hydroxylamine nitrate, but there has been some confusion at the Department of Energy. Some have said the chemical in the tank was nitric acid.

However, both chemicals produce the same reaction in the human body, Smick said.

"If there's a severe massive dose, if you're trapped inside with it, it can have serious effects ... fluid in the lungs and burns on the skin," Smick said.

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Hanford money still shrinking for outside contracts

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

Hanford's shrinking pot of money for outside contractors is expected to drop another 27 percent in the fiscal 1998 budget.

That translates to less work to be contracted to firms outside Hanford's major subcontractors and enterprise companies.

In fiscal 1997, which began Oct. 1, the Department of Energy has \$165 million for hiring outside companies to do Hanford work.

The projection for fiscal 1998, which begins Oct. 1, 1997, is that figure will drop to \$121 million.

DOE Hanford Manager John Wagoner, Deputy Manager Lloyd Piper and Fluor Daniel Hanford President Hank Hatch discussed the projections Friday with representatives from local companies, the Benton-Franklin Regional Council and the Tri-City Herald editorial board.

The cuts reflect a trend dating back to at least fiscal 1994, when the lead contractor was Westinghouse Hanford Co.

That year, Westinghouse received \$1.36 billion from DOE. Of that total, \$631 million went to contracts with outside firms. That's 46 percent.

Both the dollars and percentages dropped through the years.

In fiscal 1996, Westinghouse sent \$299 million of its \$1.07 billion budget to outside firms. That's 28 percent.

Now, Westinghouse's replacement, Fluor Daniel Hanford, expects to send \$165 million of its \$976 million budget during the current fiscal year to firms outside Hanford's prime contractors, major subcontractors and enterprise companies. That's 17 percent.

Fluor expects further cuts next year, with \$121 million spent on outside companies in fiscal 1998 — adding another \$44 million drop to

the previous year's \$134 million drop.

Hatch and Wagoner said the factors contributing to these drops include:

■ A shrinking overall Hanford budget, meaning there's fewer dollars to spend.

■ Environmental cleanup taking priority over many new construction or fix-it projects that likely would go to outside firms.

Also some big construction projects — such as the tank farms waste transfer system and the Waste Receiving and Processing Facility Module No. 1 — are complete.

■ Fluor Daniel's fee from DOE being based 100 percent on performance.

That means the major subcontractors and enterprise companies are trimming unnecessary projects that could keep them from meeting performance goals.

Also, the major companies are taking closer looks at the efficiencies of tackling projects in-house vs. hiring outside firms.

■ The "3161" congressional legislation governing the downsizing of federal contractors.

That legislation mandates work cannot be transferred to outside firms if that project eliminates contractor jobs.

Fluor has received complaints from Hanford employees that too much work is being contracted out, which might jeopardize jobs, Hatch said.

In a related matter, Hatch said Fluor expects to trim fewer than the 500 jobs that were projected for elimination this year.

Hatch said the actual number of jobs to be cut still is being determined. The next round of cuts could occur in a couple of months at the earliest, he speculated.

So far, 150 jobs have been eliminated this year.