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Herald/Richard Dickin

A dusting of snow sparkles on Rattlesnake Mountain on Monday morning as a flock of Canada geese flies over the Columbia River. Rattlesnake Mountain is included in the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve at Hanford, which is one of five places in the state being considered for designation as a globally important bird area.

Richland meetings to outline Hanford compensation

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Hanford workers and their survivors can take the initial step toward applying for compensation for work-related illness at a series of four town hall meetings this week in Richland.

The compensation program went through a series of sometimes confusing changes as it was proposed and enacted into law.

But Tuesday and Wednesday, the Department of Labor will kick off a round of meetings to be held across the nation by first offering Hanford workers, former workers and their families answers on what compensation is available and to whom.

Workers also will receive a packet of forms to fill out and return.

"This is our first opportunity to meet with workers and explain the law in detail," said Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. "It's critical that people know how to fill out these forms properly. The department is anxious to expedite these claims, and correctly completed claim forms will enable us to do so."

Meetings are planned at 1 and 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday at the Richland Red Lion, 802 George Washington Way.

Department of Labor and Department of Energy officials are suggesting everyone attend who believes they or a family member may have suffered ill health because they worked at Hanford since the site began making plutonium for nuclear weapons in World War II.

DOE officials also will have information about applying for state worker compensation programs. Even those who don't qualify under the federal program administered through the Labor Department still may be eligible for state aid, such as payment of lost wages. Workers also could find they are eligible for both state and federal benefits.

"We're trying to provide as much information as possible," said Pete Turcic, director of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Task Force for the Department of Labor.

The federal program offers \$150,000 in compensation to workers who contracted certain types of cancer after exposure to radiation or suffered respiratory

illness after breathing in fine particles of the metal beryllium. The government must determine, however, that the illness was as likely as not caused by the exposure.

If the worker is no longer living, certain survivors may collect the money.

Widows and widowers are eligible to collect, although remarriage may have disqualified some. In other instances, parents or grandparents of the former worker may be eligible if the worker was supporting them at the time of the worker's death.

The children of former workers also are eligible, but only under certain circumstances. For instance, a child with no surviving parents may be eligible if the child was under 18 or was a

full-time student under 23 when the parent died.

Federal officials will explain those and other exceptions and rules at the meetings this week.

Those applying for compensation will need to fill out a form for the survivor or ill person and an employment history. They'll also be told what medical records should be provided to the Labor Department with the claim.

"The way the regulations are structured, it's very open to what can be used for evidence of work history," Turcic said. Besides checking DOE records for dates, the Labor Department will consider affidavits from co-workers saying who worked with them on various Hanford projects.

See Hanford, Page B2

PNNL scientist receives \$100,000 honor for land mine detection tool

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Some of the countries that most need the ability to detect land mines are the least able to afford it.

A possible solution to that problem has earned physicist Richard Craig of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland a \$100,000 fellowship from the Christopher Columbus Foundation. The award will be presented today with other winners of the 2001 Discover Magazine Innovation Awards, from which the fellowship winner is drawn.

"We wanted to develop a system that would be feasible for use in countries that have the greatest need," said Craig, principal scientist on the project. "Simplicity has been our goal since the beginning, and our system is elegantly simple."

The system, the timed neutron detector, recognizes the presence of hydrogen in the casings and explosive materials of plastic or metal land mines. Metal detectors are commonly used to detect land mines but miss the increasing number made with plastic casings.

Craig's system is based on physics — and built on a weed whacker purchased from a Tri-City hardware store. It relies on the isotope californium 252, which throws off neutrons as it decays. The neutrons that hit hydrogen, which has a nucleus of about the same mass, slow down and are measured by the land mine detector.

If the device detects an unusual amount of hydrogen as it's moved over the ground, that could

mean a land mine is beneath the soil.

Craig estimates the devices could be manufactured for about \$5,000 each, a price competitive with metal detectors used by the military. It's far less expensive than another method used to clear land mines — driving over mined areas with extremely heavy armored vehicles or plows that can withstand damage from explosion.

Although a land mine can be built for \$5, it can cost up to \$1,000 to find and destroy. As a result, the United Nations estimates it would take 1,100 years to clear the world's 110 million land mines hidden in nearly 70 countries. Each year, land mines kill nearly 10,000 people and injure or maim at least that many more, according to the Landmine Survivors' Network.

"This device can be produced for use by Third World countries at a relatively low cost, yet the savings in human life and suffering could be priceless," said Rosalyn Queen Alonso, chairwoman of the Christopher Columbus Foundation. "If land mines are neutralized, these countries and their people could begin to rebuild their lives and restore their agriculture."

The foundation fellowship honors a scientist who is working to improve the world through research.

Craig and his research team plan to use the award to further refine their detector. They expect to test it at a mock land minefield later this year.

■ Reporter Annette Cary can be reached at 582-1533 or via e-mail at acary@tri-cityherald.com.

Mid-Columbia

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TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2001

TRI-CITY HERALD

B3

Fluor Hanford to take over DynCorp's duties

■ Main contractor opted not to renew DynCorp's contract

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Fluor Hanford plans to absorb the landlord duties of its subcontractor, DynCorp Tri-Cities Services Inc., in an effort to trim costs, Fluor told employees Monday.

DynCorp's contract expires Sept. 30, and Fluor recently decided not to renew it.

DynCorp was one of the original six major subcontractors when Fluor became the lead Hanford contractor on Oct. 1, 1996. The Department of Energy

recently extended Fluor's five-year contract through Sept. 30, 2006.

Earlier this year, Fluor and DynCorp failed to negotiate an extension of DynCorp's contract. The two companies disagreed on what cost-cutting measures DynCorp would have to take in an extended contract, said Dave Van Leuven, Fluor executive vice president. DynCorp President Bob Frix declined to comment.

With Hanford's cleanup budget shrinking, DOE is pressuring Fluor to trim costs. Fluor can cut overhead and

shift the savings to cleanup work by taking over DynCorp functions, the Monday memo said.

DynCorp manages Hanford's roads, buildings, utilities, some equipment and its fire department — supervising about 750 people. About 260 work for DynCorp, and the rest are union workers employed by Fluor. The memo said Fluor will try to "seamlessly" transfer DynCorp employees, functions and benefits to Fluor.

Fluor officials said their relationship with DynCorp has been good, and the decision not to keep DynCorp was simple economics.

DynCorp earned an average of 92 per-

cent of its potential annual fees from Fluor and recently won a major federal safety award.

When Fluor took over in 1996, it came with a corporate structure in which Fluor was the center of a network of six "inside-the-fence" subcontractors and six "outside-the-fence" new companies. The latter six held extensive Hanford contracts and were expected to build other businesses elsewhere. DynCorp was inside the fence.

The 13-company network drew criticism for increasing Hanford's overhead costs because of the complications of coordinating so many firms. That criticism proved on target, and Fluor has

reabsorbed much of what was split away.

When fiscal 2002 begins Fluor will have reabsorbed three entire inside subcontractors and the majority of two more. The sixth major subcontractor split from Fluor to become a separate prime contractor, now CH2M Hill Hanford Group.

Four of the six outside companies remain but are much more independent of Fluor, although they still do much Hanford work. Fluor reabsorbed a fifth company and turned the sixth — Protection Technology Hanford — into an inside-the-fence subcontractor.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Looking in a live cell

PNNL microscope wins Discover innovation award

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory have seen something no one else in the world has. They've looked inside a living cell and peered at its internal structures and its chemical composition as the cell changes in response to its environment.

That's possible because of a combined optical and magnetic resonance microscope developed at the laboratory that can look at cells without destroying or invading them.

"We're seeing details of the cell and its activity that haven't been viewed before," said physicist Robert Wind, lead developer of the combined microscope.

Until now, scientists have needed to drench cells with potentially lethal dyes or break up dead cells so they can peer inside. But the combined microscope opens up new possibilities.

Scientists can watch cells as they react to heat, chemicals or radiation that can sicken them. And researchers can watch what

Fellowship

PNNL physicist wins for land mine detector. B3.

See Cell, Page A2



Photo courtesy of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
Physicist Robert Wind prepares cellular samples for the new combined magnetic resonance and optical microscope developed at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. An image of a single cell taken with the new instrument is displayed on the monitor next to him.

Hanford claims program criticized

■ *Union, labor group say workers lack way to appeal denied claim*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Regulations for a federal program to compensate Hanford employees and other nuclear workers who became ill or died are deeply flawed and need immediate changes to provide the help workers and their families deserve, say labor and worker advocates.

"They are just riddled with problems," said Richard Miller, policy analyst for the Government Accountability Project, or GAP.

The Department of Labor plans to start enrolling workers, former workers and their survivors in the program as the regulations are now written at Richland meetings today and Wednesday.

"The problem is in the details of the way DOL will run the

See Hanford, Page A2

has gotten control of rash of problems from earlier in year

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Plutonium Finishing Plant has gotten a springtime rash of mistakes under control, Hanford observers said earlier this week.

But some operations still need some fix-it work.

And a study is under way to examine how likely a strategically placed fire could spread radioactive particles throughout the Hanford plant.

However, overall operations have improved significantly since February and March, Department of Energy and Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board officials told a Hanford Advisory Board committee Tuesday.

Hanford board gets briefing on firefighting coordination

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Firebreaks have been partly carved out around western Hanford to prevent a repeat of last year's 256-square-mile range fire. Hanford and Mid-Columbia fire officials briefed a Hanford Advisory Board committee Wednesday on how firefighting coordination is being upgraded after last summer's fire.

The 2000 fire started with a fatal auto accident on Highway 24 just west of Hanford. Then the fire quickly spread south and east on the reservation — jumping Highway 240 to almost reach Horn Rapids Road, the 300 Area and the Fast Flux Test Facility. The fire also swung southwest to destroy 11 homes in Benton

City before it was stopped.

Ultimately, 800 to 900 firefighters from numerous Northwest departments were called in — leading to many coordination and communications problems. Those problems plus the fire spreading extremely fast prompted plenty of self-examination among area fire departments.

One of last year's problems was brush crowding highways 24 and 240, which decreased their effectiveness as firebreaks.

Consequently, much of the brush has been cleared this year from Highway 24. But similar efforts along Highway 240 through Hanford have slowed amid dust control concerns by the Benton Clean Air Authority, said Greg Hughes, Hanford

Reach National Monument project leader for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Numerous coordination and communications problems, which would come from several fire departments working together on a future huge Hanford fire, are being addressed, said Hughes, Richland Fire Chief Glenn Johnson and Hanford Fire Chief Don Good. A master fire management plan for Hanford is almost complete.

"I will not stand here and tell you all the problems have been solved. They're not. But we've made substantial progress," Johnson said.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford plant operations improved

ing very well in, a defense

In the past year, the PFP has pushed its conversion efforts to full speed — meaning many new workers were hired. Also, several ways to convert plutonium into safer forms are operating — baking it into powders, extracting residue from liquids and sealing chunks inside special cans.

The newer operators have become more experienced, and efforts are under way to allow supervisors more time out of their offices, Sautman and Knollmeyer said. They said internal communications have improved, construction work is better controlled, responses to problems are better and the number of operator problems has dropped drastically.

The response to an April 5 false radiation-release alarm went extremely well, they said, although workers made mistakes in a subsequent drill. And problems remain with equipment that welds shut the specialized cans.

Meanwhile, DOE and the defense

board are looking at radiation-release problems that might happen if a fire breaks out where the plutonium-containing cans are surveyed.

Combustible materials in that area, the room's geometry and a fire possibly splitting or bursting the cans could lead to a "flashover" of radioactive particles spreading elsewhere in the PFP, a defense board memo said. The worst-case scenario could lead to a person absorbing 15,000 rem of radiation inside the PFP or 250 rem outside of it, the memo said. At most, a Hanford worker is allowed to absorb 5 rem a year, and that only with special permission.

Knollmeyer said the calculations on this matter are conservative, and the scenario is unlikely. But enough risk exists for the PFP to study the matter more and find ways to decrease the risk, he said.

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Feds talk compensation

■ *Officials at Richland meetings outline plan to pay ill nuclear workers*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

After decades of the government denying claims from ill nuclear workers, Washington, D.C., officials faced a sometimes skeptical audience Tuesday in Richland as they explained a new compensation program.

"I'm getting so fed up with it," said Thad Coleman of Richland, who started work at Hanford in 1949 and has since been diagnosed with cancer and asbestos contamination. "I don't want to be the richest guy in the graveyard."

But federal officials assured a crowd of about 300 people at an afternoon meeting that the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program represents a fresh start for the Department of Energy. About 100 attended an evening meeting.

"A previous history of denial for compensation will not affect anyone applying for the new federal or state program," said Jeff Eagan of DOE's Office of Worker Advocacy. "They'll start with a clean slate. The standards are different."

The meetings were the first of more than 50 planned across the country to explain how workers, former workers and survivors may apply for \$150,000 in compensation for exposures at Han-



Bonnie Wagner of Soap Lake asks a question Tuesday as Donna Ling, left, of Richland looks on during a town meeting put on by the departments of Labor and Energy at the Red Lion Hanford House

ford or other nuclear sites that caused cancer or certain lung diseases.

"We realize you've been waiting many long years for compensation," said Pete Turcic,

director of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Task Force for the Department of Labor.

The new compensation program is not perfect, Eagan said.

in Richland. The meeting, which addressed the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, is one of 50 planned across the country.

But "our mission is to get money to workers as quickly as possible and in a nonadversarial way," he said.

Under the program approved by Congress last year, Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services officials will figure the radiation doses nuclear workers with cancer might have received. If

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10 states criticize cleanup budget

■ *Attorneys general send letter to DOE chief opposing spending cuts*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Attorneys general from 10 states are telling Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham that short-term savings from cuts in the nuclear cleanup budget will mean greater costs in the long run.

And the spending plan proposed by the Bush administration will trigger widespread violations of cleanup agreement deadlines at Department of Energy sites across the country, said the attorneys general in an appendix to the letter they sent to Abraham on Tuesday.

Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire is among the 10 who sent the letter in response to Abraham asking them this spring for input in tackling nationwide nuclear cleanup. The appropriate DOE officials in Washington, D.C., could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Gregoire has threatened to sue DOE because the Bush administration's proposed 2002 budget would put Hanford's cleanup significantly behind the schedule mandated in the Tri-Party Agreement.

Board concerned about waste pumping safety

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

A federal oversight board has raised safety concerns about Hanford preparations to pump radioactive wastes to a yet-to-be-built glassification plant.

The board's top two concerns are:

■ Will the pipelines that eventually take liquid wastes from Hanford's tanks to the glassification plant be strong enough to withstand pressures required for pumping the fluids?

■ Will pumping the liquids from the tanks release flammable gases

and increase the chance of a fire or explosion in a tank?

The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection, which oversees efforts to move the wastes from underground tanks to a plant that will incorporate them into glass logs for safe long-term storage, said those concerns are being reviewed.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, which provides technical advice to DOE, sent DOE a memo outlining its concerns.

The Office of River Protection supervises efforts to build a glassification plant, with a target to

classify the first wastes by 2007. It also supervises preparations to send wastes to the plant.

The defense board's memo focused on four 200 East Area double-shell tanks that will accept and hold wastes from other tanks to eventually funnel to the glassification plant. Right now, all four are close to full of a mix of solids, sludges and liquids.

The defense board's memo said the pressures required to push liquid wastes through pipes in the proposed network could exceed 900 pounds per square inch (psi), which means the same force

would be exerted on pipe walls. The problem is that parts of the piping system — especially at valves, joints and other connections — are rated to handle pressures of 275 or 400 psi. Exceeding those limits increases the likelihood of leaks and ruptures.

CH2M Hill, the contractor preparing for the pumping operation, is buying new pipes rated to withstand 1,000 psi. But the same danger could remain at valves and joints, the defense board memo said.

DOE and CH2M Hill are studying what pressures are likely

and what measures are needed to handle them, said Craig Groendyke, flammable gas project manager for the Office of River Protection.

The defense board also is worried about what will happen when the top layer of radioactive liquids is pumped from the double-shell tanks. Inside the lower, more solid waste layers are scattered clusters of tiny bubbles of flammable gases such as hydrogen. Pumping will change the forces within the tank and increase the chance of flammable gas bubbles popping up into the tank's upper air space.

Groendyke said the concerns are being studied. Also, a cushion of time exists until 2006, when the four tanks are to be pumped. But he wants the situation analyzed before many of the site's tank experts retire or otherwise leave.

The problem is similar to the notorious and potentially dangerous hydrogen gas "burps" in the 200 East Area's Tank SY-101, which were fixed years ago with a mixer pump.

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Briefs

FFTF comment period comes to close July 3

The comment period on the future of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility closes July 3.

The Clinton administration ordered the Hanford reactor permanently shut down, but the Bush administration has suspended that decision for 90 days to consider new information.

The reactor could be restarted to make medical isotopes, isotopes for the nation's space program and nuclear power research.

Comments may be entered into the record by calling toll-free at 888-680-8450 or sending a fax to the Department of Energy at 888-680-9509. The e-mail address is fftf.review@hq.doe.gov.

The mailing address is FFTF Review, 20201 Century Blvd., 3rd Floor, Germantown, MD, 20874.

Royal City man survives rollover on Highway 26

B Reactor: museum or mausoleum?

■ Proposal to open it to visitors would take money, maneuvering

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

B Reactor is a towering nuclear mystical shrine in the middle of nowhere.

But difficult for pilgrims to get to, and even harder for the curious to get inside.

One of the birthplaces of the Atomic Age, the Department of Energy calculates it'll take almost \$3 million over 10 years to fix up the dead plutonium-making reactor complex so others can convert it into a museum open to the public.

DOE recently sent a report to the Environmental Protection Agency that outlines three options for B Reactor.

See Reactor, Page B2



Members of the B Reactor Museum Association tour B Reactor on June 22, 2000. The world's first large-scale nuclear reactor was built as part of World War II's Manhattan Project at Hanford.

Herald file

EPA seeks comment on B Reactor options

By the Herald staff

A one-month public comment period on the DOE's B Reactor report and options for its future begins today.

Comments can be mailed to Dennis Faulk of the EPA at 712 Swift Blvd., Suite 5, Richland, WA 99352, or e-mailed to faulk.dennis@epa.gov.

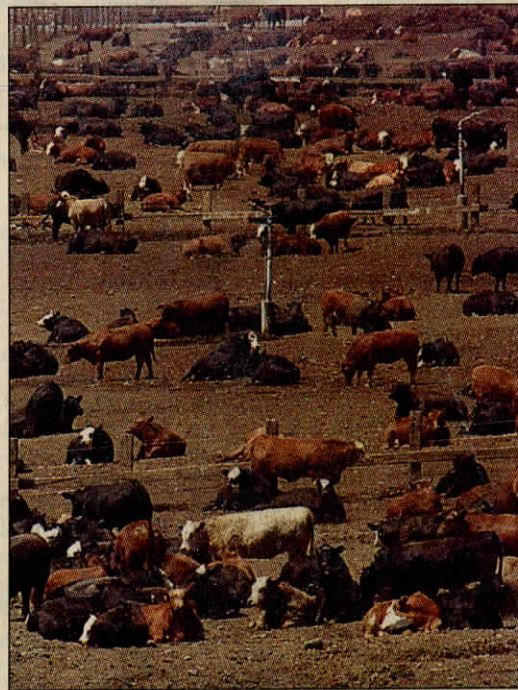
For information, call 376-8631.

The DOE report is available at www.bhi-erc.com/projects/s_m/b_reactor.htm on the Internet.

Also, a public meeting on the subject is scheduled at 7 p.m. June 26 at the Richland library.

Got cow pies? PNNL could turn them into plastic

Researchers at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Washington State University won an \$800,000 grant to study the best ways to turn manure into chemicals that could be used to make antifreeze or even plastic bottles. Feedlots, such as this one near Wallula, could provide the raw material.



Herald/Bob
Bradwy

Richland lab, WSU get grant to study way to make chemicals

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Within the next decade, when you screw the top off a cold soda and take a sip, you could be drinking from a bottle made out of chemicals derived from cow manure.

In Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's version of turning a sow's ear into a silk purse, scientists are working to turn animal manure into chemicals that could be used for antifreeze, carpeting or even plastic bottles to hold soda pop.

The national lab in Richland and Washington State University

have received an \$800,000 grant from the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. It will pay for a two-year study of the best ways to turn manure into chemicals now made from a nonrenewable source — petroleum.

With animal waste, scientists have plenty of raw material to work with.

"Manure's a huge problem," said Don Stevens, a chemist and project manager for the PNNL work.

An adult cow produces enough manure in a year to fill 10 dump trucks. That means the cows in Benton and Yakima counties alone leave enough manure each year to fill Pasco's 2.7-million gallon water tower on Road 68 more than 50 times.

"With fewer, but larger animal

operations across the United States, the waste is more geographically concentrated, resulting in more environmental problems," Stevens said.

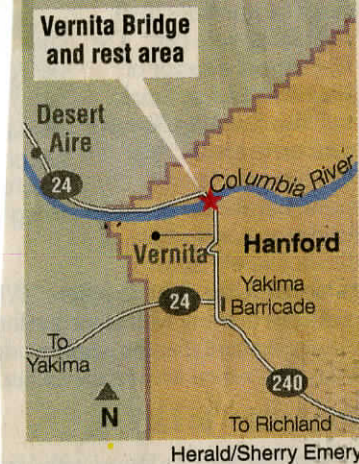
With a use for the manure, rural neighbors of dairy farms and feedlots could have less manure odor wafting into their windows, and rivers, such as the Yakima, could see less manure runoff.

Much of animal manure now is placed in holding lagoons to be eventually spread on farmland. For that use, the manure is worth a penny or two a pound.

But if manure could be used for chemicals, its value could be 40 or 50 cents a pound, Stevens said.

The Richland lab already is

See PNNL, Page A2



Vernita proposed for Reach center

Location would put visitor center in natural setting, counties say

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Benton, Franklin and Grant county leaders are united in recommending Vernita as the best place for a visitor center for the Hanford Reach National Monument.

It's about 30 miles south of Interstate 90, the primary route from Spokane to Seattle, and the location would allow the center to be in a natural setting on monument land.

The three counties have sent Interior Secretary Gale Norton their proposals for how the public might use the monument, just as a citizen advisory committee plans its first meetings to begin forming recommendations on how the monument should be managed.

The Hanford Reach National Monument Federal Planning Advisory Committee meets from 1 to 5:30 p.m. today and from 8 to 9:30 a.m. Thursday in Richland.

Hanford receives funding boost

House panel OKs almost \$700 million for cleanup at DOE sites

By Les Blumenthal
Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — A House subcommittee has agreed to increase funding to clean up Hanford and other Department of Energy nuclear sites by almost \$700 million in the next fiscal year, U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said Wednesday.

The additional funding, coupled with \$180 million included in a supplemental spending bill the House was considering late Wednesday, will almost make up the \$1 billion shortfall in cleanup funding included in the Bush administration's budget proposal.

Hastings and others had been critical of the administration for proposing a \$56 million cut in Hanford cleanup funding at a time when an extra \$400 million was needed to meet the deadlines in DOE's cleanup agreement with Washington state and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Washington state Attorney General Christine Gregoire had threatened to sue the department if adequate funding to meet the deadlines was not provided by Congress.

The additional \$700 million for cleanup in the fiscal year starting Oct. 1 was approved Tuesday by the House energy and water appropriations subcommittee. Details of the subcommittee's bill are usually a closely guarded secret until the full House Appropriations Committee considers the measure. That action could

Invitational FFTF meetings set

DOE opts to forgo public meetings for small sessions in Portland, Seattle, Richland

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy plans small meetings by invitation only rather than public hearings to gather information to decide the fate of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

Michael Holland, who's heading the review, will meet with opponents of restarting the reactor Friday in Portland and Monday in Seattle. Tuesday he will meet with supporters of the reactor in Richland.

Numerous public hearings have been held on the reactor over the last decade. By

holding smaller meetings with representatives of interest groups on both sides, participants hope to spend more time presenting their information and less time debating those who disagree with them, Holland said.

Holland, who is visiting Hanford for the third time this week as part of the FFTF review, is the manager of DOE's Brookhaven, N.Y., area office and has been named to head the review of the reactor's future.

In January the Clinton administration ordered the reactor permanently shut down. The reactor is not being used now, but once sodium is drained from its cooling system, it can never be restarted.

However, new Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham suspended that decision for three months. By July 31, Holland will present him with a summary of informa-

tion drawn from the invitation-only meetings, public comments and other sources.

"My charge is pretty clear," Holland said. "It's not to make the decision."

Although he and his working group will not make a specific recommendation, they can draw some conclusions as they pull together information for the secretary to consider.

He's already toured FFTF, noting it's much different than the water-cooled reactors he's worked with. He's had 25 years experience in the operation of nuclear reactors, including as manager of the Brookhaven office. Although Brookhaven has no operating reactors now, he's worked with its High Flux Beam Reactor and the Brookhaven Medical Research Reactor.

Supporters of restarting FFTF want it used to make isotopes for medicine and

the space program and for research.

The invitation-only meetings in Portland and Seattle will include representatives of Hanford watchdog groups and representatives of elected officials who oppose restarting the reactor.

Among those invited to the Richland meeting are representatives of labor, local government and Citizens for Medical Isotopes.

Others who want to comment have until July 3. They may call toll-free 888-680-8450 or send a fax to DOE at 888-680-9509. The e-mail address is fftf.review@hq.doe.gov.

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Board concerned about waste pumping safety

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

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The board's top two concerns are:

- Will the pipelines that eventually take liquid wastes from Hanford's tanks to the glassification plant be strong enough to withstand pressures required for pumping the fluids?

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and increase the chance of a fire or explosion in a tank?

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Comments may be entered into the record by calling toll-free at 888-680-8450 or sending a fax to the Department of Energy at 888-680-9509. The e-mail address is fftf.review@hq.doe.gov.

The mailing address is FFTF Review, 20201 Century Blvd., 3rd Floor, Germantown, MD, 20874.

Royal City man survives rollover on Highway 26

B Reactor: museum or mausoleum?

■ Proposal to open it to visitors would take money, maneuvering

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

B Reactor is a towering nuclear mystical shrine in the middle of nowhere.

But difficult for pilgrims to get to, and even harder for the curious to get inside.

One of the birthplaces of the Atomic Age, the Department of Energy calculates it'll take almost \$3 million over 10 years to fix up the dead plutonium-making reactor complex so others can convert it into a museum open to the public.

DOE recently sent a report to the Environmental Protection Agency that outlines three options for B Reactor.



Herald file

Members of the B Reactor Museum Association tour B Reactor on June 22, 2000. The world's first large-scale nuclear reactor was built as part of World War II's Manhattan Project at Hanford.

EPA seeks comment on B Reactor options

By the Herald staff

A one-month public comment period on the DOE's B Reactor report and options for its future begins today.

Comments can be mailed to Dennis Faulk of the EPA at 712 Swift Blvd., Suite 5, Richland, WA 99352, or e-mailed to faulk.dennis@epa.gov.

For information, call 376-8631.

The DOE report is available at www.bhi-erc.com/projects/s_m/b_reactor.htm on the Internet.

Also, a public meeting on the subject is scheduled at 7 p.m. June 26 at the Richland library.

See Reactor, Page B2

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Fluor, Lockheed to negotiate Hanford contract

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Fluor Hanford and Lockheed Martin Services Inc. have won approval from the Department of Energy to negotiate a five-year extension of Lockheed's contract.

Fluor, the Hanford Nuclear Reservation's lead contractor for cleanup work, must get DOE approval on major subcontractors. With that hurdle cleared Tuesday, talks on the extension's price and scope are to begin soon.

Lockheed has 577 employees and oversees computer support and other information services at Hanford. Its existing five-year contract ends Sept. 1. Darrell Graddy, Lockheed general manager at Richland, expects to have a five-

year extension nailed down by then.

The cost of Lockheed's work over the next five years depends on what actually is done but is tentatively estimated at \$300 million to \$400 million.

DOE also gave Fluor approval to extend its telephone infrastructure contract with Qwest by three years. That contract is worth an estimated \$9.5 million over three years.

"We look forward to a long-term relationship with (Lockheed) and Qwest with the clear objectives of increased innovation, reduced costs, reduced infrastructure mortgage and improved alignment of planning," said Fluor President Keith Thomson.

Lockheed is one of Hanford's four surviving "enterprise" companies. In 1996, Fluor and five of its subcontractors took

parts of the old Westinghouse Hanford and two of its subcontractors, and spun them off into six "outside-the-fence" subcontractors. The idea was that these "enterprise" companies would mostly work at Hanford while trying to build up business outside of the site. In 1996, Lockheed had slightly more than 500 employees.

Since then, Fluor has reabsorbed several inside-the-fence and outside-the-fence subcontractors — mostly to improve coordination and cut costs.

Fluor recently decided not to extend DynCorp Tri-Cities Services' contract and will reabsorb it and its site landlord duties. The two companies reached an impasse in their negotiations, at least partly over cost-cutting measures.

With Hanford's annual budgets tight-

ening, there is immense pressure to cut costs.

DOE, Lockheed and Fluor have agreed to trim overhead and other costs as much as possible, Graddy said. Their tentative target is to save \$31 million to \$43 million over the next five years.

Graddy said cost reductions might come from Lockheed using its partnerships with various computer software and hardware companies. Also, Lockheed may do its on-site work either through Fluor or contract directly with the other prime contractors — depending on which is more cost-efficient, Graddy said.

And DOE, Fluor and Lockheed have agreed to split Lockheed's personnel security and some correspondence support work from the company. DOE plans to contract that work — valued at about

\$1.5 million a year — to small companies with an eye on minority- and women-owned firms. About 20 jobs could be affected.

About 80 percent of Lockheed's revenue comes from Hanford and 20 percent from non-Hanford work, Graddy said. He declined to reveal the firm's annual revenue. About 120 Lockheed employees work on non-Hanford projects.

Graddy said Lockheed's long-term goals are to expand the Richland office's work to cover the West Coast, add 1,000 jobs, mostly in Richland, and seek \$1 billion in annual revenue.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

B2 TRI-CITY HERALD FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2001

Mid-Columbia

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Monument board to aim for consensus on plan

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The fledgling Hanford Reach National Monument advisory committee adopted procedural rules that are similar to the existing Hanford Advisory Board.

The monument advisory committee agreed during its organizational discussions Thursday it will try to reach — but won't require — unanimity among its 13 representatives before making any

formal recommendation to the federal government on how to put together a monument management plan.

The 7-year-old, 32-member Hanford Advisory Board has an ironclad unanimity requirement on any formal position it takes on Hanford cleanup matters. That unanimity gives the HAB significant political clout because it represents Hanford constituencies ranging from Tri-City interests to regional environmental groups.

The monument advisory community

also includes a cross-section of constituencies interested in the Reach, the Wahluke Slope and the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, which make up the bulk of the national monument.

The monument committee will not require absolute unanimity for its recommendations to the Department of Energy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — leaving room for minority opposing opinions to accompany its recommendations.

Committee members Bob Thompson,

Richland's mayor, and Jim Watts, representing the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, voiced concerns that any recommendation without unanimity will be watered down and be taken less seriously by the federal agencies.

Created last year, the Hanford Reach National Monument covers 305 square miles of Hanford's uncontaminated security buffer areas — relatively untouched shrub-steppe being converted into a federal refuge with some public access. DOE owns

the land, but the wildlife service is managing it. It is expected to take two to three years to create a formal management plan.

The monument advisory committee's mission is provide public and regional input to help create that plan.

The committee is supposed to meet next in late August or early September, when it plans to elect a chairperson.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford money woes may end

■ *Hastings shows
House panel proposal
would fill budget gaps*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

A U.S. House subcommittee's proposed budget increase could cure most of Hanford's predicted financial woes for fiscal 2002.

That makes Hanford observers cautiously optimistic.

The proposed increase would make up most of the Bush administration's shortfall in meeting Hanford's legal cleanup obligations for 2002.

But the increase will have to survive political journeys through the House and Senate plus avoid a presidential veto. That trek will likely last until fall.

"The House and Senate sides still have a lot of work to do," said Larry West, spokesman for U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash.

Sam Volpentest, executive vice president of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, cautioned against reaching any conclusions until the House chews over the proposal next week.

The proposed almost \$700 million increase in the Department of Energy's 2002 nationwide cleanup budget surfaced Wednesday in the House's Appropriations Committee's water and energy subcommittee, which recommended it for approval.

The details were hashed out in a closed-door session and were not expected to become public until the full House Appropriations Committee tackles the issue Monday. The full House could vote on the matter sometime next week.

House

Hastings votes against drilling ban on Reach. **B3.**

21 JUN 01 Monument land to keep status quo for at least 2 years

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expects to take two to three years to nail down a management plan for the Hanford Reach National Monument.

Until that plan is approved, the monument's land likely will remain status quo regarding access and centers for visitors, said Anne Badgley, Portland-based Fish and Wildlife regional director.

The Clinton administration created the 305-square-mile Hanford Reach National Monument last year as a federally managed refuge.

The monument is the noncontaminated outer part of Hanford, which forms a big C around the site's highly contaminated middle. It includes the Columbia River shore, which still is contaminated on the Benton County side; the Wahluke Slope; and the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve.

Wednesday marked the first meeting of a fledgling advisory committee that is supposed to help Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Energy create a master plan to manage the monument. DOE owns the land, and the wildlife service has begun managing it.

The advisory committee has 13 members — each with an alternate — representing the Mid-Columbia constituencies in the Reach, Wahluke Slope and ALE. Members include environmental-

ists, scientists, tribal members and Mid-Columbia government representatives.

Wednesday's meeting was primarily an orientation and organizational session.

Committee members said their greatest concern is about their clout: Will DOE and the wildlife service follow their advice.

Badgley said DOE and the wildlife service will have the final say on the management plan. But she added: "If we have an unanimous group, we'll sure be listening to those voices."

The Fish and Wildlife Service is also trying to figure out its relationship with the committee. "We're not sure what exactly they will be able to provide for us," Badgley said.

That's because this is the wildlife service's first federal citizens advisory committee in the Portland office's six-state region — which covers Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, plus Hawaii and other Pacific islands.

The advisory committee is scheduled to meet from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. today at Washington State University at Tri-Cities' library and information center in Richland. After 9:30 a.m., the group will tour the monument's lands.

Today, the committee is supposed to decide when it will meet next.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

All aboard!

Tri-City Railroad wants to take tourists into Hanford site

By Wendy Culverwell

Herald staff writer

Only God and the government know what once glided along the tracks at the Hanford site.

Now, the abandoned Hanford line, once the transport for the Cold War's top secret materials, is being considered for a far less covert cargo.

Tourists.

The head of Tri-City Railroad wants to revive the line, largely abandoned at the end of 1996. The idea is gaining new attention as a possible way to haul construction materials to Hanford's central plateau, where a multibillion dollar vitrification plant will be built to transform the site's radioactive tank wastes into glass.

And it's commercial hauling, not tourism, that's driving efforts to reopen the line.

But the prospect of excursions through the fascinating terrain of the 560-square-mile Hanford site is irresistible to many.

The tourist train could bring a small amount of cash to the railroad but more importantly, it could unravel some of the mystery surrounding the nuclear reservation, said Randy Peterson, chief executive officer of Tri-City Railroad.

The company operates the southern portion of the old Hanford line for the present owner, the Port of Benton.

"I think it would be informative. (Hanford) wouldn't be a secret," Peterson said.

He wants to take passengers on his private rail car, a 1926 Pullman "business car," originally built for officials of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The car includes a viewing platform, sitting area, office, bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen and crew quarters.

Peterson said he will add dining and observation cars if he gets permission to operate a tour on the currently unused section of the old Hanford track.

“

We're very interested in taking the lead. Being very biased, I think it should be done. It's a shame not to have the track used.

Randy Peterson,
CEO of Tri-City Railroad

”

The Department of Energy transferred the southern section of track to the port in 1998. The spur connects Richland's industrial area to the main line.

At the time, the port declined to take over another 80 miles of track that traverses Hanford because it saw no way to make it pay for itself.

Now, with the prospect of using the rail line to haul construction materials to the site for the glassification plant, Tri-City Railroad and other private carriers have told the port they want it to take control of the entire system.

The port has asked the Department of Energy to consider transferring rights to the miles of track, said Ben Bennett, Port of Benton director.

Any transfer would be enormously complicated by the patchwork of agencies that own and control land within the reservation, said Bennett, who predicts it could take years to iron out agreements between the port, DOE and land-owning agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management.

DOE officials are studying the rail line but haven't made any decisions, said spokesman Mike Talbot.

At a recent Port of Benton meeting, officials from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory indicated they would prefer that construction materials be shipped by train rather than surface road.

Besides causing less wear and tear on public streets, trains generate less seismic activity, pound for pound, than trucks. That means less background interference for motion-sensitive experiments at the Richland laboratory.

In April, Peterson proposed to DOE that Tri-City Railroad go ahead and begin operating the line while the various agencies negotiate ownership. The railroad is seeking a three-year renewable agreement to maintain and use the line.

"We're very interested in taking the lead. Being very biased, I think it should be done," Peterson told the port commission, adding, "It's a shame not to have the track used."

Peterson said the line, undisturbed since 1996, is in good shape. Tri-City Railroad sent a locomotive and passenger car to inspect track that runs through the central part of Hanford past the 100, 200, K and N areas to B Reactor.

The tourist train proposal resonates with the head of the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Kris Watkins said she's heard talk of a tourist train for several years and thinks it's a wonderful idea. Tourists are increasingly interested in cultural and historical attractions, and Hanford is a big one.

"I think it sets us apart from other communities," she said. The idea is still highly theoretical, but the tourist train could take visitors across the central plateau to B Reactor, where proponents want to transform the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor into a museum.

From the museum, tourists could return to Richland on one of the Columbia River jet boat tours through the Hanford Reach. And naturally, they could flip-flop the arrangement, going up by boat and returning by train.

"I think it's a real good time for DOE to use that as an educational opportunity," Watkins said.

■ Reporter Wendy Culverwell can be reached at 582-1537 or via e-mail at wculverwell@tri-cityherald.com.

Bechtel will consolidate subcontracted Hanford jobs

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Bechtel National Inc. plans to consolidate much of its subcontracted work at Hanford, which will trim the number of small subcontractors working on the site's radioactive waste glassification project.

The idea is to simplify the project's administration, said Denise Busch, Bechtel's glassification project procurement services manager.

A team led by Bechtel plus Washington Group International is in charge of designing, building and testing a plant to start converting Hanford's radioactive tank wastes into glass by 2007, and to reach full operations by 2011.

The effort currently employs almost 1,100 people. That is expected to reach 1,500 by December and to peak at about 4,300 people in 2004 before the project's employment is to drop.

Right now, about 300 of the Bechtel team's employees work for about 60 small subcontractors that do engineering and mechanical work. Those contracts expire Sept. 30, which is the end of the 2001 fiscal year.

Bechtel plans to seek proposals later this summer to cover the work in those 60 contracts, hoping to merge the contracts into about 10, Busch said. Also, Bechtel and Washington Group might hire extra people and absorb some of the work within their own companies.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Duratek to replace fired soil-removal contractor

Duratek Federal Services Inc. has been hired by Bechtel Hanford Inc. to replace a soil-removal subcontractor fired Friday because of alleged financial irregularities.

Duratek will be the interim contractor to dig up contaminated soil along the Columbia River at the H, K and F Reactor areas. The company has done similar work at two other contaminated areas of Hanford. It also operates the facility in central Hanford where the soil is disposed of.

Bechtel plans to solicit bids for a permanent subcontractor and to select a replacement in 180 days. Duratek expects to start some work on July 13 and be up to speed by July 23, said Bechtel spokesman Todd Nelson.

The work was being done by P.W. Stephens Contractors Inc. Bechtel has accused that firm of failing to pay federal employment taxes and properly manage other financial obligations. No one from Stephens has returned calls from the Herald.

P.W. Stephens employed about 18 people on the contract, which dated from March 1999.

Bechtel helps nurses

Bechtel donated \$5,000 Friday to Columbia Basin College in Pasco to help expand the school's nursing program.

The donation comes the day after a Tri-City philanthropist anonymously challenged doctors, nurses and members of the Tri-Cities Health Care Task Force to help raise \$30,000 to \$45,000 for the program. The donations would allow 20 more students to enter the nursing classes this fall.

The philanthropist has offered to donate \$10,000 to expand the program. He agreed to give 50 cents for every dollar doctors, nurses and task force members donate.

Donations are being accepted through July 9 by the task force for the fall semester. To make a donation, call 627-4031 or e-mail the task force at bldub@owt.com.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

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Hanford tanks not leaking but pipes suspect

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

A suspicion that a leak might have occurred in one of Hanford's double-shell waste tanks has been disproved.

However, some repairs might be needed in pipes leading to Tank AY-102, where monitors have detected an increasing amount of radioactivity between its inner and outer walls.

This is the third time since March that Hanford's experts spotted a possible leak in one of the site's underground radioactive waste tanks.

So far, crews have determined the suspicious signs in two of the tanks are not from leaks. Experts still are investigating the possibility of two potential pinholes in

double-shell Tank AY-101.

Tanks AY-101 and AY-102 are next to each other on the east side of the 200 Area.

The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection pressured the tank farms contractor, CH2M Hill Hanford Group, to check for potential tank leaks, said Harry Boston, the federal agency's manager. That's because the tanks—even the supposedly safer double-shell tanks—are getting old enough that chances of leaks are increasing.

Central Hanford has 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes in 149 older, leak-prone single-shell tanks and in 28 newer double-shell tanks. The double-shell tanks, which were built between 1968 and 1986, have in the past not been

considered leak risks.

Suspicious that a leak might have occurred in the inner wall of Tank AY-102 surfaced several weeks ago, said Ken Wade, of DOE's Office of River Protection.

Technicians do daily radiation checks in the gaps between the inner and outer walls of the double-shell tanks. Small, but steadily increasing, radiation counts are showing up between Tank AY-102's walls, Wade said.

AY-102 holds wastes that spontaneously heat up. To help cool the tank, the air pressure in the gap is kept lower than the air pressure inside the inner tank.

Because of that, the increasing radioactivity in the gap led to suspicions that

radioactive particles might be leaking from the tank's interior, said Wade and a recent Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board memo.

The double-shell tanks also have leak monitors at the bottom of their wall gaps that detect fluids of more than 1/4-inch deep. Tank AY-102's monitors don't show this.

The defense board memo said another possibility is a leak through a damaged gasket in the underground pipes leading into the tank's gap. Hanford's experts tentatively agree with this scenario and are double-checking it, Wade said.

Meanwhile, experts still are studying two large stains on opposite sides of Tank AY-101's inner wall. Those stains are 22

feet above the surface of the tank's wastes.

One hypothesis is that the stains are from pinholes corroded through the inner wall.

Further inspections of those spots are scheduled for later this year, said Vic Callahan, DOE's double-shell tanks assessment program manager.

This year's third suspicious sign in a tank was a strange 20- to 30-foot wiggly line on the dome of the 200 East Area's single-shell Tank C-107. Experts concluded the line was a shadow rather than a crack.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford soil removal sub fired for financial issues

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Bechtel Hanford Inc. fired one of its soil removal subcontractors Friday because of financial irregularities.

P.W. Stephens Contractors Inc. was terminated because it failed to pay federal employment taxes and properly manage other financial obligations under its

contract with Bechtel, according to a written Bechtel statement.

Bechtel spokesman Todd Nelson declined to elaborate on the allegations.

The local P.W. Stephens manager could not be reached for comment Friday. Phone numbers at the parent corporation—P.W. Stephens Environmental in St. Louis—were disconnected.

P.W. Stephens employed 17 to 19 people on its Bechtel Hanford contract, Nelson said.

Since March 1999, the subcontractor's job was to dig up contaminated soil along the Columbia River at the H, K and F Reactor areas, then haul it to a huge landfill in central Hanford.

P.W. Stephens completed most of that work at the H Reactor

area, and is partly done at the F Reactor area. It had not started work at the K East and K West reactors, Nelson said.

Three other firms—Foster Wheeler Environmental Corp., RCI Environmental Inc. and Duratek—have similar contracts with Bechtel to removal contaminated soil from Hanford's Columbia shoreline areas.

Bechtel soon plans to name an interim contractor for P.W. Stephens' work. Bechtel expects work at the reactors to resume within three weeks.

Bechtel Hanford's contract and those of its subcontractors expire on June 30, 2002.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

DOE, Fish and Wildlife agree on Reach rules

The Department of Energy and the Fish and Wildlife Service on Monday announced a 25-year agreement that spells out their roles and responsibilities in overseeing the Hanford Reach National Monument.

"This is an excellent first step in solidifying our partnership," said Keith Klein, manager of DOE's Richland operations office.

The understanding is designed to ensure DOE's cleanup missions are not interrupted and that the Fish and Wildlife Service can protect the monument's natural resources.

Bechtel picks CH2M Hill as Hanford plant operator

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Bechtel National Inc. picked CH2M Hill Constructors to help play the part of plant operator during the construction of Hanford's radioactive waste glassification complex, Bechtel announced Friday.

CH2M Hill Constructors' contract will run for one year, with possible future extensions, said Bechtel spokesman John Britton.

Bechtel and its main subcontractor Washington Group International have a contract with the Department of Energy to design,

build and test plants to start converting Hanford's highly radioactive tank wastes into a safer glass. That contract extends to 2011.

One of Washington Group's responsibilities is to look at the project from the viewpoint of the yet-to-be-picked company that will start operating the plants in 2011. It is supposed to address operational issues as the plants are designed and built.

CH2M Hill Constructors' job is to help Washington Group when Washington Group needs extra expertise on operations matters.

Bechtel will pay CH2M Hill

Constructors based on how much extra help is requested, Britton said. The amount of this work could vary for year to year.

CH2M Hill Constructors was one of three bidders for the job. The other two were Duke Engineering & Services and BNFL Inc.

CH2M Hill Constructors is the third subsidiary of Denver-based CH2M Hill now working at Hanford. CH2M Hill Hanford Group manages the site's tank farms. A small CH2M Hill company is a subcontractor for Bechtel Hanford on its environmental restoration work.

MACTEC awarded contract for Hanford radioactive vault

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A team led by MACTEC Inc. will tackle the preliminary design work on a huge central Hanford underground vault so it can hold the site's radioactive tank wastes after the material is glassified.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group awarded the \$1.6 million design contract to a team of MACTEC, Applied Research and Engineering Science Corp. and Battelle, MACTEC announced Friday.

The team is scheduled to have its preliminary design work finished by August 2002, said Jim Bertsch, MACTEC's Richland office manager.

Central Hanford has 53 million gallons of radioactive wastes in 177 underground tanks that are becoming more and more prone to leaks. A team led by Bechtel National is to design, build and test plants to convert the tank wastes into a relatively benign glass — with the first glass supposedly to be produced by 2007.

Hanford plans to temporarily store the glass in two massive chambers in a three-chamber subterranean vault called the "Canister Storage Building" in the 200 East Area.

The idea is that the vault will hold the glassified wastes until a permanent nuclear waste storage site is created at Yucca Mountain, Nev.

However, construction and testing at Yucca Mountain is behind schedule and faces heavy political opposition in Nevada. In Hanford circles there has been an informal and grudging acknowl-

edgment that the central Hanford vault might end up as a permanent storage site by default.

One chamber of the three-chamber vault already contains a dense forest of 40-foot-tall tubes that has begun to receive canisters of spent nuclear fuel from the K Basins.

The other two empty chambers long have been earmarked for the glassified tank wastes, which will be in the shapes of cylinders and cubes.

The MACTEC team's job is to do the general overall design work on how 440 vertical storage tubes will be manufactured and inserted into the 40-foot-deep chambers. It also will tackle the general overall designing on a new trucking bay and other equipment at the Canister Storage Building that can move the glassified wastes from a truck to the storage tubes all inside additional radiation-proof shielding.

After August 2002, CH2M Hill likely will put out for bids for the final design work that will include cost estimates and more exact specifications for on this project, Bertsch said. Those specifications will be used to seek bidders for the actual construction work.

Colorado-based environmental contractor MACTEC usually has had an engineering consulting role at Hanford. Now, the company wants to get more involved in design and construction work at the site, Bertsch said.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford to remove tanks from watch list

■ Tanks no longer considered dangerous

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The Wyden watch list of Hanford's most dangerous underground tanks of radioactive waste is about to become history, Harry Boston, manager of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection, said Tuesday.

By Sept. 30, none of the 60 tanks cited on the list when it was created in 1991 will still pose enough of a hazard to retain that status. That date is the deadline under the Tri-Party Agreement for removing the tanks from the list.

When U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., was a congressman, he legislated special Hanford watch lists to mark particularly

hazardous waste tanks. DOE was given 60 days to identify any tank with the potential to release radioactive material because of an increase in pressure or temperature.

Three dozen tanks have been removed from the list so far, with 24 remaining. Those two dozen tanks were placed on the list because of suspicions that flammable gas could build up inside them.

Hanford officials believe they can prove those tanks were not as dangerous as originally feared.

"In '91 we did not know a lot," said Craig Groendyke, the Office of River Protection's flammable gas project manager.

Seven years of data have been collected on the 24 tanks, including gas release data, sampling of the waste to determine

See Tanks, Page B2

Humanity in their efforts

Hanford employees, retirees helping build homes and community

By Joni Carrasco
Herald staff writer

Some Hanford employees and retirees have picked up hammers and nails to help the community by building houses with Habitat for Humanity.

Del Ballard is a retiree who left Hanford seven years ago after working there since 1951. Joining the group allowed him to use his skills while helping people.

"I've always been interested in building things," said the former civil engineer. "I was interested in having an avocation where I could use my talents."

Ballard is the Monday crew leader for Habitat for Humanity, so he volunteers at least once a week. He has been building houses with the program since November 1997.

"I really enjoy accomplishing something for society and the community," he said.

A newcomer to the organization is retired Hanford engineer Warren Sevier, who started working with Habitat for Humanity a few months ago. Sevier, who gained experience building his own home, retired 12 years ago and has done volunteer work with his church, including building churches in Africa.

"It's just like working for any other charitable organization — you get satisfaction out of it," Sevier said.

He said he had been thinking about volunteering with the organization for a while, so when Ballard, a former co-worker, called and asked him to help, Sevier was happy to join.

Chris Smith, volunteer coordinator for the organization, said Habitat for

Humanity receives a mix of volunteers from all over the Tri-City area, including the Benton-Franklin PUD, Lamb-Weston and other businesses and churches. But, he said, about half of the 150 or so active volunteers are from the Hanford site.

"Part of their mission is to improve their community," said Smith, who used to work for Battelle.

Smith helps new volunteers get plugged into the program by finding out their specific interests and letting them know what opportunities are available.

"Habitat for Humanity is a hand up, not a handout," Smith said. "That's what I liked about this organization, so I jumped right in with both feet." He volunteers 15 to 20 hours a week with the program and has been part of it for 3½ years.

While many of the regular construction volunteers are men, there are some women who work on the houses as well, Smith said. The organization takes volunteers of all skill levels, and they are trained on the spot.

See Humanity, Page B2

Hanford company wins safety award

Fluor Federal Services has achieved a top ranking in a nationwide safety program, winning Gold Star status in the Department of Energy's Voluntary Protection Program.

Two Fluor Hanford subcontractors, DynCorp Tri-Cities Services and Protection Technology Hanford, received the same award earlier this year.

The program was conceived by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and later adopted by DOE. It emphasizes cooperation between managers and workers to improve safety habits and records.

The award brings not only prestige but also cuts down on the number of safety inspections a company is required to go through. A few hundred companies in numerous industries have achieved the Gold Star designation nationwide.

Federal officials looked extensively at management leadership, employee involvement, hazard prevention and control, work site analysis and safety and health training before giving Fluor Federal the award. The company has accumulated 1 million hours worked without a lost-time injury three times and 2 million hours once.

Fluor Federal employs 840 people, most at Hanford, who provide project management, engineering, procurement and construction services.

Senate panel OKs bill to keep Hanford cleanup on schedule

■ Bill could cause Bush administration, Congress showdown

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A key U.S. Senate committee on Thursday approved an appropriations bill that would provide just enough money to keep Hanford cleanup efforts on their legal schedules for fiscal 2002.

This bill provides \$841 million more for nationwide nuclear cleanup — with almost half going to Hanford — than the Bush administration originally proposed.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$6.754 billion for Department of Energy nuclear cleanup work,

which would send a tentative \$1.834 billion to Hanford, said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

That is \$2 million more than what DOE believes is the bare minimum needed to keep Hanford on its cleanup timetable.

The allocation — part of the Senate energy and water development appropriations bill — is scheduled to go to the full Senate early next week. After Senate action, the House and Senate then will have to compromise on their proposed appropriations.

This bill could prompt an autumn showdown between the budget priorities of the Bush administration and Congress, said Murray, a member of the Appropriations Committee's energy and water subcom-

See Hanford, Page A2

State set to hit DOE with weekly fine

■ *Missing July 31 deadline for starting construction of glass plant violates pact*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The state plans to fine the Department of Energy, assuming it misses a July 31 deadline to begin construction on plants at Hanford to turn high-level radioactive wastes into glass.

How the state will levy the fine still is undecided, but Washington's Department of Ecology plans to penalize DOE for missing the Tri-Party Agreement deadline, said Sheryl Hutchison, an Ecology Department spokeswoman.

DOE declined to comment on the expected fine, saying it would be premature to do so.

Hanford's worst environmental problem is 53 million gallons of highly radioactive waste stored in 177 underground tanks. The Tri-Party Agreement, a legal pact governing Hanford's cleanup, requires DOE to start building plants by July 31 to convert those wastes into glass. The first wastes are supposed to be turned into glass by 2007.

DOE had hired BNFL Inc. to build the glassification plants but fired that company in June 2000 after its cost estimates skyrocketed from \$6.9 billion to \$15.2 billion. That termination and the six months needed to hire Bechtel National as BNFL's replacement guaranteed that the July 31 deadline will be missed.

DOE and Bechtel now hope to begin construction of the plants sometime between April and December 2002.

For the past several months, DOE has tried to convince the state to postpone the July 31 legal deadline. But the state

refused because it wants to keep pressure on the federal agency.

Under the Tri-Party Agreement, the state can fine DOE up to \$5,000 for the first week after a missed deadline, and up to \$10,000 for each subsequent week until the problem is fixed.

That means DOE could face a potential maximum fine of \$515,000 if the glassification project begins a year late.

The state also has long threatened to file a lawsuit against DOE if the glassification project stumbles behind schedule. But Hutchison said the state views a fine and the threatened lawsuit as separate issues.

The state is closely watching whether enough money is budgeted for the glassification project in the 2002 budget before deciding whether to file a lawsuit, Hutchison said.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

DOE official says Hanford not taking enough wastes

■ *More low-level wastes could be routed here and to Nevada Test Site*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

In the past two years, Hanford and the Nevada Test Site have received only 48 percent of the federal low-level radioactive wastes that they could have handled, according to a recent federal report.

That means the Department of Energy needs to become more cost-efficient in routing those wastes to the two sites, said a DOE Inspector General's report released last week.

While Hanford and Nevada already receive low-level radioactive wastes from several DOE sites, both expect to see wastes from additional sites by late 2002.

However, the Inspector General's recommendations do not signal any

See **Wastes**, Page A2

Hanford to determine speed of radioactive plume transmission

■ *Waste moving to plume headed toward Columbia River*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford officials are trying to determine how fast a small highly radioactive underground plume from Hanford's northernmost waste tanks might reach a nearby faster-moving plume that's headed toward the Columbia River.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group recently drilled a 260-foot borehole into the aquifer beneath Tank B-110 and plans to soon drill a similar hole at the BX-BY Tank Farms area, said Rick Raymond, CH2M Hill Hanford Group's vice president for projects.

The holes will be used to sample ground water to determine how fast and far the one highly radioactive waste plume has spread.

The B, BX, and BY Tanks Farms are bunched on the north side of the 200 East Area and include 40 single-shell tanks. Twenty of those tanks, including B-110, are suspected of leaking radioactive wastes.

In 1998, Hanford confirmed that liquid wastes from those three tank farms had reached the underground aquifer.

There also is a large fast-moving underground plume near that 40-tank cluster from "cribs" where huge volumes of mildly contaminated water were dumped into septic-tank-like fields.

The small highly radioactive plume beneath the tank farms is believed to be only a few hundred yards from the huge, faster-moving plume that is headed toward the river.

Once the plumes meet, Hanford officials believe, the slow-moving highly radioactive sub-

stances likely will speed up with the faster plume.

Central Hanford has 53 million gallons of radioactive wastes in 149 single-shell and 28 safer double-shell tanks. Sixty-seven single-shell tanks are suspected of leaking.

Subterranean Hanford is a patchwork of several dozen plumes from various sources that include more than 100 radioactive and hazardous substances. The plumes are moving at different speeds toward the aquifer, then to the Columbia River.

Studies indicate the plumes contain at least 1 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes and 440 billion gallons of mildly contaminated fluids.

Tank B-110 leaked at least 10,000 gallons of radioactive liquids into the ground before it was pumped out in 1984. Two leaking tanks, BY-105 and BY-106, remain in those three tank farms, and they are supposed to be pumped out by the end of this year, Raymond said.

The liquids leaked from Tank B-110 include technetium 99, a highly radioactive substance with a half life of 212,000 years. That means it will take 2.12 million years to decay to a negligible level. Also, technetium 99 moves through ground water faster than most radioactive substances, which highlights concerns about it linking with a speedier plume.

Drilling boreholes to sample and track underground waste is a slow, expensive undertaking. When the proposed hole is completed at the BY-BX Tank Farms area, Hanford will have drilled five boreholes in fiscal 2001. Five more — at \$500,000 to \$1 million each — are scheduled to be drilled in the 200 East and 200 West Areas in fiscal 2002.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

Mid-Columbia

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2001 TRI-CITY HERALD

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New Kennewick office to aid ill Hanford workers

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The Department of Labor plans to open a Kennewick office to help ill Hanford workers or their survivors apply for compensation shortly before a July 31 deadline.

The center at 1029 N. Kellogg St. should open the week of July 23, although the exact date has yet to be announced.

Federal officials are advising workers and former workers to file their claims by July 31, since medical benefits on accepted

claims will be paid retroactively to that day.

Under the new Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, \$150,000 will be paid to nuclear workers or certain of their survivors if the worker fell ill because of workplace exposures. Workers and former workers also could receive medical care for the illness.

At Hanford, workers with any type of cancer will be considered for compensation. They'll be required to file medical information and as detailed a work his-

tory as they remember. Then the government will consider whether their exposure to radiation at Hanford or other Department of Energy nuclear sites as likely as not to have caused the cancer.

If the worker has died, a spouse may apply for the compensation. Those who were dependent on the worker at the time of his death, such as a child in college, also may apply.

Workers with lung diseases because of exposure to beryllium or silica also are eli-

gible for compensation. Those with chronic beryllium disease from an allergy-like reaction to breathing tiny particles of the exotic metal would receive \$150,000. Workers who test positive for sensitivity to beryllium would receive medical monitoring paid for by the government.

The resource center also is expected to offer help in filing state worker compensation claims, even if previous claims have been denied. DOE has ordered its contractors to stop fighting state claims that show merit.

Workers who have illnesses such as asbestosis may qualify for the state program, even if they are not eligible for federal compensation.

The Labor Department, which is administering the federal compensation program, has a toll-free number at 866-888-3322 for information and order claim forms.

■ **Reporter Annette Cary can be reached at 582-1533 or via e-mail at acary@tri-cityherald.com.**

Senate OKs Hanford cleanup money

By the Herald staff

By a veto-proof tally of 97-2, the U.S. Senate on Thursday approved spending enough money — \$1.834 billion — to meet Hanford's minimum legal cleanup obligations in fiscal 2002.

The vote sets up a yet-unscheduled conference with U.S. House members for the two chambers to compromise on appropriations for Department of Energy nuclear cleanup money.

The action also puts Congress in a strong position when President Bush studies congressional appropriations this

fall to determine if he will sign them, said the staff of U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

The federal budget political situation is expected to change this fall since the administration is seeking additional defense spending to go with its massive tax cuts.

"Now that both the Senate and House have done the right thing by approving money for nuclear cleanup, I hope the Bush administration will decide to support our effort as well," Murray said.

This is the status of the Hanford

cleanup budget for fiscal 2002, which starts Oct. 1.

■ Congress is expected to pass a supplemental DOE cleanup budget for fiscal 2001 of \$180 million, including \$53 million for Hanford. That is expected to be spent in 2002, so DOE officials and congressional members are informally adding it to the 2002 budget.

■ In fiscal 2001, DOE's national cleanup budget was \$6.267 billion with \$1.456 billion for Hanford. DOE calculated Hanford needs at least \$1.832 billion in 2002 to meet minimum legal obligations plus

accelerate cleanup along the Columbia River.

■ The administration asked Congress for \$5.913 billion for nationwide cleanup in 2002, with \$1.4 billion for Hanford, a \$432 million shortfall.

■ The House recently passed a nationwide cleanup budget of \$6.613 billion. With the extra \$53 million, that would send \$1.814 billion to Hanford.

■ Thursday's Senate vote appropriates \$6.754 billion to nationwide cleanup, with \$1.834 billion for Hanford with the \$53 million included.

Claims office to open Monday

■ *Ill nuclear workers, survivors can file papers in Kennewick*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

A Kennewick office to help ill nuclear workers or their survivors file federal and state claims is to open Monday at 1029 N. Kellogg St.

People who want to meet with one of the office's case workers may schedule an appointment now for the coming weeks by calling 783-1500 or toll-free 888-654-0014. The office also will have forms available for filing federal claims.

Under the new Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, \$150,000 will be paid to nuclear workers or certain of their survivors if the worker fell ill because of workplace exposures. Workers and former workers in construction and production also could receive medical care for an illness.

At Hanford, workers with any type of cancer will be considered for compensation. They'll be required to file medical information and as detailed a work history as they remember. Then, the government will consider whether their exposure to radiation at Hanford or other Department of Energy nuclear sites may have caused the cancer.

Nuclear workers with chronic lung disease from breathing small particles of beryllium, an exotic metal used at Hanford, also are eligible for medical coverage and a \$150,000 payment. Workers in Alaska and Nevada also may have lung disease because of

PNNL finds new method to clean up diesel exhaust

■ *Diesel technology will reduce release of nitrous oxide by 70 percent*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

In cars with gasoline engines, catalytic converters have controlled pollution.

But the devices don't work on diesel engines, which continue to spew oxides of nitrogen that can result in smog.

However, scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory have come up with a way to clean up the diesel exhaust, and the process is promising enough to be recognized as among the top 100 technological innovations of the past year.

It was one of four technologies developed by scientists in Richland and collaborators elsewhere to win an R&D 100 Award in the annual competition run by R&D Magazine.

Initial tests with the diesel technology developed at the Richland lab showed nitrous oxide could be reduced by 70 percent.

"But our lab results over the past six months now show that greater than 90 percent reduction can be achieved," said Chuck Peden, principal investigator for the project. Laboratory tests also have shown the process could significantly reduce the amount of soot produced by diesel engines.

The process uses two steps.

First exhaust from diesel fuel is electrically charged, causing chemical reactions. Then a catalyst material, a class of hydrous aluminum silicates or zeolite, is used to further change the chemistry.

The result is water and nitrogen — which makes up nearly four-fifths of the atmosphere — where once there were harmful oxides of nitrogen.

New hybrid, light-duty diesel engines, such as those used in passenger cars and small trucks already can meet fuel economy requirements and actually emit less of the

See Exhaust, Page B2

Waste mistakenly sent to landfill for 2 years

■ *Hanford equipment misread radioactive waste meant for burial*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Problems with key Hanford equipment caused radioactive wastes earmarked for deep burial in New Mexico to be mistakenly sent to a Hanford landfill for the past two years.

Hanford's experts still are sifting through a series of glitches, trying to figure out how to fix the trouble. So far, no threat to human health or the environment

seems likely, Hanford officials said.

But they are disturbed that incorrect readings on plutonium concentrations in Hanford wastes went undetected for two years.

"How we can go for two years and not detect this analytical problem? The analytical work is sloppy at best," said Doug Sherwood, the Environmental Protection Agency's Hanford site manager.

George Jackson, Fluor Hanford's vice president for nuclear materials stabilization, said: "All those (involved in the glitches)

See Landfill, Page A2

Leaky package forces evacuation at Hanford

An apparent leak of a potentially harmful gas forced the evacuation of a Hanford building Monday.

No one was hurt, but three Hanford employees were checked as a precaution and allowed to return to work, said Fluor Hanford spokesman Michael Turner.

The incident occurred at 2:15 p.m. at Hanford's 1162 Building — the site's shipping and receiving center in north Richland along Stevens Drive.

Two DynCorps Tri-Cities Services clerks noticed a strange odor coming from a cardboard box. About 100 people were evacuated from the building for about 90 minutes, Turner said, while a Richland Fire Department crew removed the package.

The box contained a 1-liter bottle of carbon disulfide, a toxic liquid used at Hanford to dissolve materials. It can harm people if inhaled, digested or absorbed through the skin.

Loosened lid blamed for Hanford leak

A jostled lid on a glass bottle is to blame for the leak of a potentially harmful chemical Monday, causing the evacuation of a south Hanford building.

Investigators don't know yet why the lid came off a 1-liter bottle of toxic carbon disulfide liquid in a cardboard shipping box at the 1162 Building on Stevens Drive, said Michael Turner, a Fluor Hanford spokesman.

Two DynCorp Tri-Cities Services clerks smelled an odor, and Richland's hazardous materials team responded and put the package in a sealed container.

Carbon disulfide is used in Hanford labs to dissolve materials. Exposure to the chemical can cause heart, respiratory, nervous system, eye and other internal problems. Turner said only a whiff of an odor escaped, but 100 people evacuated the building for 90 minutes as a precaution.

The bottle was shipped properly under federal rules, Turner said. Further investigation is planned.

26 JUL 01

Bush signs bill to give Hanford \$53.3 million

President Bush signed a budget bill Tuesday that puts an extra \$53.3 million into Hanford's budget for fiscal 2001, according to the office of U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

Overall, that budget bill sends an extra \$180 million to various Department of Energy nuclear cleanup projects nationwide for fiscal 2001.

The extra money will help Hanford meet its legal obligations for cleanup next year, which are expected to cost at least \$1.832 billion.

PNNL earns 'Gold Star' award from DOE

29 JUL 01

The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has earned Gold Star status in the Department of Energy's Voluntary Protection Program. It is the first DOE Office of Science lab to earn the honor and the fourth Hanford-related company to do so.

The Gold Star recognizes superior efforts to promote safety and health activities.

Harry Pettengill, DOE Office of Regulatory Liaison director, presented the award to PNNL Director Lura Powell at a ceremony at the lab.

State to fine DOE

■ *Missed glassification deadlines cause for \$5,000, \$10,000 fines*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Washington plans to start fining the Department of Energy after it misses next week's deadline to start construction of Hanford's tank waste glassification plant, state officials said Thursday.

DOE will be fined \$5,000 for the first week after the missed

deadline, then another \$10,000 each week until the state is satisfied the much-delayed project is solidly back on schedule, according to the state.

“(The state is) not after the actual dollars. The money is not important. What is important is the signal we send by taking this action.”

Tom Fitzsimmons, Department of Ecology director

That means providing a plan that the state believes will lead to the first glassified wastes by 2007, plus getting guarantees from the Bush administration that glassification efforts will be fully funded next year, said Tom Fitzsimmons, director of Washington's Department of Ecology.

If the federal government doesn't meet those goals by Oct. 1, the state will likely lead to Washington following through on its threat to file a lawsuit against DOE to force it to keep Hanford's glassification project on schedule, he said.

“We're not after the actual dollars. The money is not important. What is important is the signal we send by taking this action,” Fitzsimmons said.

If DOE doesn't meet the state's conditions until Oct. 1, the fine would total \$85,000, taken from Hanford's cleanup coffers.

Fitzsimmons said if the state eventually is satisfied with DOE's efforts, it would consider rolling the fines back into Hanford's cleanup.

Todd Martin, chairman of the Hanford Advisory Board, said he lauded the move.

PNNL projects among top 101 innovations

■ DOE's Office of Science selects Richland lab's work for Decades of Discovery list

From Herald news services

Work at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has given the nation strategies for peering inside cells, immobilizing nuclear waste and fighting acid rain.

The Department of Energy's Office of Science has picked those projects and four other research accomplishments at the Richland lab for its Decades of Discovery list of the office's top 101 innovations.

The list covers work done with Office of Science funding since the agency was formed 25 years ago. The national lab in Richland is overseen by DOE's Office of Science.

Richland discoveries and innovations picked for the list include:

■ Preventing radioactive contamination

A 20-year collaboration between Bill Weber at the Richland lab and Rod Ewing at the University of Michigan identified materials that absorb harmful neutrons from plutonium and resist radiation damage. Internationally, titanate materials have been considered for plutonium immobilization, but Weber and Ewing have shown that gadolinium zirconate materials are superior, resisting radiation damage for thousands of years.

The Office of Science praised the work for potentially helping resolve the problem of what to do with 1,350 metric tons of plutonium already produced by nuclear energy and weapons programs. The amount is growing by 70 metric tons annually, and decays very slowly over tens of thousands of years.

■ The world's toughest microbe

A bacterium first discovered in spoiled beef has proved to be difficult to destroy through radiation, surviving 3,000 times the radiation dose lethal to humans.

Researchers at Richland and elsewhere re-engineered the microbe so that it can reduce toxic metals and partially degrade harmful solvents while surviving the high radiation levels found at DOE waste sites.

■ Accelerating the study of proteins

Richard Smith of the Richland lab has developed an instrument that can rapidly and accurately study all of an organism's proteins.

With the completion of DNA sequences from a rapidly growing number of organisms, scientists want to identify and characterize all of the genes and their protein products, but that work had proceeded slowly. Measurements of protein production, for example, could provide new insights into the molecular nature of disease.

■ Optical probes for imaging single molecules

With conventional optics, scientists can view an area no smaller than one-half of the wavelength of light being used. But Sunney Xie, Peter Lu and other scientists

at PNNL found a way to deliver light energy to areas much smaller than its wavelength. Their advance enables the study of individual molecules in their own environments and may be useful in understanding the biological effects on humans of chemical and radiation exposure.

■ Observing chemical changes in living cells

Scientists at the Richland lab and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology recently developed a way to combine optical microscopy and nuclear magnetic resonance microscopy to view a single living cell and its nucleus. Just a few years ago, scientists were unable to observe chemical changes within normal living cells, because methods of analyzing them changed or killed them.

The new microscope allows scientists to monitor how live cells respond to environmental changes such as heat, chemicals and radiation.

■ Modeling and simulation of environmental problems

To model and simulate major environ-

mental problems, scientists need more than the most powerful computers. They also need software algorithms that express the fundamental physics involved in entirely new ways.

Software of this type recently was developed by computational scientists, applied mathematicians and theoretical chemists at the Richland lab. The new software provides many methods for computing the properties of molecular systems by using quantum mechanics based on either molecular orbital theory or density functional theory.

Studies using the software are addressing health and environmental issues.

■ Discovering the processes of acid rain

Scientists at the Richland lab and three other national labs uncovered the detailed chemical and atmospheric processes that convert emissions from industry and cars to acid rain. The work was essential in developing pollution control strategies, the Office of Science said.

FFTF funding may be tied up

■ *Committee review
of startup details may
delay appropriations*

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

Money to restart Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility could be withheld at least temporarily under a new provision that calls for approval of the details of a restart by a skeptical Senate committee.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham was due to receive a report Tuesday on the pros and cons of restarting the Hanford reactor. He will make the decision on whether the reactor should be restarted to make isotopes for medicine and the space program and to do research, including on nuclear energy.

But Congress appropriates the money for the reactor.

The House and Senate have approved \$38.4 million for the reactor for the fiscal year that starts in October.

But a report that details the Senate appropriation includes two paragraphs that appear to favor a shutdown.

In the last days of the Clinton administration, then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson ordered the reactor permanently shut down. Abraham suspended that decision for 90 days to study new information.

The Senate appropriations report characterized the suspension as "a 90-day delay in shutdown for yet another review of possible missions."

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Inside

Willamette Valley farmers file lawsuit against New York food processors. **Business, B6**

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Briefs

Former Richland man killed in plane crash

A 27-year-old former Richland man was one of the victims of a plane crash Sunday near Puyallup that killed all six on board.

Troy Fausey and his wife Becky were passengers in the single-engine Piper Cherokee that crashed shortly after takeoff at Thun Field.

Troy Fausey died at the scene and Becky Fausey, 25, died from her injuries after being taken to a Tacoma hospital.

They had just celebrated their third wedding anniversary July 17, said a close friend, Jason Brooks of Sumner.

Troy Fausey, who graduated from high school in Richland, was a firefighter with the Sumner Fire Department.

Group launches isotope use effort

■ *Isotopes created by nuclear reactors may be used in treating cancer*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

A Tri-City-based group is launching an effort to educate the public and professionals about the promise of using isotopes often produced in nuclear reactors to treat cancer.

A CD-ROM prepared by Citizens for Medical Isotopes will be given to political leaders, doctors and others who may not understand the term "medical isotopes."

The CD includes national news stories touting medical breakthroughs in cancer treatment using isotopes.

"Lifeline tonight — a radical new treatment for breast cancer that is faster, less traumatic and less invasive," announces

NBC anchor Tom Brokaw in one segment.

The CD ends with a plug for the reactor that could meet growing demand for the medicine: Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

On Wednesday, the Department of Energy announced it will consider a proposal by a consortium of private companies to use the Hanford reactor primarily for making medical and industrial isotopes.

Although many in the Tri-Cities support restarting FFTF for such a humanitarian mission, environmental groups want DOE to stick to cleaning up contamination left at Hanford from World War II and the Cold War.

Short-lived isotopes, which emit radiation, can be used in very small amounts as medicine to kill cancer cells without killing as many healthy cells as more conventional treatments.

"These treatments are much gentler on

patients and often work after a 30-second injection," said Marlene Oliver of West Richland of the National Association of Cancer Patients.

Medical isotopes have shown promise in treating many cancers, but the CD concentrates on advances in breast cancer and non-Hodgkins lymphoma, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.

Two non-Hodgkins lymphoma treatments may be close to U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval. One uses Yttrium 90 as its radiation source, which usually comes from nuclear waste left by reactors at Hanford or in Russia.

In those treatments, the isotope is attached to an antibody that seeks out the cancer. The isotope then bombards the cell with deadly radiation. Some patients are left with no sign of cancer.

A similar "smart bullet" treatment for breast cancer has shown promise,

although a lack of available copper 67 isotopes has slowed research, said Bob Schenter of Richland, also a member of the National Association of Cancer Patients.

But breast cancer also is being treated experimentally using radioactive seeds similar to those used to treat prostate cancer.

Women who opt for a partial removal of their breast also often need radiation. But rather than weeks of traditional radiation that can leave burns, some women have been successfully treated with tiny seeds of radiation injected into the at-risk area several times over about a week.

Citizens for Medical Isotopes also has produced a public service announcement with the help of Charter Cable that it will ask Northwest television stations to air.

■ Reporter Annette Cary can be reached at 582-1533 or via e-mail at acary@tricityherald.com.

DOE examines proposal to lease FFTF

■ *Commercialization of reactor could keep it running through private sector*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy is considering a proposal by Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems of Richland to lease Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility for 35 years.

ANMS is proposing using financing provided by organized labor, importing

Isotope health

Group educates about FFTF's medical power. **B1.**

fuel from Europe and providing operations and services by a team of companies experienced in nuclear-related work.

Duke Engineering & Services Inc. of Charlotte, N.C., would

operate the Department of Energy reactor, said Bill Stokes, president of ANMS. Duke Engineering is one of the largest nuclear engineering companies in the United States and a subsidiary of Duke Energy, which has seven commer-

“The ANMS commercialization approach offers the DOE an alternative approach to dependency on federal funding and shifts significant risk from the government to the private sector.”

Bill Stokes,
Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems president

cial nuclear reactors in the Carolinas.

Other team members with Duke and ANMS include Fluor Federal Services Inc. of Richland, Nuclear Fuel Services Inc. of Erwin, Tenn., and Science Appli-

cations International Corp. Inc., or SAIC, of San Diego.

The Fast Flux Test Facility has been idle since 1992 for lack of a government use for the reactor. In January, the Clinton

administration ordered it permanently shut down, saying it had not found sufficient interest from companies that need isotopes to restart the reactor. Maintaining it for a possible restart costs about \$40 million a year.

However, the Bush administration suspended that decision for 90 days to gather new information, including whether money could be found to offset the government's costs.

On Wednesday, DOE announced it was interested in one of the proposals that

Report asks DOE to cede Hanford monument land

■ 223 square miles recommended to be turned over to Fish and Wildlife Service

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A federal report recommends the Department of Energy turn over ownership of the Hanford Reach National Monument to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Such a move would severely cut DOE's payments-in-lieu-of-taxes to governments and schools in Benton, Franklin and Grant counties.

"That was kind of a shock," said Grant County Commissioner LeRoy Allison, who learned of the report Thursday.

DOE tentatively and partly agreed with the report's recommendation but plans to study it until December before discussing it with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Any transfer of ownership would take 18 to 24 months, DOE told its Inspector General's office.

"We'll be conducting an analysis. ... It's premature to say what the analysis will conclude," said DOE spokesman Tom Welch.

DOE's Inspector General's office examined the administration of the Hanford Reach National Monument and sent its

“
That was kind of a shock.”

LeRoy Allison,
Grant County commissioner

”
recommendation to DOE officials in late July.

Former President Clinton created the monument last year — turning roughly 265 square miles of the 560-square-mile Hanford reservation into a nature reserve.

The monument's area consists of Hanford's almost pristine outer security buffer, which includes the Wahluke Slope, the Hanford Reach, the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve and Hanford's northwest corner, dubbed the McGee Ranch area.

DOE owns the land. The Fish and Wildlife Service is in charge of managing it for DOE and recently began a two-year effort to create a master management plan.

See Hanford, Page A2

DOE reconsidering disposal plans for 55 tons of plutonium

By The Associated Press
and the Herald staff

WASHINGTON — The Department of Energy is revamping a Clinton-era plan to dispose of 55 tons of surplus plutonium amid cost overruns, prompting threats from South Carolina's governor to block shipments into that state.

That would include 4.4 tons of Hanford plutonium, scheduled to go to South Carolina sometime between 2010 and 2014.

The 4.4 tons are mixed within 19.6 tons of scrap at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant. DOE is extracting the plutonium and converting it into safer forms before shipment.

A DOE report, made public Thursday by a private group, concludes the cost of disposing of the plutonium will be at least \$6.6 billion over 22 years, about 50 percent more than estimated two years ago.

At the same time, the Bush administration put on hold part of the program that called for some plutonium to be fused into glass logs for eventual burial at the Yucca Mountain nuclear repository in Nevada.

That decision brought complaints from South Carolina officials, who are concerned DOE

will ship tons of plutonium from its weapons facilities into the state for processing with no assurance the material will ever leave.

"When South Carolina agreed to accept plutonium, ... DOE agreed that there would be a clear exit strategy," South Carolina Gov. Jim Hodges said recently.

Hodges, a Democrat, said the "shifting nature" of the government's plan suggests DOE "plans to renege on many of its prior commitments."

Energy Department spokesman Joe Davis said Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, who talked with Hodges earlier this week, is eager to resolve the dispute.

In 1999, the Clinton administration announced a "dual strategy" for getting rid of excess plutonium from Cold War-era warheads and plutonium found at various weapons facilities. Under the plan, 33 metric tons would be converted into a mixed-oxide, or MOX, fuel for burning in civilian power reactors. Another 17 metric tons, thought too impure for conversion, would be immobilized in glass containers and eventually buried in Nevada.

But earlier this year, the administration stopped funding the immobilization program and

announced the entire plutonium disposal plan was being reviewed.

Abraham said that it was too expensive to pursue both programs and that the department would focus for now on building the MOX conversion facilities at the Savannah River complex. He suggested the immobilization track would be resumed later.

24 Hanford tanks to close out Sen. Ron Wyden's watch list

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The final 24 Hanford radioactive waste tanks are being removed from a federal watch list that calls for extra monitoring.

That will close the "Wyden watch list" of potentially extra dangerous tanks after 11 years.

That list had included Hanford's two most troublesome tanks — SY-101, which used to routinely "burp" flammable hydrogen, and C-106, whose wastes used to spontaneously heat up.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., are scheduled to announce closure of the Wyden watch list at Richland's Hampton Inn at 12:30 p.m. Friday.

The Department of Energy declined Tuesday to discuss closing out the list, saying it wanted to wait until Friday's announcement by Hastings and Wyden, who created the watch list.

The final 24 tanks were on the Wyden list because of suspicions they might contain flammable gas buildups. However, DOE and CH2M Hill Hanford Group, which manages Hanford's tank farms, tentatively had believed the

wastes in those tanks were less hazardous than they originally were considered.

Under the Tri-Party Agreement, DOE has a legal deadline of Sept. 30 to remove all radioactive waste tanks from the Wyden list.

Six weeks before that deadline, DOE and CH2M Hill have apparently proved those 24 tanks are not as dangerous as they were once believed.

Hanford has 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes in 177 underground tanks. Sixty of those tanks were on the Wyden list at one time or another.

In 1990 Wyden, then in the U.S. House, got Congress to pass legislation that required Hanford's tanks with extra potential of exploding or leaking to undergo additional monitoring and to have emergency plans in place.

Meanwhile, studies began on those tanks to figure out how dangerous they really were.

The reasons to put a Hanford tank on the watch list included a potential to release flames or dan-

gerous gases, a presence of potentially flammable organic chemicals, a presence of potentially explosive ferrocyanide gas or wastes that spontaneously heat up.

Gradually through the 1990s, Hanford either fixed the problems in the wastes or proved the wastes were safer than originally believed.

The ferrocyanide and organic chemical problems eventually were proved safe enough to be taken off the Wyden list.

Tank C-106's wastes were pumped to a better-designed tank that prevents the material from spontaneously heating up.

The notorious Tank SY-101 would routinely "burp" huge amounts of hydrogen gases that had collected at the bottom of the waste to periodically erupt through the surface in potentially explosive bursts. Hanford fixed that problem by installing a mixer pump in 1993.

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FFTF, health top Cantwell's agenda

■ Protestors, supporters greet senator on visit to Tri-Cities

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Pickers greeted U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., when she visited the Tri-Cities Friday afternoon to learn about Hanford and area health issues.

Citizens for Medical Isotopes is unhappy the new senator has not supported a restart of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility, but other groups seeking her help on health issues gave her a warmer welcome.

Before touring Hanford, Cantwell stopped at Lourdes Medical Center in Pasco to discuss a compensation program for ill nuclear workers and the difficulties of providing health care in a county heavily dependent on government payments.



Cantwell

Lourdes, the only hospital in Franklin County, receives 60 percent to 70 percent of its money from government programs to provide care for seniors or low-income residents.

Physician assistant Randall Clower of Lourdes Family Health Center in Connell slipped in 15 minutes after the discussion began.

"I'm late because we have a patient having a heart attack right now," he said. But because Lourdes maintains the clinic there, the patient could see a cardiologist immediately at the hospital, rather than showing up in the emergency room with no medical history.

"A lot of people are marooned in Con-

nell," Clower said. They don't have the money to get to the Tri-Cities for medical care, and as a result many of them have serious conditions that went untreated for years before the center opened.

"(The clinic's) run very efficiently," said James Dover, Lourdes' chief executive. "It has one of the lowest costs per visit you can find."

Despite that efficiency, Lourdes must dip into its revenue from other services to keep the Connell health center operating. The government reimbursements are too small to consistently cover overhead costs that would be spread among more patients in larger communities.

Community Health Center La Clinica of Pasco, which serves many who are too poor to pay or who use medical coupons issued

See Cantwell, Page B2

DOE investigating proposal for FFTF

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy received 91 inquiries about using Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility during the recently ended federal review, said Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

DOE has begun an additional 60-day investigation to consider one of those proposals — a plan by Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems of Richland to lease the Hanford reactor.

ANMS is proposing using the reactor to make isotopes for use in new ways to cure cancer, as well as other industrial uses.

Hastings, who was in the Tri-Cities on Monday during a Congressional break, had no other information on the other inquiries, and DOE has not released information on any of the inquiries or proposals.

Hastings was concerned the Clinton administration in January ordered the reactor shut down, saying there was insufficient support from companies and government agencies to restart the reactor. However, the federal government had not contacted Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems, which in 1997 gave DOE an unsolicited proposal to take over the reactor, Hastings said.

In April, the Bush administration agreed to suspend the shut down for three months while it considered new information.

The current ANMS proposal is similar to the 1997 proposal, Hastings said. The firm would lease the reactor for 35 years and use fuel from Europe. Financing would be provided by organized labor, and operations and services would come from a team of firms experienced in nuclear services, including Duke Engineering & Services and Fluor Federal Services.

Several facets of the proposal should be attractive to DOE, including paying for reactor operations entirely with private money, using the proceeds to

eventually shut down the reactor and having fuel lined up for the reactor, Hastings said.

The two-month review of the proposal will "make sure it fits into existing law, dotting the i's and crossing the t's," Hastings said.

"We could indeed become an area that really deals with cancer patients," Hastings said.

DOE would be allowed some use of the reactor under the proposed deal. That could include research on the next generation of nuclear reactors and research on reprocessing nuclear fuel to be used again, Hastings said.

Hastings has called for a study of how medical isotope technology could improve health care and reduce costs for Medicare and Medicaid.

Tommy Thompson, the secretary of Health and Human Services, replied in a letter last week that did not directly address the study.

However, he wrote that he has asked science advisor Dr. William Raub to work with DOE to "do what we can to ensure that any decision that is ultimately made does not jeopardize the availability of isotopes for medical purposes."

Citizens for Medical Isotopes, a Tri-City group, also has asked for a federal study of the potential cost savings to the Medicare program from restarting FFTF.

"It's a cause-effect relationship: supply isotopes to the medical community and better treatments will develop," the group wrote in a letter to Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham.

However, there has been little cooperation between DOE and the Department of Health and Human Services on medical isotope supplies and research, even though such cooperation was directed by Congress in 1999, according to the group.

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AUG 01

Drought holds up chromium cleanup

■ *Hanford salmon-saving operation pumping 20 fewer gallons per minute than last year*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The drought is even affecting cleanup work at Hanford.

Because Columbia River flows have shrunk, the water table has dropped 2 to 5 feet below normal along the Hanford Reach, said state and federal officials.

That means work to pump out ground water and remove harmful chemicals has slowed intermittently, said John Price, state ecology department environmental restoration project manager at Hanford, and Arlene Tortoso, DOE ground water remediation project manager.

The dropping aquifer does not affect projects to pump and purify water in central Hanford, where the water table is a couple of hundred feet below the surface, they said.

But the lower aquifer does affect a pump-and-treat project near H Reactor, they said, that tackles chromium, a non-radioactive chemical. It once was used to fight corrosion in the Hanford plutonium-production reactors that line the river

shore and help decontaminate them after they shut down. The reactors consequently have plumes of chromium-laced ground water seeping toward the Columbia River and oozing up through its gravel bed.

Chromium potentially is fatal to baby salmon in some of the concentrations reaching the riverbed gravel where newly hatched salmon linger.

Consequently, the plumes are a top target of Hanford pump-and-treat efforts to clean up ground water from the areas near the H, D and DR reactors, which contain some of the highest concentrations of salmon nests along the Hanford Reach, a prime spawning spot.

Normally, the operation pumps out 150 gallons of ground water per minute to treat. In July, it averaged 130 gallons per minute.

The drop does not threaten overall effectiveness but has prompted increased monitoring, Price and Tortoso said.

The lower aquifer levels have not affected a sister operation in

See **Cleanup**, Page B2

Bechtel to hold forums for vitrification vendors

9 AUG. 01

Bechtel National Inc. will hold a series of forums to explain to area businesses how to get work with the Hanford vitrification waste treatment plant project. Bechtel is the lead contractor on the \$4 billion vit plant project. The first forum will be from 5 to 6 p.m. Aug. 21 in the auditorium at 3000 George Washington Way, Richland. To register, send e-mail to tlwallac@bechtel.com.

Future forums will be Sept. 18, Oct. 23 and Dec. 11.

Oregon senator to visit Hanford

By the Herald staff

Portland is scoping out Hanford this week, led by two Portland-based congressmen.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is scheduled to appear with U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., at 12:30 p.m. today at Richland's Hampton Inn to announce the final 24 Hanford tanks are being removed from the "Wyden watch list."

And earlier this week U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., and a half dozen Portland business leaders visited Hanford on a general orientation tour. Blumenauer has visited the site before, but the business leaders had not.

"There is more interest (in Hanford among Portland residents) than people recognize. But I don't think there is enough," Blumenauer said.

While Blumenauer has been involved in Hanford issues, he is not part of a bipartisan U.S. House nuclear cleanup caucus that recently spearheaded the House calling for several hundred million extra dollars to be added to the Department of Energy's cleanup programs in fiscal 2002.

Blumenauer said he focuses on other caucuses on issues closer to his Portland constituents' interests.

However, he backs the budget increase, which would allow Hanford to meet its legal obligations in 2002.

Blumenauer noted that the overwhelming congressional support for extra cleanup money appears veto-proof.

Meanwhile, when Wyden was in the U.S. House in 1990, he got legislation passed to create a federal watch list of Hanford underground tanks that needed extra monitoring because their radioactive wastes had the potential to explode or burst into flames.

Eventually, 60 tanks ended up on that list.

Those 60 included Hanford's two most troublesome tanks — SY-101, which "burped" flammable hydrogen gas, and C-106, in which wastes would spontaneously heat up.

Those tanks and 34 others were removed from the watch list over the years because their problems were fixed or further studies proved them less dangerous than originally suspected.

PNNL to receive \$2 million in grants

By the Herald staff

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland will receive about \$2 million in grants next year from a new Department of Energy program called Scientific Discovery Through Advanced Computing.

The national program is planned to create a new generation of scientific simulation codes to take full advantage of computers capable of doing trillions of calculations per second. That includes creating the theoretical approaches, algorithms and software required to use such computers on some of the nation's most difficult research programs.

Advances made under the program will allow scientists to study complex problems, such as combustion and climate change, at a level of accuracy and detail never before achieved.

"This innovative program will help us to find new energy sources for the future, understand the effect of energy production on our environment and learn more about the fundamental nature of energy and matter," said Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham when the grants were announced.

Richland scientists received money for six projects it proposed with partners at other labs and universities.

Two of the projects will work on advancing climate models and chemical models of combustion processes to design more efficient, less polluting engines.

Three new software centers will develop new computational and mathematical technologies needed to take full advantage of even larger emerging computers.

The sixth project will use advanced technology to integrate DOE's large computing and database resources into a computing grid accessible by DOE researchers anywhere.

Under a different program, the lab also will receive \$1.2 million next year from DOE's Office of Advanced Computing and Scientific Research.

Among the work to be done with that money is developing tools for programming the next generations of computers needed for complex research projects.

Last Hanford tanks removed from 'watch list'

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

An 11-year Hanford fix-it program was declared finished Friday.

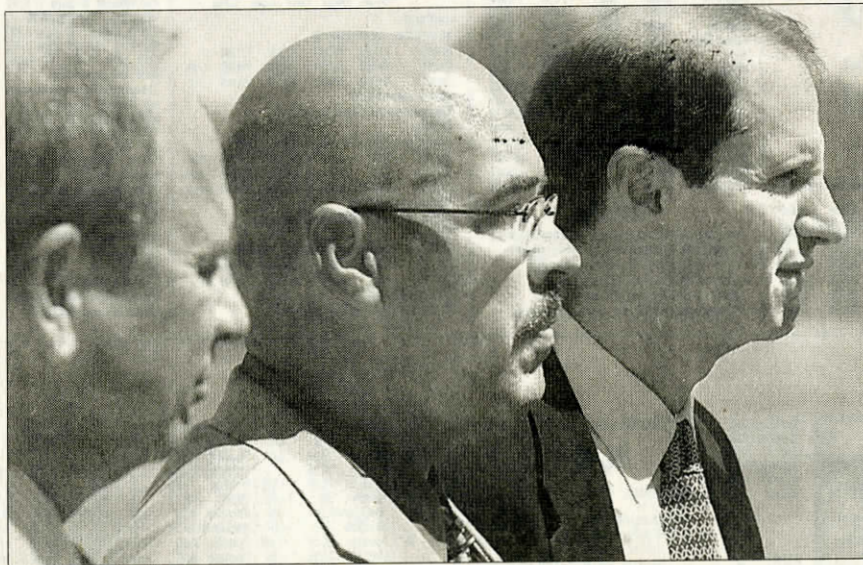
The Department of Energy announced that the last 24 radioactive waste tanks have been removed from the "Wyden watch list" that calls for extra monitoring and safety measures.

"We have resolved the final tank safety issue (pertaining to the list)," said Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection at a short Friday ceremony in Richland.

He was accompanied by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

When Wyden was in the U.S. House in 1990, he got legislation passed that required extra monitoring and protective measures be taken with tanks in which wastes had the extra potential to explode, catch fire or spew radioactive goop or particles.

Hanford has 177 underground tanks that hold 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes, which are supposed to be eventually converted into a



Herald/Paul T. Erickson

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., left, Harry Boston, Department of Energy's Office of River Protection manager and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., announce the elimination of the waste tanks watch list at Hanford.

more benign glass.

At one time or another, 60 tanks were on the Wyden list. The list's two most famous tanks were SY-101, in which

huge amounts of hydrogen routinely "burped" through the wastes, and C-106, in which wastes spontaneously heated up to dangerous temperature.

Through the 1990s, tanks were gradually removed from the list until 24 remained in early 2001 because of their potential for buildups of flammable gases. Those 24 officially were declared safe Friday.

Wyden, Hastings and Boston praised each other, the Hanford workers who fixed and studied the tanks, CH2M Hill Hanford Group, DOE and former U.S. Rep. Sid Morrison, R-Wash., who helped Wyden create the list in 1990.

However, all three cautioned that a close eye still must be kept on all 177 Hanford tanks.

"Although this is the official end of the list, there is no reason to end the monitoring," Wyden said.

Tanks were removed from the list through a combination of fix-it measures, studies that showed the risks were less than originally believed and an extensive checking or upgrading of the tanks' monitoring equipment and ventilation systems.

Seven tanks required the greatest amount of work — six double-shell tanks including SY-101 and the single-shell

C-106, said Craig Groendyke, DOE's flammable gas project manager.

A mixer pump and the removal of some wastes fixed SY-101. Removing some wastes and diluting the rest fixed C-106.

The others had flammable gas problems that were fixed by upgrading equipment and ventilation.

Since Hanford is pumping all liquid wastes from its largely leak-prone single-shell tanks into the newer and safer double-shell tanks, that means the double-shell tanks are the site's workhorses for holding and preparing wastes for eventual glassification.

When those double-shell tanks were on the Wyden list, that meant special reviews and permission from Washington, D.C., were needed each time wastes were pumped in or out of those tanks — handicapping Hanford's ability to use them.

The last 24 tanks were declared safe six weeks before Hanford's legal deadline of Sept. 30 to do so under the Tri-Party Agreement

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PNNL scientists to investigate smog

Richland scientists are stepping in to help the Puget Sound address its air quality problems.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory scientists will be flying Seattle's periodically hazy skies this month in search of answers about regional ozone and other pollutants.

The study is designed to gather air chemistry data essential to addressing air quality problems such as ozone and particulates. Levels of ozone in the greater Seattle area periodically exceed regulatory limits. In addition, particulates, which aggravate asthma suffers and have been linked to other serious health problems and air pollution-related deaths, are nearing peak recommended levels.

The Richland lab is leading the study with collaboration from Washington State University, the University of Washington, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, the state Department of Ecology and Environment Canada.

Tennessee official joins PNNL on Oct. 1

An official from the Department of Energy's national laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tenn., has been hired for the new position of deputy laboratory director at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland.

Reinhold Mann is the director of life sciences at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He joins PNNL on Oct. 1.

His duties will include assuring that key scientific initiatives at PNNL — including systems biology, computational science and engineering, and nanoscience and nanotechnology — will be integrated with PNNL's other research activities.

Mann will be the second deputy laboratory director at PNNL. It also has a deputy lab director for operations, Don Boyd.

Duratek president joins CH2M Hill Hanford

Ed Aromi, president of Duratek Federal Services of Hanford, will join CH2M Hill Hanford Group as its executive vice president today, CH2M Hill announced Wednesday.

That would make him the No. 2 person at the roughly 1,000-employee contractor in charge of managing central Hanford's 177 underground radioactive waste tanks.

Duratek Federal Services of Hanford — with less than 100 employees — is a subcontractor of Fluor Hanford. This Duratek subsidiary has operated under three names and two parent corporations during its five years at Hanford.

Aromi was the company's original president when Rust Federal Services of Hanford came to the site as a Fluor subcontractor in 1996.

He remained its president when the parent corporation Waste Management changed the Hanford subsidiary's name to Waste Management of Hanford. Waste Management later sold the Hanford company to Duratek. During Aromi's stay the Rust-Waste Management-Duratek company has posted some of the highest grades among Hanford's contractors and subcontractors.

The company manages Hanford's evaporation facilities, two central Hanford laboratories plus the treatment, burial and shipping of Hanford's low-level radioactive, transuranic and mixed wastes.

Report says safety oversight lacking for Hanford tanks

■ *CH2M Hill, Office of River Protection working on problems*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection needs to improve its safety oversight of CH2M Hill Hanford Group at the site's tank farms, a federal report said.

The Office of River Protection's "oversight of (CH2M Hill) has not been rigorous or fully effective," said DOE's Environmental, Safety and Health section in Washington, D.C., in a report released this week.

That section reviewed the Office of River Protection's supervision of CH2M Hill's safety matters from April to July.

A 1996 inspection of DOE's Hanford office's oversight of tank farm safety mentioned concerns, the report said.

The report and Bill Smoot, the Office of River Protection's director of quality assurance, said the ORP and CH2M Hill already have identified most of the problems and are working on them. CH2M Hill referred questions to DOE.

A early draft of the report was one reason why the Office of River Protection told CH2M Hill in May to identify and fix

See **Tanks**, Page A2

Russians see how nukes handled

■ *Country wants to develop plan to store parts from spent nuclear subs on land*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Almost every spring as the Arctic ice breaks up, a contaminated nuclear reactor compartment of a Russian submarine breaks loose from the pier where dozens of the mothballed compartments float.

"It's very difficult to deal with the forces of nature," said Valeriy Lebedev, the deputy minister of the Ministry of the Russian Federation of Atomic Energy, speaking through an interpreter Monday in Richland.

The compartments float because the Russians leave empty compartments on either side of the nuclear reactor compartment. But with corrosion, the reactor compartments could take on enough water to sink and contaminate ocean water.

"It's not an environmental disaster, but it would be very unpleasant," Lebedev said.

The United States stores all 96 of its reactor compartments from decommissioned nuclear submarines in a trench at Hanford.

But Russia stores its 52 reactor compartments floating in bays in the Pacific Ocean and Arctic Ocean, some for more than 20 years.

"This is a temporary solution until we can build a permanent and sure storage — the type of Hanford storage," Lebedev said.

Lebedev and representatives of countries concerned about Russia's floating reactor compartments are visiting the Tri-Cities for two days. They're exchanging technical information at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, touring the burial trench at central Hanford and watching heavy equipment demonstrations.

Their goal is to provide information to help Russia develop a plan to store its reactor compartments on land and eventually help find international funding for the project from countries concerned about the environmental risk, such as nearby Norway. Ministry officials estimate Russia's favored plan would cost about \$80 million.

"We would like to see how Americans solve this problem," Lebedev said, before touring the Hanford disposal trench. "We want to see how this facility was built, how the transportation works, how they do monitoring."

Now, Russia removes spent fuel and liquid and solid waste, then welds the nuclear compartments closed. The sealed compartments are tethered to a pier, many of them in Saida Bay near the Arctic Circle.

It's a hostile environment with salt water that can cause corrosion and ice that can break the moorings of the huge reactor compartments. Each compartment has a diameter approximately equal to the height of a 3½-story building.

Russia also is running out of pier space for the approximately 20 submarines, some with two reactors, it would like to dismantle each year.

Some of Russia's submarines were decommissioned under the provisions of an international disarmament treaty covering nuclear-powered submarines with torpedoes and long-range strategic missiles.

But other nuclear compartments are from submarines, equipped only with torpedoes, that have grown too old to operate. It's those compartments, some 30 to 35 years old, that are of particular risk of sinking because of their age.

However, Russia now doesn't have the sites on land to store them and doesn't have the equipment to move them.

The only nation with long-term experience in storing reactor compartments from submarines on land is the United States.

Here, nuclear submarines are scrapped at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. The reactor compartments, minus their spent fuel, are floated by barge up the Columbia River to the Port of Benton.

They're placed on a 30-by-60-foot "land transporter" with 320 wheels to be pulled by large tractors for the 25-mile trip to the burial trench.

The trench, which eventually will be covered, is more than 50 feet deep and about the size of two football fields.

However, burial is not an option in the frozen earth of northern Russia. Instead, Russia will have to develop a system to lift the compartments from the bay and store them above ground.

Russia is scheduled to present its plan for permanent storage this fall at an international seminar, said Bob Dyer of the Environmental Protection Agency, which sponsored the technical exchange in Richland.

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Smaller, brighter, cheaper lightbulbs get PNNL boost

■ *Richland lab looked to help makers develop better fluorescent bulb*

By Chris Mulick

Herald staff writer

Those fancy-pants subcompact fluorescent light bulbs you keep hearing about are the rage of home improvement centers and hardware stores, thanks in part to research conducted by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

Though they cost more, subcompact fluorescent bulbs use 25 percent less energy and last 10 times longer than standard incandescent bulbs. Until recently, most consumers were offered a version that was too big for many standard light fixtures.

After conducting market research to determine what people would buy, PNNL provided manufacturers with specifications that included smaller dimensions.

Those manufacturers reported sales of 1.9 million bulbs during the first two years beginning in late 1998. Another 1.4 million were sold in the first five months of this year, reflecting an interest that spiked with higher energy prices.

Similar products offered by other manufacturers also have



Herald/Evan E. Parker

Larry Stollmeyer, the lighting manager at Kennewick Industrial and Electrical Supply, displays a 14-watt subcompact light bulb that can last up to 10,000 hours. Research by Richland's Pacific Northwest National Laboratories helped in development of smaller, more energy-efficient bulbs.

become hot items.

"It's just been incredible," said Larry Stollmeyer, lighting department manager at Kennewick Industrial.

Marci Sanders, a project coordinator for the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, credits the

See **PNNL**, Page A2

PNNL, Oregon colleges team up

■ *PNNL, researchers form partnership to access larger grants, meet complex needs*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

With a few strokes of the pen Wednesday, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory formed an alliance with researchers at public and private universities across Oregon.

"We've never broadly entered into an agreement with this many institutions at once," said Lura Powell, director of the Richland lab. "We believe we're going to reap many benefits."

As science grows increasingly complex, the Richland lab has looked for ways to allow researchers to collaborate with scientists doing related work elsewhere, sharing information and equipment.

One of the benefits of packaging together a complete set of scientific skills from multiple institutions can be access to larger grants — allowing the lab to grow and to continue to tackle increasingly complicated scientific problems.

"What you see here is the future," as institutions increasingly work together on research projects, said Paul Risser, president of Oregon State University in Corvallis.

The agreement, signed Wednesday in Richland at a ceremony attended by several high-ranking education officials from Oregon, joins the lab with the seven universities of the Oregon University System. They include OSU, University of Oregon in Eugene and Portland State University.

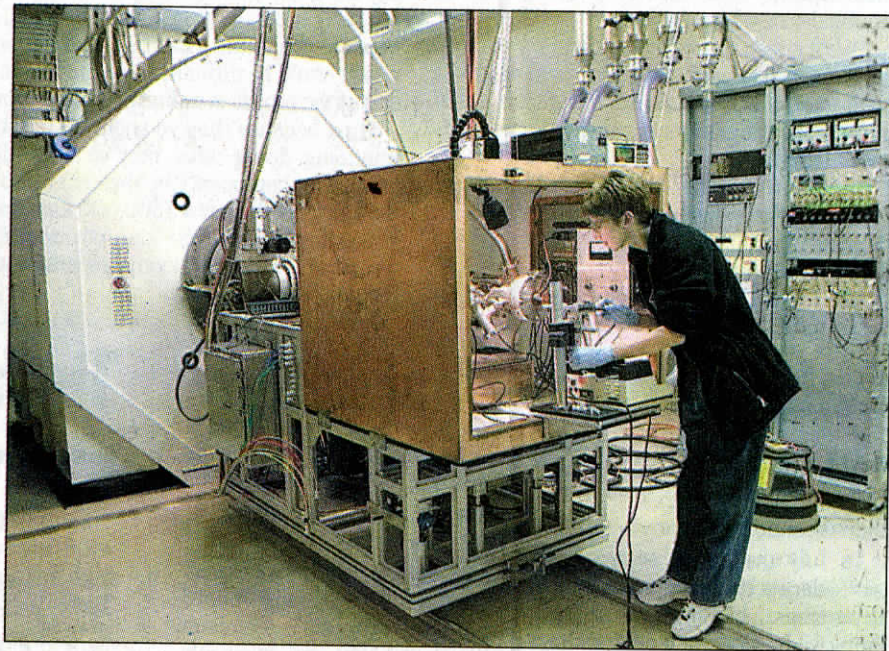
Also signing the agreement was Oregon Health Sciences University, the state's only academic health center. The non-profit corporation includes OHSU Hospital and Doernbecher Children's Hospital, schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing and science and engineering and multiple research institutes.

Initial collaborations will focus on genomics, microtechnology and economic development.

"Among the national labs, comparatively, PNNL is doing a good job of transferring technology from the laboratory to commercial use," Risser said.

Oregon's interest in the joint research

See **PNNL**, Page B2



Herald/Richard Dickin
Ljiljana Pasa-Tolic, senior research scientist with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, adjusts an ion source on a mass spectrometer with the highest magnetic field for its type in the world. It's used for functional genomics research, one of the focuses of a new joint research agreement between the Richland lab and public and private universities in Oregon.

Hanford plutonium cleanup talks set for November

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

SEATTLE — Tri-Party Agreement talks are expected to begin in November on the cleanup and demolition of Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

"We're anxious to begin negotiations," Mike Wilson, nuclear programs manager for the state Department of Ecology, told the Hanford Advisory Board on Friday in Seattle.

Right now, the Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford are converting

4.4 tons of plutonium — mixed within more than 19 tons of scrap — into safer forms at the PFP.

Some of that neutralized plutonium is supposed to be sent to DOE's Savannah River, S.C., site between 2010 and 2014 to be glassified or converted into mixed oxide reactor fuel.

Other forms of the neutralized plutonium are supposed to be permanently stored in central Hanford or in an underground storage site in New Mexico.

The plutonium at the PFP is in several forms, and several processes are under

way to convert that material into a safe forms.

That neutralization is on track to be finished by the Tri-Party Agreement deadline of mid-2004, said Pete Knollmeyer, DOE's assistant manager for Hanford's central plateau.

The Tri-Party Agreement is the legal pact among the state, DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The agreement calls for the PFP to be cleaned out, its buildings demolished and its 200 West Area site be in a yet-to-be-defined "end state" by 2016.

DOE calculates that this project will cost almost \$1.2 billion through 2016, with Knollmeyer believing that figure can be trimmed. The PFP's tentative 2002 budget is almost \$85 million. DOE predicts that the PFP's annual budget will be slightly lower but somewhat steady for the next several years.

Knollmeyer said the upcoming talks will cover:

■ Removing less than 100 kilograms of plutonium dust and residue from the ducts and other areas in the PFP.

■ How and when the Cold War plutonium refining equipment will be flushed and cleaned out.

■ How and when the equipment will be dismantled and removed.

■ Setting the schedule for tearing down the 48 facilities within the PFP complex.

■ What will the PFP site look like after the buildings are demolished, including final cleanup standards.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Bechtel, unions look to project

■ *Contractor meets with AFL-CIO, unions on glassification jobs*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

By next year, about 3,000 workers — engineers, other white-collar employees and construction crews — will be building the Hanford radioactive waste glassification complex, more than double the number now employed on the project.

Bechtel National and the AFL-CIO this week sat down to map out how the contractor will manage almost 3,000 construction jobs alone over the next four years.

Bechtel briefed officials from the AFL-CIO and 15 unions earlier this week.

The glassification project brings something to Hanford that it has not seen since the Washington Public Power Supply System quit building reactors in the early 1980s — a monster-size construction project.

For the past several years, Hanford's major projects consisted of decontaminating, demolishing or operating facilities.

Construction entails different skills, management issues, training requirements and workplace rules, said AFL-CIO and Bechtel officials. This means building trades unions will play a much bigger role than they have recently at Hanford.

"Anything controversial should be resolved before it goes out to the field," said Ken Hedman, Bechtel National's corporate vice president for labor relations.

DOE plan would set 2007 glassification deadline

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

SEATTLE — The Department of Energy has drawn up a catch-up plan to build a Hanford radioactive waste glassification plant by a 2007 deadline.

The question is: Will DOE's Office of River Protection get enough money for fiscal 2002 to convince the state this is a valid plan?

If the state is convinced, it will consider stopping the practice of fining DOE \$10,000 a week for missing the July 31 legal deadline to start building that plant — and it might back off of threats to sue DOE, said Tom Fitzsimmons, director of the state Department of Ecology, told the Hanford Advisory Board on Thursday in Seattle.

But if the state isn't looking over DOE's plan and the fiscal 2002 glassification budget in October, the fines will continue and a lawsuit will be more likely to be filed against DOE, Fitzsimmons said.

"Our lawyers are sharpening every sword and every arrow in their quivers," he said.

This year, the state drastically has increased its threats to sue DOE if the federal agency does not keep to the Tri-Party Agreement's legal timetable to build and operate plants to convert Hanford's tank wastes into a benign glass.

The Tri-Party Agreement is the legal pact that governs Hanford's cleanup. The agreement gives DOE a legal deadline to start building the glassification plant five weeks ago with glassification to begin in 2007.

But DOE fired the original glassification contractor, BNFL Inc., in May 2000 and hired its replacement, Bechtel National, last December. That made the July construction start unachievable.

Now, the beginning of actual construction is expected to begin in December 2002, although DOE and Bechtel will try to start it earlier, said Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection.

The bottom line: Construction likely will begin one year to 18 months behind schedule.

That delay is one major factor in the state fining DOE and threatening to sue the agency to enforce the Tri-Party Agreement timetable.

The other major factor is the glassification project's budget for fiscal 2002, which begins Oct. 1.

Right now, no one knows if the fiscal 2002 budget will be sufficient to keep to the Tri-Party Agreement's timetable.

Early this year, the Bush administration requested Congress to appropriate \$1.4 billion to Hanford's cleanup in fiscal 2002, including \$500 million to the glassification project.

The problem is DOE's own calculations show that \$1.832 billion is needed in 2002 to meet Hanford's legal cleanup obligations, including \$690 million for the glassification project.

Later, both the House and Senate — by overwhelming veto-proof margins — voted to appropriate enough money to meet Hanford's legal obligations, including \$690 million for glassification.

However, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and the federal Office of Management and Budget — the president's budget crunchers — voiced opposition to the extra money that Congress wants to allocate to Hanford.

Their rationale is they don't want more money sent to Hanford and other DOE cleanup sites until a "top-to-bottom" review of DOE's entire nuclear cleanup program is complete. That completion is expected sometime later this year.

However, in a phone conversation with the Hanford Advisory Board Thursday, DOE's new cleanup czar, Jessie Roberson, said the federal agency might nail down some of its revised budget wishes before the entire review is completed.

President Bush has not indicated whether he will accept or oppose an increased Hanford budget.

Meanwhile, Hanford observers worry about the overall federal budget picture changing significantly since Congress voted for a bigger Hanford budget.

New figures show the federal budget surplus is drastically less than what it looked like when DOE's budget request went through Congress. Also, the administration asked Congress for significant increases more than its original defense budget request made earlier this year.

Boston said his agency has a plan ready to submit to the state, outlining how it can make the 2007 deadline to begin glassification.

He said Bechtel's experience in managing huge projects puts its construction

plan on a faster track than BNFL's plan — and noted Bechtel's contract locks it into the 2007 deadline.

Also BNFL unofficially was shooting for starting glassification in 2005 or 2006 — giving it a cushion for unexpected problems. A significant part of that cushion has been removed, Boston said.

But Boston does not want to submit that catch-up plan to the state Ecology Department until DOE has the 2002 budget figures to back it up.

And Fitzsimmons said the state does not want to receive the catch-up plan without the budget figures to analyze. He expected it will take the state about a month to study DOE's plan and dollar figures after they are received.

In other matters Thursday:

The board heard Keith Klein, DOE's Hanford manager, say the upcoming awarding of a long-range Columbia River corridor cleanup contract likely will be the first cleanup contract made by the Bush administration. Consequently, the administration likely will showcase its approach to cleanup contracts with that pact, he said.

DOE's Richland office proposed speeding up Hanford's cleanup along the Columbia River. A major plank of that proposal would be a contract lasting until that project is finished, which is supposed to be about 10 years.

But, as with the glassification contract, the administration did not request enough money for 2002 to put it into action, while Congress voted to appropriate sufficient funds.

So this proposal also hangs on the final budget battle.

Bechtel Hanford's river shore cleanup contract expires on June 30, 2002. Meanwhile, Klein guessed that a draft request for proposals on the new contract won't be ready until at least mid-October.

A rough rule of thumb has been that it takes at least a year from initially seeking bidders until a new Hanford contract kicks in. Klein said Bechtel Hanford's current contract could be easily extended a few months until the new contract begins.

Boston also told the the Office of River Protection is studying ways to speed up glassification over the long run, which will also trim costs.

Right now, the current master plan calls for 10 percent of the most radioactive tank wastes to be glassified by 2018, and all the wastes to be glassified by 2028. This plan calls for building additional glassification plants between 2010 and 2020.

The Office of River Protection is looking for ways to speed up and improve how Bechtel National's first generation of melters will glassify wastes.

Also, Hanford is looking for ways to remove massive amounts of sodium from the tank wastes before glassification. Sodium makes up a significant portion of the wastes and presents extra problems during the melting process.

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PNNL working out bugs in security device

■ *Scanner can see metal under clothes, but also body*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Researchers at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory have developed a security scanner that could be used at airports to detect not only metal, but also concealed weapons made of plastic or ceramic.

However, the technology works so well that it shows not just weapons concealed under clothing, but a person's physical features as well.

Because of privacy concerns, the Federal Aviation Administration has asked Richland researchers to change the technology.

"To date, we have not been able to address the issue to everyone's satisfaction," said Greg Koller, spokesman for the lab.

After Tuesday's acts of terrorism, airport and other national security issues were being raised across the country.

More than 40 percent of the work at the Richland lab is related to national security. Work ranges from developing devices such as the personal security scanner for airports to training international border agents to detect smuggled weapons or materials that could be used in weapons.

Funding for the airport security project

ended this spring, but the lab has responded to a request for proposals from the FAA in hopes of receiving additional money to further develop the technology. It's one of several agencies developing improved scanning devices.

The Richland system uses ultra-high frequency radio waves to penetrate clothing and other nonmetallic objects. The reflected signals are fed into a high-speed computer to quickly create a detailed, three-dimensional holographic image.

Most scanners now used at airports can detect only metal objects — not the ceramic or plastic weapons that can be detected by the system under development. Although X-rays also could be used

to detect nonmetallic weapons, they subject the body to potentially harmful radiation.

The personal security scanner developed in Richland uses harmless low-power waves with wavelengths on the order of 1 centimeter.

"This technology can generate images of items that otherwise are hidden because they are inside, behind or beneath solid objects," said Gary Morgan, commercialization manager for the project.

Researchers have been working on the project for 13 years. In 1993, a prototype was tested on 150 volunteers at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Five years later, a cylindrical imaging system was completed that could check

for weapons on all sides of a person's body at once in one to two minutes.

Although the technology was developed for the FAA, the Richland lab also is looking at other uses for it. It might be used to screen people entering large concert arenas for weapons or to check employees leaving work for possible stolen company property.

But not all potential uses are related to security. It might be used to create three-dimensional images of body parts to make custom-fit safety equipment, such as helmets, or to produce artificial limbs that fit perfectly with fewer visits for fittings.

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Japan big fan of Richland company's waste melters

■ Firm plans to provide 200 of the specialized melters

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A Richland company has signed a contract with a Japanese firm that is expected to add about \$80 million in revenues and 100 new jobs.

The agreement calls for the company to provide 200 specialized waste melters to Japan over the next 10 to 20 years.

"This is the year we turn from a developing company into a profitable commercial enterprise," said Jeff Surma, president and co-founder of Integrated Environmental Technologies.

Founded in 1995, IET designs and builds the "Plasma Enhanced Melter," which glassifies and neutralizes chemical, biological and some radioactive wastes.

So far, IET has sold seven of the melters, including two that have been completely installed.

But last month, IET signed an agreement with Sanwa Donetsu Kogyo, a division of Japan-based Hitachi to replace at least 200 waste incinerators in Japan with the Plasma Enhanced Melters over the next 10 to 20 years.

Sanwa, which is getting about 5 percent interest in IET as part of the deal, also plans to market more of the Plasma Enhanced Melters in Japan.

Surma said the deal will lead to IET increasing its annual revenue from \$15 million to 20 million to about \$100 million, and boosting its work force from 41 employees to between 100 and 150 workers in the next two to four years.

The Plasma Enhanced Melter was originally designed at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, with its inventors forming the spinoff company IET in 1995.

This melter combines some features from other waste melters to glassify various hazardous wastes faster, cheaper and with almost no polluting emissions.

One Plasma Enhanced Melter has been installed at Allied Technology Group's plant in north Richland, where the device is going through a much-delayed shake-down period.

A second melter is tackling medical waste in Hawaii with no problems. Five others are being installed this year in Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan and the United States.

Surma speculated IET will build possibly 10 melters a year for Sanwa.

The first few melters will probably be built in Richland, with the auxiliary equipment to be assembled in Japan. After that, the logistical and transportation issues will determine where the Japanese melters will be built, Surma said.

Right now, IET is about where the company's original business plan in 1995 predicted it should be, Surma said.

IET has recently signed two other contracts, including a pact with Onyx Environmental Services, one of the largest hazardous waste treatment companies in North America and a division of the French corporation Vivendi.

Onyx will try to market Plasma Enhanced Melters in the United States and France. So far, one melter has been sold and negotiations are under way on a second sale.

The other contract is with the Boston-based engineering firm of Stone & Webster to study whether these melters could be used to destroy chemical weapons.

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Fluor exceeds job-creation goals

■ Hanford contractor has created 2,888 jobs during past 5 years

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Fluor Hanford has met the job-creation goal it assumed five years ago when the company became Hanford's lead contractor.

In late July, Fluor told the Department of Energy that it reached its job-creation target. DOE crunched and double-checked Fluor's numbers and formally confirmed Fluor's claim last week.

"They busted their target by about 300 jobs. We're obviously pleased," said Bob Rosselli, DOE's deputy manager for site services at Hanford.

Fluor's official job-creation count is 2,888 over five years. Its original goal was 3,000, but that was changed to 2,550 in 1999.

In 1996, Fluor and five subcontractors beat out two other corporate teams to become Hanford's lead contractor group.

A major reason why Fluor's team won was that it had the best economic development package among the three bidding teams. Fluor's bid said it would help create 3,000 non-Hanford jobs to offset a shrinking

Hanford work force in the 1990s.

Under its contract with DOE, Fluor would lose part of its annual fee — meaning profits — if it did not help create a specific number of non-Hanford jobs each year.

Fluor made all its annual quotas. However, the first couple of years were marked by debates on how credit should be split officially and tabulated among Fluor and other Tri-City economic development efforts.

DOE has credited Fluor with helping attract or create 201 jobs by the end of fiscal 1997, 511 by the end of fiscal 1998, 750 by the end of fiscal 1999, 1,578 by the end of fiscal 2000 and 2,888 by the end of fiscal 2001.

In 1999, Fluor's contractual job-creation goal dropped from 3,000 to 2,550. That year DOE split the Office of River Protection from DOE's Richland office, with the new agency put in charge of Hanford's radioactive tank waste matters. Shortly afterward, Lockheed Martin Hanford Corp. — the Fluor subcontractor in charge of the tank farms — was removed from Fluor's team and converted into a prime contractor.

In the same move, Fluor's 3,000-job goal was split into 2,550 jobs for Fluor and 450 jobs for Lockheed. That same year, CH2M Hill bought Lockheed Martin

Hanford Corp. and assumed its tank farms contract.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group's contractual job-creation goal for fiscal 2000 was 61, but it actually helped create 137 jobs that year, said CH2M Hill spokesman Ace Etheridge.

In 2000, however, DOE also decided to quit putting economic development obligations in its environmental cleanup contracts, contending its contractors should focus exclusively on cleanup.

Consequently, when CH2M Hill Hanford Group signed a new contract last January, economic development obligations were removed. The same happened when Fluor signed a five-year contract extension this year.

The bottom line is that Fluor's 2,888 created jobs and CH2M Hill's 137 created jobs equal 3,025 area non-Hanford jobs that can be traced to Fluor's original 1996 contract.

Rosselli said Fluor still helps in creating jobs in the Mid-Columbia.

"Not having a contractual hammer has not affected the outcome of their social responsibility," Rosselli said.

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Glitches reduce Hanford cleanup leeway

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Several equipment glitches in August reduced the cushion in Hanford's K Basins project's timetable, the Department of Energy reported.

However, the project still is slightly ahead of schedule in removing spent nuclear fuel from the basins, said Larry Earley, the Department of Energy's operations and maintenance manager for the spent nuclear fuel project.

The K Basins are two water-filled, leak-prone indoor pools

near the Columbia River that hold 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel.

Hanford is supposed to remove all the fuel, vacuum dry the fuel inside special containers and store the containers in an underground vault in central Hanford by 2004.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an advisory panel of nuclear experts, cited six equipment problems this summer that showed up while fuel was being packaged underwater and removed from the K West Basin. These problems took equipment

out of service — in one case for several days, the board's memos said.

Earley said the same technical glitches bothered DOE.

But he noted the K Basins' custom equipment is the first of its kind anywhere. "Equipment failures were not unexpected," Earley said.

The various problems do not appear to have any common causes, he added.

Fluor was able to shift and juggle the use of equipment inside the K West pool to keep some fuel

work going while the problems were fixed, Earley said.

Right now, the project is about two weeks ahead of schedule, which calls for moving 25 canisters of fuel to the storage vault by Sept. 30.

By February, the K Basins project is expected to be operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Right now it is working 16 hours a day, five days a week with some overtime work on the weekends.

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New Web worm slows Hanford employees

■ 'Nimda' program strikes many computer networks

By the Herald staff
and The Associated Press

Hanford workers stayed off the Internet on Wednesday and were unable to communicate with one another on small computer networks within the complex that use shared drives.

At Pacific Northwest National Lab-

oratory in Richland, computer specialists shut down the lab's Web site, and workers also were barred from logging onto the Web.

The problem was the latest Internet worm, the complex "Nimda" program that has struck computer systems around the world.

The viruslike program spreads rap-

idly to infect computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system.

"I think it's going to be around for a while," said Marc Van den Dikkenberg of Amerion, formerly Boss, Internet company in Pasco.

Nimda has multiple ways to look for weaknesses it can exploit to infect computer systems and spread, Van den Dikkenberg said. Once it infects a

computer, it heads to the e-mail address list to mail itself out through an attachment. The attachment may be named "README.EXE."

It also can infect Web sites running Microsoft's Internet Information Services software. Once a Web site is infected, any Web user accessing it can get the worm.

When one computer on a company

See **Worm**, Page A2

Hanford Communities will host a public meeting on the municipal impacts of the Vitrification Plant

Thursday, Sept. 27 at 7 p.m.
in the auditorium at the Federal Building
on Jadwin Avenue in Richland

More than 7,000 people, including 1,000 school children, are expected to move to this area as a result of new jobs associated with construction of a vitrification plant at Hanford.

This influx of new residents will impact traffic, housing costs and availability, law enforcement and emergency services, public utilities, schools and hospitals. Hiring has already begun on the project and is scheduled to ramp up significantly during the next year. An analysis about projected impacts of this population influx will be presented at the public meeting on Sept. 27.

Briefs

No decision from DOE on FFTF this week

A Department of Energy decision on the fate of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility is not expected this week because of delays in federal work not related directly to national security issues.

At the start of August, DOE announced it would spend 60 days reviewing a proposal for commercial operation of the reactor. Advanced Nuclear & Medical Systems of Richland has assembled a team of top nuclear service companies to privately operate the reactor to produce isotopes for medicine.

An announcement of a decision on whether to proceed with that project or permanently shut down the Hanford reactor is not likely to come immediately with the end of the 60-day period, said a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash. However, an announcement is expected in the next few weeks.

Radioactive red ink

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The bottleneck is the size of a medium house. The radioactive wastes clogged behind it could fill a small lake.

And though that may not sound like a giant problem, solving it is the key to one of the nation's trickiest environmental problems.

Resolution depends on a state-of-the-art waste melter in north Richland, a stainless steel chamber big enough to hold two stacked compact cars that is connected by a complicated maze of pipes and cylinders to a 76-foot-tall exhaust stack.

The unique contraption is designed to take low-level radioactive wastes laced with dangerous chemicals and turn them into a benign glass.

Lots of Hanford wastes are supposed to go through this system. So are wastes from federal and commercial sites nationwide.

The problem is the sophisticated equipment keeps shutting itself off.

That means Allied Technology Group cannot conduct a demonstration for state and federal regulators, whose approval is needed before the so-called GASVIT system can operate at full speed.

Its official test run is now 10 months behind schedule.

Glitches stall progress at Allied Technology Group melter, but officials still optimistic

And because of the delays, ATG has piled up at least \$12 million in overdue debts and is flirting with bankruptcy. ATG can't pay many of its bills, including money due some Tri-City construction contractors.

"Since we do not currently have sufficient funds to repay all our indebtedness ... we may not be able to continue as a going concern. ... In that case, we would likely become insolvent and subject to ... bankruptcy proceedings," ATG wrote in a May 4 filing with the U.S. Securities Exchange Commission.

Vik Mani, ATG's chief operating officer, said mentioning bankruptcy in its SEC filings is mandatory because the company must outline the worst-case scenario for stockholders.

But, he said, "We're not remotely thinking about bankruptcy."

Even so, the company needs the system working at full speed to dig itself out of debt, he said. ATG hopes to start the delayed tests by next Sunday.

Hanford officials are hoping for suc-

cess because GASVIT is a key to tackling some of their worst waste problems.

For example:

■ The Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact that governs Hanford cleanup, requires the Department of Energy to glassify or incinerate 312 cubic yards of Hanford's mixed radioactive and chemical wastes by the end of next year, and another 468 cubic yards by December 2005. The total would fill 3,000 55-gallon barrels.

■ Fluor Hanford's contract with DOE requires it to treat 10,133 cubic yards of mixed wastes by June 30, 2006.

Fluor expects to send at least 780 cubic yards through the GASVIT.

■ Bechtel Hanford is trying to figure out how to neutralize and dispose of 1,500 partly buried barrels of uranium chips stored in oil, which are just north of the 300 Area, three miles from Richland. Hanford's huge range fire last year came within a couple hundred yards of this site — the closest the fire came to radioactive materials.

"There is no other technology close to this in the United States, ready to be permitted and meet the Tri-Party Agreement milestones," said Ken Norris, Fluor Hanford senior counsel.

"ATG's it," agreed Ty Blackford, Fluor manager for waste services.

See **Radioactive**, Page A7

War won't drain Hanford funding

■ *Fight against terrorism will be first financed through budget surplus*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

It does not appear that Congress intends to take nuclear cleanup money to finance the nation's war on terrorism.

The \$40 billion that Congress is drumming up in relief aid and to combat terrorist groups likely will come from the nation's budget surplus, say members of the state's congressional delegation.

The United States has a \$153 billion budget surplus for the fiscal year that ends Sunday, said U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

The surplus will absorb immediate anti-terrorism costs without taking cash

from the House's and Senate's separate water and energy appropriations bills, which include Hanford's cleanup money, according to an aide for U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

The Department of Energy's 2002 nuclear cleanup budget, including Hanford's, still is working its way through Congress.

Hanford needs \$1.832 billion next year to meet all its legal cleanup obligations,

according to DOE.

But the Bush administration, including Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, wants Congress to allocate \$1.4 billion to Hanford in 2002, contending a "top-to-bottom" review of DOE's cleanup programs that's under way should be finished before extra money is sought.

The House has passed a \$1.814 billion Hanford budget for 2002. The Senate's version would provide \$1.834 billion for

cleanup at the site.

The Bush administration has signaled that it opposes spending that much, although the Senate's support for full funding at Hanford appears veto-proof.

The House and Senate have not yet reconciled the differences in their proposed budgets, although talks might lead

See **Funding**, Page A2

ATG lays off 55 workers, delays testing of glassification system

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Allied Technology Group has postponed an already much-delayed test on a new waste melter until early 2002.

That delay was accompanied Monday by the company laying off 55 of its 165 employees at its Richland plant.

By now, ATG had hoped to have federal and state regulators observing a formal test run of its new system to glassify low-level radioactive wastes laced with dangerous chemicals.

ATG must pass that test to get the federal and state permits to operate the so-called "GASVIT" system at full speed. The GASVIT system is the only existing machine capable of neutralizing some of Hanford's dangerous radioactive and chemical "mixed" wastes. That test originally was scheduled for November 2000.

But after a recent internal review, ATG decided to delay the test run until sometime from January to March 2002, said Vik Mani, ATG's chief operating officer.

ATG's review showed that the waste melter worked well. But upgrades are needed on the equipment that converts the melter's exhaust gases into harmless carbon dioxide and steam, Mani said. Right now,

the GASVIT system routinely shuts down because of problems with the emissions equipment.

This latest delay adds to ATG's red ink troubles, although Mani characterized the delay's effects as a short-term problem.

Mani said this is a permanent move to remold the Richland's plant's work force into a more cost-efficient size and mix of skills. A few engineers and operators might be hired to take care of certain skill needs, he said.

Mani said ATG had talked with employees about the company's finances and the likely need to trim the work force. "It shouldn't be a surprise," he said.

But three employees, including two laid off Monday, disagreed. The three, who requested anonymity, said Monday's layoffs did come as a surprise. "Boom. No one expected it," one said.

Two employees said ATG had rehired some previously laid-off workers about a week ago, then laid them off again Monday.

Rumors among ATG's employees say the company might lay off more people, but Mani said no more are planned for Richland. "That's an emphatic no," he said. However, ATG is thinking about

laying off up to 16 of its 94 employees at its Oak Ridge, Tenn., plant, he said.

In 1995, ATG got a Hanford contract to glassify at least 780 cubic yards of the site's mixed wastes — a type of waste that has been a major and almost insolvable headache for federal and commercial sites nationwide.

The project's \$30 million price tag in 1995 grew to almost \$40 million by the time the GASVIT system was built in 1999. Since then, ATG has been unable to work out the bugs in the systems, so it cannot get the permits to operate at full capacity.

Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford officials said this latest testing delay requires close watching but added ATG has plenty of time to recover. The Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact governing Hanford's cleanup, gives Fluor and ATG until 2005 to glassify 780 cubic yards of mixed waste, and Fluor's contract with DOE gives it until 2006 to accomplish that task.

"The Tri-Party Agreement milestone is pretty far out there. ... It's not in jeopardy yet," said DOE official Pete Knollmeyer.

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THURSDAY, SEPT. 27, 2001
TRI-CITY HERALD

Briefs

Glassification plant meeting today

A public meeting to discuss the expected municipal effects of Hanford's proposed waste glassification plant is scheduled at 7 p.m. today at the Federal Building in Richland.

The Hanford Communities, a coalition of Mid-Columbia governments, is sponsoring the discussion. Hanford Communities is helping the Department of Energy calculate the economic impact of building the \$4 billion plant between now and 2007.

That plant is supposed to start glassifying the radioactive wastes in Hanford's 177 underground tanks in 2007. The construction is expected to boost Bechtel National's work force from about 1,200 today to 4,000 by 2003, with that number to start shrinking in 2005.

The Hanford Communities hired a consulting firm to study the glassification project's social and economic effects. That analysis will be presented at tonight's meeting.

Watchdog groups threaten to sue over FFTF study

■ *Science Applications International Corp. involvement called a conflict of interest*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Hanford watchdog groups Thursday notified the Department of Energy that they plan to sue the government over an alleged conflict of interest in an environmental study of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

At issue is a company that helped prepare an environmental study on the future of the reactor and now stands to benefit if DOE decides to restart the reactor.

Of the 47 people who prepared the report completed in July 2000, 37 worked for Sci-

ence Applications International Corp., or SAIC, according to the Government Accountability Project and Heart of America Northwest.

Included in the review is a statement signed by the California-based company saying it had no financial or other interest in the outcome of the review.

Now DOE is considering a restart proposal that would have SAIC, among several other companies, play a role in operations or services. Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems, or ANMS, of Richland has lined up

See **Study**, Page A2

Flaws found in Hanford review

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A federal inspection of Hanford's computer security had its own flaws that ruined the review's effectiveness.

An independent federal agency recently inspected Hanford's classified computer security program. But when the Department of Energy's Inspector General's Office checked up on the agency's work, not enough information was available to verify the effectiveness of the computer security inspection, a report released this week says.

Under a federal law enacted in late 2000, an independent agency is supposed to inspect DOE's classified computer security systems annually.

The federal Office of Independent Oversight and Performance Assurance conducted the prototype inspection at DOE's Hanford and Washington, D.C., offices from June through August 2001.

Actually, what the independent agency did was analyze existing security inspection reports that covered the previous 19 months, the DOE Inspector General's Office report said.

But the Office of Independent Oversight could not provide all the documents to verify the scope and quality of the computer security review, the Inspector General's report said.

The report recommended the Office of Independent Oversight set up a formal inspection and documentation system for future reviews of DOE's classified computer security systems.

The Office of Independent Oversight has agreed with those recommendations.

28 Sep 01 Despite ceremony, vit plant future still hazy

■ *Officials mark beginning of waste glassification, but budget questions loom*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford's plodding waste glassification project took another step forward Thursday.

But unanswered questions cast shadows over a Thursday celebration that preliminary construction of the complex will now begin.

The celebration: Hanford will soon begin work on roads, utilities, trenches, an office building and a warehouse at the glassification complex's site.

The shadows: The project is still about 16 months behind its legal timetable to begin building the plants to treat high-level radioactive wastes. The Department of Energy is still paying weekly \$10,000 fines for that missed deadline. Also, there are increasing hints that DOE's budget for next year may be slashed.

The plant is supposed to begin treating the 53 million gallons of radioactive wastes stored in Central Hanford in 177 underground tanks. The legally mandated cleanup plan calls for starting construction of the glassification buildings by July 30, 2001, and to begin glassifying wastes in 2007.

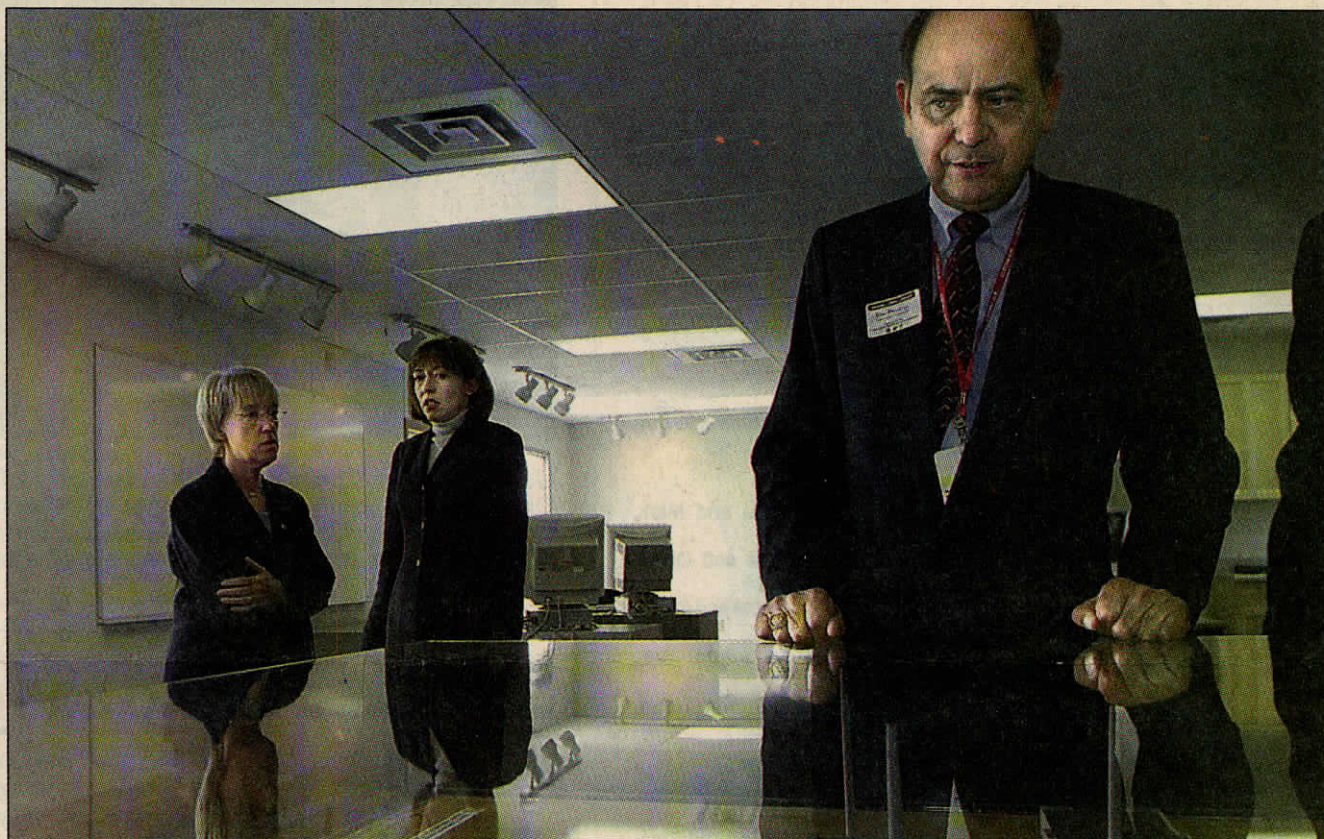
But construction has been delayed since DOE decided last year to fire its lead glassification contractor and hire Bechtel National to replace it. That led to the state fining DOE \$10,000 a week when it missed the July deadline.

Hanford now hopes to start constructing the glassification buildings by late November 2002, said Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection.

Hanford is trying to play catch-up.

A month ago, CH2M Hill Hanford Group finished setting up a power substation, utility lines and roads leading to the 65-acre glassification complex site — about a year ahead of schedule.

On Thursday, about 100 people — from congressional members to blue-collar workers — gathered at the site to celebrate the start of preliminary con-



Herald/Evan E. Parker

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., looks over construction plans Thursday afternoon for the waste treatment plant at the 300 Area in Hanford while U.S. Sens. Patty Murray, far left, and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., wait for the ceremonies to begin.

struction. U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., and U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., attended.

"Today we're literally moving from plans to progress," Boston said.

Plans call for finishing by next year trenches for utility lines and excavations for the glassification plants. Also, the onsite roads will be built and a 60,000-square-foot office building and a huge warehouse will be constructed.

However, the state won't stop levying the weekly fines until DOE provides a detailed plan to start glassifying wastes by 2007, and until DOE can guarantee the money to back up the plan.

Boston said DOE is ready to submit the 2007 plan to the state. But he said DOE won't submit the plan until Congress and

See **Plant**, Page B2

Tri-City officials brace for influx of workers, demand for services

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

The biggest community effects from the construction of the Department of Energy's waste glassification project at Hanford will be a shortage of classrooms and added road congestion, according to a study released Thursday.

The \$65,000 study, undertaken by Pertec Engineering Inc. of Everett, Thomas/Lane Associates Inc. of Seattle and SCM Consultants Inc. of Kennewick, was done to help identify

the negatives associated with having as many as 7,000 employees move to the Tri-Cities during the project's construction through 2011.

The glassification plant will treat Hanford's 54 million gallons of underground tank wastes.

The study's results were presented during a public meeting Thursday in Richland attended mostly by municipal employees. The hope is to use the results to get state and federal money to

See **Influx**, Page B2

5 Oct. 01 Hanford DOE to trim staff

■ *Richland offices to cut 48 employees from payroll*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy's two Hanford offices apparently will have to trim their staffs by almost 10 percent.

That translates to cutting by 48 employees the payroll of 496 people at DOE's Richland office and Office of River Protection by Sept. 30, 2002. The cuts are supposed to be accomplished by attrition,

buyouts and early retirements.

In a Sept. 7 memo to field offices, DOE cleanup czar Jessie Roberson said the nationwide nuclear cleanup program must cut 186 positions to reach a target of 2,401 full-time-equivalent slots.

DOE Richland office's target under the plan is 339 positions, and the Office of River Protection's target is 109.

Right now, the Office of River Protection has 130 employees supervising contractors handling Hanford's tank farms and the expanding waste glassification project. DOE's Richland office, which manages the rest of the site, has 366.

The Richland office's staff has steadily shrunk since 1998, when it had 512 people. The Office of River Protection was created in 1999, siphoning people from the Richland office.

But the Office of River Protection has been trying to increase its work force from 90 last year to 150 this year — a level that DOE in Washington, D.C., authorized in November 2000. The additional people were to help manage the growing and increasingly complex glassification project.

The Sept. 7. memo reverses that growth.

The Richland office and Office of River

Protection have internal committees studying the new staffing targets to figure out what effects the cuts will have and how staffs should be reassigned.

Roberson wrote that all efforts should focus on reducing the number of managers and management layers and increasing the ratio of employees to supervisors.

All hirings by the field offices also must be approved by DOE headquarters in Washington, D.C., she wrote.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

9 Oct 01

Hanford reservation tightens security status

Hanford increased its security status Sunday in the wake of the American and British air strikes on Taliban sites in Afghanistan.

Hanford moved from a security level No. 3 to a level No. 2 on Sunday, and remains at that level, said Colleen Clark, spokeswoman with the Department of Energy. She declined to elaborate on what additional security measures have been taken, citing a DOE policy.

Hanford has five security levels with No. 1 being the most strict. Before the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington, Hanford normally stayed below a level No. 3.

Discussion of FFTF Oct. 16 in Richland

A panel discussion of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility and medical isotopes is planned at 7:15 p.m. Oct. 16 at the Best Western Tower Inn, Richland, by the Eastern Washington Section of the American Nuclear Society.

Scientist Robert Schenter will lead the panel discussion. He's the vice-chairman of the Northwest Section of the National Association of Cancer Patients.

The cost for a 6:30 p.m. dinner meeting of the nuclear society before the presentation is \$15. To register, call 627-3511 by Friday.

20 Oct 01

Hanford Reach panel sets meeting Thursday

The Hanford Reach National Monument planning advisory committee is to meet Thursday in Mattawa.

The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. in Studio 73 at the Wahluke School District buildings complex, 400 N. Boundary Road. It will adjourn at 4:15 p.m.

Agenda items include: presentation of nominations for and selection of a committee chairman and vice chairman; revision and approval of committee ground rules; and informational presentations regarding the comprehensive conservation plan development process and National Wildlife Refuge System policies.

PNNL wins conservation award

■ *Federal groups honor PNNL Richland campus for energy conservation*

By Chris Mulick

Herald staff writer

The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is being given a national award for conserving energy at its Richland campus.

Mike Moran, who heads up the lab's energy conservation campaign, will accept the 2001 Federal Energy and Water Management Award on Oct. 16 in Washington, D.C.

The award is given by Department of Energy and the Federal Interagency Energy Policy Committee.

The expansive PNNL campus, which includes more than 2 million square feet of lab and office space, is one of the largest energy consumers in the Mid-Columbia.

In 2000, only 17 other accounts used

more electricity in the region, and that list was dominated by food processors, irrigators and manufacturers.

In March 2000, the lab restructured its building operations to conserve energy, a move that ultimately shaved \$180,000 off its electric bill through the end of the year.

Those gains largely were achieved through the lab's own "no cost, low cost" list of efficiency measures it's been developing. It included measures such as inspecting air conditioning systems, ensuring dampers were in the correct position and adjusting temperatures up by a degree or two.

At night, more lights were turned off and use of air-conditioning systems was curtailed to take advantage of favorable outdoor ambient temperatures.

"The little things may sound trivial but they all add up to a big cost savings," Moran said.

Not all of the measures were cost-free. Light sensors were installed in some office buildings, for example, so lights

automatically shut off when people leave the room.

"The best bang for our buck has been in the office buildings," Moran said.

PNNL has invested about \$12 million in energy conservation measures since mid-1993, which Moran says has helped curtail energy consumption by 30 percent.

The measures, some of which can be found on PNNL's Web site at www.pnl.gov/conserve-energy, could be used by homeowners and other businesses, Moran said.

Some large commercial buildings, for example, could realize savings by better inspecting heating and cooling systems, said Michael Kintner-Meyer, who develops energy efficient technologies for PNNL.

"Maintenance, generally, is lacking," he said.

■ Reporter Chris Mulick can be reached at the Herald Olympia bureau at 360-753-0862 or via e-mail at cmulick@tri-cityherald.com.

Report predicts vit project will strain cities

■ *Glassification likely will require more school space, housing, emergency workers*

By Genoa Sibold-Cohn and Terry Hudson

Herald staff writers

An independent report released Tuesday revealed potential effects of Hanford's glassification project on the Mid-Columbia's police, schools and housing.

The report, prepared by Perteet Engineering, Thomas/Lane and Associates and SCM Consultants, confirmed the four cities could be facing severe hits over the next four or five years, peaking in 2005.

"This is one phase of a multiphase project that is going to have impacts on

the community," said Bob Kelly, Kennewick city manager.

The report and its findings were the topic of discussions Tuesday night at Richland School District and Kennewick City Council meetings.

Officials are predicting the glassification process, known as the vitrification project, will bring 4,300 people by 2004 before the project's employment will drop.

Until then, city government, emergency services and school officials are bracing for an overhaul on everything from police departments to classroom sizes.

At the Richland School Board meeting Tuesday, Superintendent Rich Semler said the report shows the plant could bring many more students to the district.

"Not all will bring children, and not all will choose to live in Richland," Semler

said. "We'll pick up about 200 this year, peak at about 600 and then go down."

Portable classrooms could be the answer.

"We'll monitor the situation closely over the next six months," Semler said. "But we probably won't go to taxpayers for permanent structures for a temporary situation."

The report predicts the plant will bring the Richland School District 188 students this year, with increases to 504 next year, 623 in 2003 with a peak of 653 in 2005, before the numbers decline.

The report also predicts an increase of 418 students in Kennewick and 171 in Pasco for the peak year of 2005.

Here are other findings concluded in the report:

■ Kennewick and Richland would each have to hire 16 new firefighters and 23 new police officers by 2005.

The additional emergency workers would cost Kennewick an estimated \$1.4 million and Richland an estimated \$2.9 million.

Pasco, West Richland and Benton County would have to hire more officers and firefighters, spending an estimated \$300,000 to \$800,000.

■ An estimated \$145 million in sales tax would be generated over the next 10 years from the project and its workers. Only 11 percent would be returned to the cities, the report projected.

■ Tri-City housing projections during the project call for an additional 1,767 to 2,383 rental properties, 1,470 to 2,205 owned units and 297 to 416 trailer spaces. As of August, the Mid-Columbia had 730 rental properties and 900 owned units available, the report stated.

■ North Richland traffic and travel to the construction site would overflow

during the project years, according to the report.

Kelly presented Kennewick City Council members Tuesday with a grave picture of possible effects the Mid-Columbia could encounter with the 10-year project.

Kennewick leaders want state officials to help find money to compensate the city for potential effects on schools and emergency services.

Mayor Jim Beaver and Kelly plan to meet Thursday night in Kennewick with representatives from the 8th and 16th legislative districts to discuss the issue.

In the meantime, Kelly has advised city council members to think of ways to mitigate the project's effect on Kennewick.

■ Reporter Genoa Sibold-Cohn can be reached at 582-1539 or via e-mail at gsibold@tri-cityherald.com.

Duratek wins bid for reactor cleanup

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Duratek Technical Services has won a five-year, \$13.6 million contract to dig up and remove contaminated soil near four shut down Hanford reactors.

This is the biggest soil removal contract for the Richland-based company, which recently began expanding into this type of work, said Joel Eacker, the company's president.

Duratek Technical replaces P.W. Stephens Contractors Inc., which was fired in late June for mismanaging financial obligations in its contract with Bechtel Hanford.

Bechtel is in charge of digging up contaminated Hanford soil along the Columbia River and moving it to a huge specialized landfill in the site's center. P.W. Stephens was in charge of removing soil near the H, F, K East and K West reactors.

Duratek Technical replaced P.W. Stephens temporarily until the project was put out for bids. Duratek Technical then turned in the winning bid. Its new contract went into effect Oct. 1.

The contract is to dig and move about 1 million tons of radioactive soil and debris and four miles of underground pipes in those reactor areas, plus at a small former animal testing lab near the F Reactor. Much of that soil is to be removed from the basins that held the reactors' radioactive water for cooling before being returned to the river.

Duratek Technical is one of Hanford's four so-called "enterprise companies" created in 1996. In their early years, these companies were guaranteed Hanford work while they tried to build up a non-Hanford clientele. Today, these companies, including Duratek Technical, are no longer guaranteed work at Hanford. They are now straightforward contractors that still do a lot of work at the site.

Duratek Technical originally focused on packaging and transporting radioactive and hazardous wastes. But it is expanding into managing environmental fix-it work. It employs about 170 people, including 20 interim workers whose jobs became permanent with the new Bechtel contract.

Groups target FFTF proposal

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Hanford watchdog groups are asking that the Justice Department review what they see as conflicts of interest related to a proposal to commercialize Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

A company that was paid by the Department of Energy to work on a review that considered proposals for restarting the reactor also was included in one of the proposals.

The company, Science Applications International Corp., or SAIC, has since withdrawn from the proposal. Although watchdog groups criticizing the company say it did not reveal its dual roles, SAIC sent a letter to DOE on June 11 asking for guidance. The company pointed out it was a contractor for DOE on the study and a bidder under a proposal to commercialize the reactor.

Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems of Richland submitted a plan to restart the reactor to make

medical isotopes. ANMS would not operate the reactor but had firms with nuclear experience as subcontractors.

SAIC would "provide isotope marketing strategy" and other services, according to the letter.

SAIC told DOE in the letter that the internal organization doing work for DOE was in a different sector than the one that might be involved in FFTF operations.

DOE replied in a letter SAIC received July 26 that there was not a conflict of interest with the work SAIC was doing for the DOE report on restarting FFTF.

However, DOE would need to make a separate decision on whether SAIC had a conflict of interest if ANMS were awarded the contract, the officer wrote.

That decision is moot since SAIC withdrew this month. A company spokesman did not say SAIC had a conflict of interest, but that the company was concerned the perception of a conflict of interest was not helpful to DOE.

Heart of America Northwest, the Government Accountability Project and Columbia Riverkeeper are asking that SAIC and ANMS be barred from contracts with DOE for a year. They also want them permanently barred from FFTF-related contracts and SAIC to return money it received from DOE.

Gerald Pollet, executive director of Heart of America, said the organization was asking for the Justice Department review in part because of concerns over what it sees as potentially widespread

conflicts of interest by DOE contractors.

Among the groups' other concerns was that a former FFTF manager, now an independent consultant, also worked on the DOE review of the decision to restart the reactor.

The three Hanford watchdog groups asking for the investigation into conflicts of interest have seats on the Hanford Advisory Board, which advises the state and federal government on Hanford matters.

However, that's not a conflict of interest, said Greg deBruler of Columbia Riverkeeper, because those are not paid positions, while SAIC and ANMS stood to profit.

■ Reporter Annette Cary can be reached at 582-1533 or via e-mail at acary@tri-cityherald.com.

Vit plant topic of lunch meeting

The National Contracts Management Association Columbia Basin chapter will hold its monthly luncheon meeting from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday at the Richland Red Lion Inn.

Ron Naventi of Bechtel National Inc. will discuss the Hanford tank waste glassification project. Lunch is \$12. The program is open to the public.

For information or reservations, call 372-9500.

Lab must share more results, DOE says

■ PNNL asked to spread its knowledge

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland needs to do a better job of sharing research results from its Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, according to a report by the Department of Energy's inspector general.

EMSL was opened in 1997 for use by DOE and non-DOE scientists, with a mission that included educating researchers in molecular sciences. For-profit users, such as national companies that want to use the lab's state-of-the-art equipment, are required to pay the full cost for work at the lab. Nonprofit users, such as university researchers, are not charged but must document and provide research results to EMSL.

"The scientific work done at the EMSL is not in question," said the inspector general's report. "However, it is questionable whether DOE and the scientific community have fully benefited from the nonproprietary research done at the EMSL."

Under federal rules, officials at EMSL are supposed to collect and forward the results of nonproprietary research done there to DOE's Office of Science and Technology Information. That office is charged with making information available to the general scientific community.

An audit of the procedure found that EMSL officials had not received research results for 94 of 153 completed research projects. Even when EMSL officials did receive the results, they often did not send them to the information office, according to the report.

"Without full dissemination of research results to the scientific community, future researches may not benefit from past discoveries," the report said. "Therefore, DOE may not receive full value from the \$48 million it costs annually to operate the EMSL."

A nuclear exchange

Chernobyl, Hanford officials reciprocate visits to learn from one another

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Chernobyl has just entered the next stage in its history. Originally, the site was a four-reactor nuclear power complex.

Then after 1986's disastrous fire at one reactor, Chernobyl became the world's most radioactively contaminated spot. But it kept another one of its reactors running to produce electricity.

Ukraine finally shut down Chernobyl's last reactor last December. And now, Chernobyl is purely a nuclear waste cleanup project — just like Hanford.

In fact, Chernobyl has begun to grope through the same issues Hanford did in the 1990s and still does today.

Finding cleanup money. Dealing with changing technical and training needs. Trying to wean a local economy from relying solely on the nuclear industry.

Chernobyl and Hanford already have some fairly strong ties — such as routinely sending scientists back and forth to study nuclear cleanup.

Meanwhile, two Hanford contractors — Battelle and Bechtel National — are teamed with a French company to manage cleanup projects at Chernobyl plus replacing the huge concrete shelter over the fire-damaged reactor.

This week, Ukrainian nuclear officials are visiting Hanford, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the Tri-Cities to make some contacts in the nuclear cleanup world and to explore how to diversify the economy of Slavutych, the main town in the immediate Chernobyl area.

Those officials include Vitaly Tolstogov, Ukraine's general manager of the Chernobyl complex; Anatoly Nosovsky, director of the Slavutych Laboratory of International Research and

Technology; and Irina Mitichkina, deputy director for personnel at the Chernobyl complex.

Many similarities exist between Hanford and Chernobyl.

Each national government usually does not provide enough money to keep cleanup efforts on schedule. Each site is uncertain how much cleanup money it will get next year. Each site's cleanup is expected to take decades, with Tolstogov estimating it will take 50 to 100 years to clean up Chernobyl. Each site has many thousands of spent nuclear fuel assemblies that have to be moved to safer dry storage sites.

Chernobyl has two major government engineering, nuclear and ecological labs, compared with Hanford's single PNNL. However, PNNL traces its roots back to World War II, while the two Ukrainian

See **Exchange**, Page B2

Archeology month celebrated at Hanford

The Hanford Cultural Resources Laboratory is celebrating Archeology Month with a monthlong exhibit of the area's history and a series of special programs.

The cultural resources laboratory helps maintain records of the history of the Hanford site during the cleanup.

The East Benton Historical Society museum features an exhibit on the archeology of the White Bluffs and Hanford farming communities. The display will remain through Hal-

Briefs

Energy secretary cancels Hanford visit

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham has canceled his Thursday visit to Hanford but plans to reschedule it soon.

A last-minute scheduling conflict caused the postponement of the secretary's visit, said DOE spokesman Mike Talbot. Abraham's agenda was expected to include a driving tour of Hanford, briefings on cleanup progress and the glassification project and a tour of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

Audubon to hold nuclear waste lecture

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society will hold the second lecture in its series at its general meeting tonight.

Roy Gephart of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory will present "A Conversation About Nuclear Waste and Cleanup" at Hanford.

This presentation will summarize why Hanford was selected for plutonium production, what materials were generated, what contaminants were stored or released and what chemical and nuclear materials remain. The talk is intended to provide "a context to better understand the cleanup and long-term stewardship challenges facing this and future generations."

Gephart has 27 years of geohydrologic and management experience in the hazardous waste industry.

The general meeting and program will be held at the Kennewick First Lutheran Church, at the corner of Highway 395 and Yelm Street in Kennewick. It will start at 7 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the free program. For more information, call 588-4025.

DOE to hold forum for potential vendors

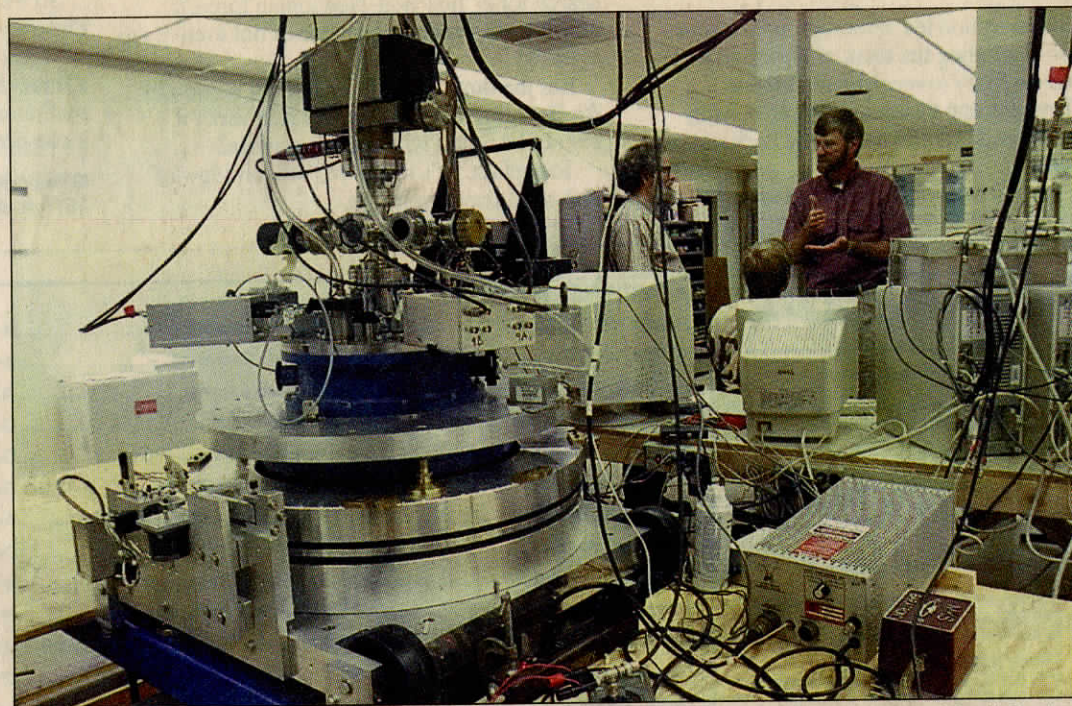
The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection will hold a symposium Nov. 15 for small businesses that wish to become vendors for the \$4 billion waste vitrification project. Approximately \$1 billion worth of contracts will be available for small businesses.

The forum will provide information on types of contracts available, a project timeline, details on how to become an eligible bidder and an opportunity to make contact with procurement specialists from the lead contractors.

Presenters include Sen. Maria Cantwell, D.-Wash., and managers of the lead agencies, including Harry Boston of the Office of River Protection.

The daylong program starts with registration and refreshments from 9 to 10 a.m., presentations from 10 to 11 a.m., visits with procurement specialists from 11 a.m. to noon and an opportunity to meet buyers from 1 to 3 p.m. It will be held at the Trade, Recreation and Agricultural Center off Road 68 in Pasco.

The event is free, but reservations are required. Contact Kris Berg at the Tri-City Industrial Development Council, 735-1000.



Physicists Riley Newman, left, and Mike Bantel discuss their hunt for a revised "Big G" number with Battelle liaison Roy Gephart inside a Hanford bunker. Big G is a mathematical constant used in Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation.

Herald file photo

The search for Big G

Scientists trying to pinpoint law of universal gravitation

■ Each Monday, the Herald takes a look back at a person or issue in the Mid-Columbia's past.

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

It's a 10-foot-tall super-duper thermos bottle hidden beneath Hanford.

Inside: A vacuum as perfect as humanly possible.

Also inside: A chill that flirts closely with absolute zero, a temperature so cold it freezes

molecular movement.

And inside that thermos bottle, scientists want to probe and stretch the limits of the physical universe that Isaac Newton imagined.

That thermos sprouts dozens of wires into a small network of gizmos and computers — all at the bottom of Rattlesnake

See **Big G**, Page A2

4 Hanford contract companies in business for 5 years

■ Former enterprise firms evolving

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

What are they really? And what do you call 'em?

On paper, the four companies are no longer part of the official card-carrying Hanford universe.

But in reality, they still do mostly Hanford work — and a significant chunk at that.

Fluor Federal Services, Lockheed Martin Services, Duratek Technical Services and Cogema Engineering Corp. used to be called Hanford's "enterprise companies."

Then, in a bureaucratic public relations move, Hanford later tried to call them "affiliated companies," a term that never really caught on.

And now, they're just four scrambling corporations, heavily dependent on Hanford work but without their earlier guaranteed insider links.

All four appear fairly solid. But all four also are much more susceptible to the cyclical ups and downs in their businesses.

This year, the four companies evolved a little more to be able to live in a less-forgiving corporate jungle inside and outside of Hanford.



Photo courtesy of Bechtel Hanford

Enterprise company Duratek Technical Services recently received a 5-year, \$13.6 million contract from Bechtel Hanford to take over removing contaminated soil near H Reactor, as well as near three other Hanford reactors.

They turned 5 years old on Oct. 1, with about 1,700 employees among them.

In the beginning, there were six enterprise companies, with more than 2,200 employees

In 1996, the Department of Energy named Fluor Hanford and its subcontractors as the lead Hanford cleanup

team — based partly on Fluor's plan to boost economic development in the Tri-City area.

That plan included creating six enterprise companies with people from the old Westinghouse Hanford team.

Fluor Hanford's master plan was this:

The company would coordinate six "inside-the-fence" full-time subcontractors and another six "outside-the-fence" enterprise companies.

The idea was the enterprise companies would be guaranteed a significant amount of Hanford work while they tried to build up non-Hanford clients to wean themselves from the site and become permanent Tri-City companies.

The overall 13-company concept has evolved significantly since 1996. Sometimes, that evolution went smoothly. Sometimes, it was pretty ugly.

The bottom line: Fluor Hanford could not effectively manage 12 major subcontractors. So it reabsorbed most of its inside-the-fence subcontractors and employees over the past five years.

Fluor Hanford also reabsorbed the tiny DE&S Northwest enterprise company. And it fired another enterprise company, security contractor B&W Protec, replacing it with Protection Technology Hanford. Fluor then moved

See **Hanford**, Page B2

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Richland firm looks to irradiation

■ *Company negotiating to use isotopes produced by FFTF*

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

As the U.S. Postal Service investigates ways to sanitize mail, a Richland company is making plans to build an irradiation center in north Richland or the former Soviet Union.

Plans hinge on finding a source for the isotope with the energy that can kill bacteria in food, mail or medical equipment, said Carl Holder, chairman of New Horizon Technologies Inc.

"A major constraint in the development of the gamma irradiation industry is no United States suppliers of gamma-producing isotopes," he said. "Gamma energy is in critically short supply."

Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility could

change that, if the Department of Energy agrees to a plan to commercialize and restart the reactor. New Horizon is negotiating with Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems, which is proposing operating the reactor, to use isotopes produced by FFTF.

The reactor is large enough to produce gamma-emitting isotopes in its outer rings in addition to isotopes for medical use, the primary use proposed for the reactor, said Bob Schenter, vice chairman of the Northwest Chapter of the National Association of Cancer Patients.

In fact, it's produced cobalt 60, the only isotope approved for food irradiation, in test runs. It's also produced gamma-emitting isotopes used in medical tests to diagnose osteoporosis and scan the hearts of newborns.

During irradiation, high-energy electrons pass through food to kill pathogens. The Food and Drug Administration has approved the technique to kill bacteria

such as E. coli in hamburger and sterilize medical equipment. But it also has been used as early as the 1960s to kill anthrax in lamb's wool sweaters.

Demand for irradiation is growing, Holder said.

Irradiation most recently has been proposed to kill pathogens in mail after two postal workers died, apparently from anthrax-infected letters or packages.

Either gamma radiation or an electron beam source can be used.

However, gamma radiation can penetrate packages or an entire pallet of mail, and an electron beam source likely would have to sanitize letters individually since it can penetrate less than an inch.

The public also is more aware of the dangers of pathogens in food and less fearful of irradiation, potentially increasing that market, Holder said.

In addition, the medical market is growing 7 percent to 10 percent a year.

Demand for irradiation could grow faster, as environmental and other concerns grow over a competing technology using a chemical, he said.

"The industry is ready, but the isotopes are not ready," he said.

Now New Horizon Technologies is irradiating food on a demonstration scale. It's used the technology to lengthen the shelf life of Walla Walla onions, cherries and herbs using isotopes imported from Canada.

But Canada cannot meet the current demand for cobalt 60 and would not supply full-scale operations by New Horizon, Holder said.

"There is a national emergency in irradiation, and FFTF needs to come on line to (solve) that," he said.

However, rather than depending entirely on a restart of the Hanford reactor, the

See **Firm**, Page B2

Numatec Hanford continues on cleanup project

■ New \$50 million contract keeps company involved

By Wendy Culverwell

Herald staff writer

Numatec Hanford Corp. will continue to support CH2M Hill Hanford Group's work at the Hanford tank farm under a five-year contract extension approved a week ago.

The new contract is worth about \$50 million.

Numatec Hanford has worked with CH2M Hill, the lead contractor, on the tank farm cleanup project for two years. In that time, the companies have worked on safety issues, including pumping wastes from single-shell tanks to double-shelled ones and began work on a system to feed

the waste to the future vitrification plant for treatment.

In extending the contract, CH2M Hill officials gave Numatec Hanford its highest rating for its performance during the last year. Numatec exceeded expectations in safety, quality, innovation, keeping to a schedule and cost-effectiveness.

Dale Allen, senior vice president of operations for CH2M Hill, said Numatec brings welcome technical expertise as well as knowledge of the commercial nuclear industry.

Allen credited the company with reducing costs and developing new technologies to ease work in the complex tank farms.

For example, Numatec Hanford was one of the agencies that worked on a backhoe-like robot that operates in the 600 radioactive pits that serve to connect the underground tanks at the 200 Area.

The robot device, or "pit viper," was created to minimize the need for human workers to operate at the pit's edges — an arduous process since the pits are so contaminated and workers must be cycled through quickly to keep their exposure at less than 500 millirem per year.

Though costly to build, officials believe the pit robots could save money.

The contract extension will keep Numatec on the job through the end of September 2006. The company is a subsidiary of Cogema, a French nuclear company, and was formed as part of the Project Hanford Management Contract in

1996. It supports Fluor Hanford and CH2M Hill.

CH2M Hill is the contractor charged by the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection with managing about 53 million gallons of highly radioactive and hazardous waste stored in 177 underground tanks at the Hanford site's 200 area.

The wastes eventually will be vitrified — or transformed into glass under extreme heat. While tank farm managers work to ready wastes for shipment to the plant, another contractor is gearing up to build the \$4 billion project. Bechtel National Inc. started working on the plant project in March.

■ Reporter Wendy Culverwell can be reached at 582-1537 or via e-mail at wculverwell@tri-cityherald.com.

Northwest

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2001

TRI-CITY HERALD

A3

PNNL crew looks north for energy

■ Scientists study frozen methane deposits in Canada

By The Associated Press

YAKIMA — In Canada's Northwest Territories, where the Mackenzie River empties into the Beaufort Sea, scientists are studying a vast deposit of frozen methane as a potential energy source.

Methane hydrates are icelike substances found in deep ocean sediments and Arctic permafrost that contain methane in a highly concentrated form.

"We're investing in it because of the interest in trying to limit or reduce the amount of reliance that we have on foreign energy sources," said Peter McGrail, a staff

scientist at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, just north of Richland.

PNNL and the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory are part of an international team of private sector energy and research companies and U.S. and Canadian governmental agencies working on the project at the Mallik Gas Hydrate Research Well.

Hydrates have been found under the tundra in Alaska and Canada and under the ocean floor off the coast of Oregon, the Carolinas and in the Gulf of Mexico.

The U.S. Geological Survey has estimated the value of gas hydrates in the United States at 320,000 trillion cubic feet of gas, 200 times conventional natural gas resources and reserves in the country.

Come this winter, when the temperature is

about 30 degrees below zero in the Arctic, crews at the Mallik well will drill three-fourths of a mile into rock to take core samples of the crystalline hydrates.

The goal is to find a way to produce useable methane gas in a safe and cost-effective way.

Last year, Congress appropriated nearly \$50 million for this type of research.

"If only 1 percent of the methane hydrate resource could be made recoverable, the United States could more than double its domestic natural gas resource base," the bill's sponsor, U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa., said at the time.

Once the core sample is retrieved, it will be shipped to a field lab in the small town of Inuvik before portions are packaged and sent to researchers, McGrail said.

Funding for Reach's future uncertain

■ *Bill earmarks \$850,000 for planning, operation of Hanford Reach monument*

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

Excitement over charting the future of the Hanford Reach National Monument is being overshadowed by the effort running out of money.

The Reach citizens advisory committee met Thursday in Pasco, but its next meeting is uncertain at least until the Interior Appropriations bill for 2002 is signed into law.

The bill reportedly strongly encourages the Fish and Wildlife Service to spend \$850,000 for planning and operations on

the Reach as part of a \$10 million boost to the wildlife refuge system. However, it could not be confirmed Thursday evening whether that direction is still in the bill.

Even if it is, it's not certain that the Fish and Wildlife Service will follow congressional advice, given the demand for money across the nation's wildlife refuges and the political hazards of spending such a large chunk in one place.

"It is supposed to be earmarked, but sometimes those things get lost in the shuffle," said Jim Watts, chairman of the advisory committee. "The concern is that lacking that budget infusion, we are going to have problems planning an effective mission for the Fish and Wildlife Service" on the Hanford Reach.

"We're getting close to the end of the funding," Watts said after he told com-

mittee members they may not meet in December as planned.

A large cash outlay is critical to establishing the Reach as a monument and keeping in motion planning activities that cover everything from public access to protection of natural resources.

Without it, Fish and Wildlife Service officials would be hard-pressed to move forward with the advisory committee while keeping up with day-to-day operations and building a planning staff in Richland.

"The committee would like to have the people in place so we could give them some advice," Watts said.

Greg Hughes, monument manager for the Fish and Wildlife Service, hopes to know his budget within two weeks. He said Thursday that he doesn't want to waste committee members' time if he

knows he doesn't have any way to handle their recommendations.

"The group is ready to go," he said.

After three meetings largely committed to setting a planning process, committee members also are eager to get started. On Thursday, they outlined several topics to address over the next three years.

"I am pleased that we are starting to talk about the issues ... and a timeline that gets us to action," said Jeff Tayer, vice chairman of the committee.

Among the issues are how to stop sloughing of the White Bluffs, a visitors center, game management, water rights, Columbia River flow levels and protection of cultural resources.

"There is quite a lot of commonality between everyone at the table," said Mike

See **Future**, Page B2

Former Battelle worker loses layoff lawsuit

Scientist Harry Burkholder lost his six year battle with Battelle.

A 12-person jury decided Thursday in Benton County Superior Court that Burkholder didn't prove that Battelle Memorial Institute was unfair when he was laid off in July 1995 after 22 years.

Burkholder was let go after the Department of Energy cut \$60 million in funding from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, which is overseen by Battelle.

Battelle's attorney David Bateman argued the downsizing was unfortunate and painful for many people but was a result of the economic climate at the time.

About 900 people from a staff of 4,000 lost their jobs.

Burkholder's attorney Susan Mindenbergs argued the company didn't follow its own procedures in making an effort to find Burkholder another position at the company instead of laying him off.

He was seeking wages lost over the last six years, as well as money for pain and suffering. After the hearing, Burkholder declined to comment on the decision and said he's not sure if he will appeal.

— By the Herald staff

Hanford budget still unresolved in Congress

■ *Murray to be on joint spending committee*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., will be on the joint Senate-House committee that will nail down what Congress wants to spend on Hanford's environmental cleanup in fiscal 2002.

Other than that, Hanford's 2002

budget picture is just as hazy as it was a month ago.

Congress wants to appropriate slightly more than \$1.8 billion to Hanford for fiscal 2002, which began Oct. 1. The Bush administration has not provided a clue yet on if it will agree to anything more than the \$1.4 billion it proposed for Hanford last spring.

Todd Webster, Murray's press aide, said the House and Senate will likely meet in the next week or two to hammer

out the slight differences over their proposed 2002 Hanford budgets.

The Bush administration wants to make cuts in 13 appropriation bills that have more or less been passed by Congress. One of those is the water and energy appropriations bill, which includes the Department of Energy's and Hanford's nuclear cleanup money. But the administration has not yet provided Congress with figures on what it wants to cut in those bills. Webster said those figures

might materialize within two weeks.

Since the Senate and House pushed for a Hanford budget of more than \$1.8 billion, the federal financial climate has changed substantially.

Those changes include the new war on terrorism, a sluggish national economy and a shrinking Social Security budget surplus.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-city-herald.com.

Man admits he dug artifacts from Reach site

By Kristin M. Kraemer
Herald staff writer

A man has admitted in federal court that he dug American Indian artifacts from a site at the Hanford Reach National Monument.

Theodore Albert Jensen Jr., 53 and no known address, pleaded guilty Oct. 17 to a misdemeanor charge in U.S. District Court in Yakima, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said Thursday.

Jensen was accused of violating the Archaeological Resource Pro-

tection Act of 1979, which prohibits the unauthorized removal or destruction of archaeological material from public or tribal land.

Jensen reportedly was fishing along the Columbia River when he trespassed onto a recorded archaeological site that is several thousands years old, dug up some stone tools and other artifacts and left with the collection.

The land, managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, was found disturbed a short time later by federal agency and tribal cultural

resource specialists doing routine site monitoring. Carleen Gonder, a Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement officer, reportedly found evidence that connected Jensen to the crime. "It's a shame. We're hoping to educate the public," said Jenna Gaston, cultural resource manager at the Hanford Reach. "I think the important thing is that it sets a precedent because it is very unusual to get a full conviction this rapidly on a case like this."

Jensen was fined \$1,491.77 to cover the damage. Under the act,

damage of more than \$500 is a felony, but Jensen's admission was part of a plea agreement.

The money will be used to restore the site in addition to public education and training for law enforcement and cultural resource personnel.

The Umatilla, Yakama, Nez Perce and Wanapum tribes were involved in the case.

■ Reporter Kristin M. Kraemer can be reached at 582-1531 or via e-mail at kkraemer@tri-cityherald.com.

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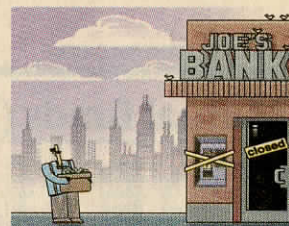
Business

Daily BizFact

Decline in the number of U.S. commercial banks during the past 20 years:

1981..... 14,434
2000..... 8,315

— Source: U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation



River shore cleanup cost uncertain

■ **DOE says bids could affect figure; \$2.7 billion estimated**

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy tentatively believes that an accelerated plan to clean up Hanford's river shore will cost about \$2.7 billion.

That number comes from figures in a draft request for proposals that DOE unveiled a few days ago.

But the draft request also noted that \$2.7 billion figure could easily change after DOE receives bids on the contract for the bulk of Hanford's river shore cleanup by

2012.

Bechtel Hanford's contract, which heavily focuses on cleanup along Hanford's Columbia River shore, will expire July 31, 2002.

River shore cleanup traditionally accounts for slightly less than 10 percent of Hanford's overall cleanup budget each year.

DOE's Richland office has proposed to speed up river shore cleanup significantly with the new, still developing contract. And DOE wants to hire one contractor to tackle this until the task is done.

This plan has a couple of major question marks.

No one knows yet how much the federal government will appropriate to Hanford's river shore cleanup in fiscal 2002,

which is a key clue to DOE's long-term plans. And the \$2.7 billion is a preliminary number that will likely be fine-tuned in 2002.

After receiving feedback on its draft request, DOE expects to issue a final request for proposals by Jan. 23 and to award the contract three to six months later.

This month's draft request divides the rivershore cleanup contract into two phases. The first phase's costs totaling \$1.5 billion are more solid than DOE's estimates for the second phase, which total \$1.2 billion and are more likely to change, according to DOE documents. A timetable has not been set yet for when the first phase ends and the second phase begins.

DOE's draft request calls for

demolishing plus cleaning and sealing areas around the D, DR, F and H reactors. And it calls for the cleanup and demolition of the huge 324 and 327 lab buildings in the 300 Area as well as 12 smaller 300 Area buildings. Overall, the first phase is supposed to finish work on four reactors, 31 buildings, 45 waste burial sites and 267 waste sites.

The second phase is supposed to address the cleanup, demolition and sealing up of the complexes at the KE, KW and N reactors, plus the rest of the 300 Area.

That supposedly translates to three reactors, 230 buildings, four waste burial sites and 255 waste sites.

DOE's draft request for proposals calls for bidders to come

up with their own estimates on what the first and second phases will cost. Then each bidder will propose target fees — essentially its profits — that DOE will pay for accomplishing work on time and on budget. That target fee cannot exceed 8 1/2 percent of a bidder's estimate for tackling the project.

The eventual contract will also trim a bidder's fees — again its profits — if work goes over budget and falls behind schedule.

Bechtel Hanford is eligible to bid on the new contract. But DOE is trying to get as many companies as possible to compete for the project.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

Hastings confident of Hanford cleanup

■ **Hanford needs \$1.832 billion in 2002 to meet obligations**

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., believes Hanford will get enough money for fiscal 2002 to meet its legal cleanup obligations for that year.

"For 2002, I feel very confident about where we are," Hast-

ings said.

At a Friday press conference, he pointed to Congress and the Bush administration agreeing to increase the overall federal fiscal 2002 budget from last spring's \$661 billion to \$683 billion now.

That \$683 billion is enough to ensure that the roughly \$1.8 billion needed for Hanford will materialize for 2002, Hastings said.

Right now, the Bush administration's last public Hanford cleanup budget figure, which is more than four months old, is

\$1.4 billion for fiscal 2002, which began last Oct. 1.

Hanford needs \$1.832 billion in 2002 to meet its legal obligations for that year, according to the Department of Energy's calculations.

In a May testimony before a Senate committee, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham opposed Congress increasing DOE's 2002 nationwide nuclear cleanup money from \$5.913 billion to a House figure of \$6.613 billion or a Senate figure of \$6.754 billion. That nuclear

cleanup money includes appropriations to Hanford.

The House wants to appropriate \$1.814 billion to Hanford, and the Senate wants to spend \$1.834 billion. The two chambers expect to reconcile their differences within two weeks.

Abraham contended he did not want the extra money until a review of DOE's cleanup programs is completed. The Bush administration wrote a memo in late June that backed Abraham's stance of keeping DOE nuclear cleanup budget to \$5.913 billion,

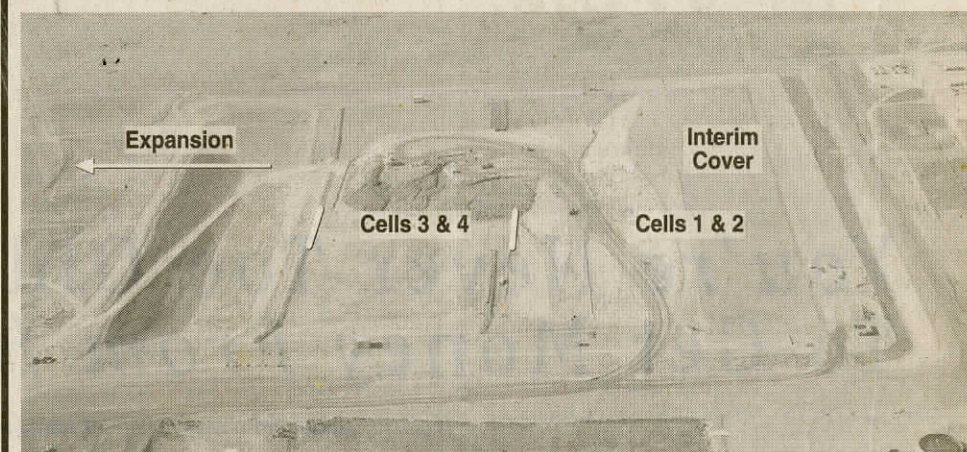
including \$1.4 billion for Hanford. Since then the administration has not provided any clue about where it now stands on DOE's nuclear cleanup programs.

The \$683 billion is split among 13 appropriations bills that have more or less passed Congress, but the administration has not said yet how it wants to split that \$683 billion among those bills.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

Hanford Site

Disposal Facility Expansion



Notice!

Public Comment Period
October 29 - November 27, 2001

The public is invited to comment on a proposed plan to expand the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. The large disposal facility accepts contaminants generated from Hanford cleanup. The amendment consists of the following proposals:

- Initiate Phase III of ERDF that includes expansion of up to four additional cells on an as-needed basis.
- Construct a staging area that allows waste along the Columbia River to be moved to a secure location while awaiting treatment and/or disposal.

The Proposed Plan for an Amendment to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility Record of Decision (DOE/RL-2001-44) is available for review at the following location:

U.S. Department of Energy Public Reading Room
Washington State University, Tri-Cities
Consolidated Information Center, Room 101-L
2770 University Drive
Richland, WA 99352
Attn: Terri Traub (509) 372-7443

For more information or to submit comments in a written or electronic format, contact:

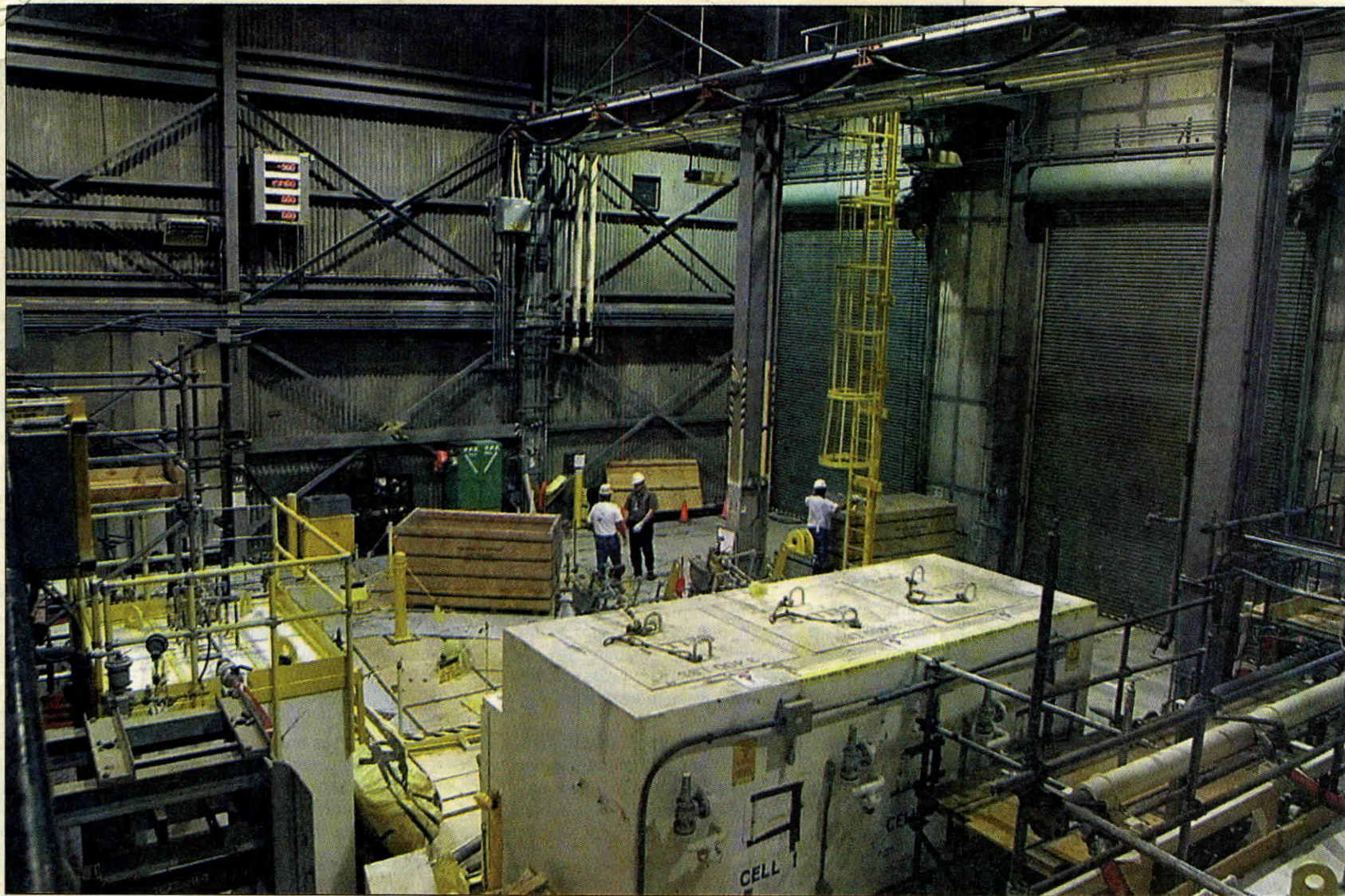
David Einan
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
712 Swift Boulevard, Suite 5
Richland, WA 99352
(509) 376-3883
einan.david@epa.gov



Tri-Party Agreement

Or on the website at: www.bhi-erc.com/projects/rawd/erdf/htm

For additional information call the Hanford Cleanup line toll free: 1-800-321-2008



Herald file

Spent nuclear fuel is loaded onto trucks in this bay at Hanford's K West Basin as part of the massive cleanup program under way at the site, which includes

about \$1 billion earmarked for small businesses. A symposium on how to earn a part of that money is set for Nov. 15.

A piece of federal pie

Small business owners won't want to miss Hanford vendor forum

By Wendy Culverwell
Herald staff writer

With approximately one-fourth of the work on the massive River Protection Project at Hanford set aside for small businesses, it's time for local business owners to bone up on cleanup plans.

There is a vitrification plant to build, a river corridor to protect, millions of gallons of radioactive waste to process and many engineering challenges to meet.

But first there is a schedule to keep. The clock, though already ticking, gets going in earnest Nov. 15.

That's when the Department of Energy, its lead contractors and the Tri-City Industrial Development Council will hold a daylong symposium to help small business owners learn how they can be part of the \$4 billion effort.

The symposium offers would-be business partners a chance to learn more about the project and make face-to-face contact with purchasing officers for the two major contractors, Bechtel National, Inc. and CH2M Hill Hanford Group, Inc.

Bechtel is leading the effort to construct the plant where radioactive tank wastes will be treated; CH2M Hill is responsible for the tank farms and rivershore protection.

The combined effort is called the River Protection Project and it will play out over the next 10 years at the Hanford site.

Even though \$1 billion worth of work is set to go to small businesses, size alone won't guarantee work from the government's contractors, said Michael Barrett, Bechtel's contracting director.

"Just your small business status isn't going to get you the job," he said.

Successful businesses should take time to learn about the project, its timelines, what materials will be needed and when.

At a minimum, any small business acting as a supplier or subcontractor must be licensed in Wash-

“Just your small business status isn't going to get you the job.”

Michael Barrett,
Bechtel's contracting director

ington state and registered as a federal contractor.

"Understand the project. Understand the timeline of the project," advised Greg Jones, executive officer of DOE's Office of River Protection.

That's why the vendor symposium was set up.

The individual contractors, namely Bechtel, have already held forums for potential vendors.

But DOE and Tri-City business leaders wanted an event that covered the full scope of the tank waste project, from tank farm management to construction of the vitrification plant at the Hanford site's central plateau.

The project will result in 54 million gallons of highly radioactive and hazardous tank waste being treated at the vitrification plant, where it will be glassified in a process involving extreme heat.

Small businesses can have a role in the nuts-and-bolts aspects of the project.

Carrie Brittain, supplier advocate for Bechtel National, said the company will need businesses that provide construction services as well as materials. Her office regularly refers potential suppliers to Bechtel's Web site, www.ebechtel.com, to learn what steps they must take to become a supplier as well as what bids are coming up.

Visiting the ebechtel.com site is the most important first step a potential business partner can take.

"The biggest problem we have is they don't follow through. We send them to the Web site and they don't go," Brittain said.

Bechtel already uses small businesses for engi-

neering and architectural services, preparation of the construction site, site security and safety supplies. It's looking for a contractor to install a fence around the project as well as a contractor to install a septic system.

Building the vitrification plant will be a massive project that's likely to deplete supplies of certain construction materials and strain the ability of small businesses to supply others.

"We've always encouraged teaming arrangements, especially on the large buys," Brittain said.

At CH2M Hill Hanford Group, or CHG, prospective vendors can register either by setting up a meeting with the vendor advocate, Debbie Bone-Harris, or by visiting its Web site, www.hanford.gov/chgcp/.

Contact names and numbers are listed on the site.

CHG relies on small businesses to supply everything from engineering support and contract estimators to office furniture, paper, pens and other office supplies, said Betty Euteneier, director of contracts and procurements.

Euteneier tells businesses that they must do more than register and wait for a call offering work. Even among registered businesses, competition for government-sponsored work is fierce.

Individual businesses need to study the project, figure out where they fit in, then sell themselves to purchasing officers.

"Do the homework, then come and tell us what you can do," she said.

The Nov. 15 vendor symposium starts with registration at 9 a.m. and continues until 3 p.m.

There will be presentations, a question-and-answer period and a chance to meet buyers.

The program will be held at the Trade, Recreation and Agricultural Center in Pasco.

To register, call Kris Berg at TRIDEC, 735-1000.

■ Reporter Wendy Culverwell can be reached at 582-1537 or via e-mail at wculverwell@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford Reach public planning money uncertain

■ Interior Department bill didn't allot extra funds

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

No extra money is earmarked for the Hanford Reach National Monument in the Interior Department spending bill now on the president's desk, leaving the future of the public planning process for Reach management with Fish and Wildlife Service leaders.

The Reach advisory committee last week was hoping for language directing the agency to spend \$850,000 at the new monument of a \$10 million increase in the agency's operations and maintenance budget.

"People at the monument might have thought that they were saying this money was going to be coming, when in fact

these were recommendations or suggestions," said Todd Webster, spokesman for Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. He said Congress typically doesn't give specific directions to agencies about their operations and maintenance spending, and this case is no different.

Instead, Congress said Fish and Wildlife "should place a high priority on the staffing and planning needs at the Hanford Reach National Monument."

That is far less than what planning committee members wanted to keep up with a three-year plan to set policies and projects in motion.

"I would like to see a number in there — something we would

See **Reach**, Page A2

Energy secretary to visit Thursday

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham has rescheduled his visit to Hanford for Thursday, when he's scheduled to spend the afternoon in the Tri-Cities.

It will be his first trip to the nuclear reservation since being appointed Energy secretary this year.

He plans to spend his time here meeting with Hanford employees, touring Hanford and looking over the Fast Flux Test Facility. A community reception and a meeting with news media also are proposed.

Abraham is faced with the decision of whether to shut down the FFTF permanently or allow its commercial use, primarily to make isotopes for medicine and other nonmilitary uses.

He's also facing a Washington state fine of \$10,000 a week for not starting to build a complex to glassify radioactive waste.

External interest lacking at HAMMER

■ Report doubts \$750,000 spent annually on marketing can increase use at facility

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

In four years, Hanford's HAMMER training complex spent \$4 million to earn just \$627,000 from non-Hanford clients, according to a recent Department of Energy Inspector General's report.

The bottom line: The HAMMER complex conducts much less non-Hanford training than anyone envisioned in 1997 when the site opened.

"HAMMER is not attractive to external users," concludes the report on the center's marketing program.

Paul Kruger, DOE's associate manager for science and technology at Hanford, agreed with the report's broad conclusions. But he and HAMMER officials disagreed with how the report interpreted many details and statistics.

They contend the complex's future for non-Hanford clients is much brighter than painted by the report.

The \$29 million Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response training center opened in late 1997 after being developed for much of the 1990s.

“HAMMER is not attractive to external users.”

Report by the Department of Energy Inspector General

Its original purpose was to train Hanford and non-Hanford firefighters, emergency rescue workers and other employees on how to deal with various emergencies, especially with radioactive and chemical materials. Since then, it has evolved to handle other training missions,

including combating drug and nuclear materials smuggling, archaeological investigations and working on power lines.

The complex has a classroom building and about 40 outdoor mock-ups that range from a chemical storage pad to an overturned tanker railcar. HAMMER's annual budget has run between \$5.5 million and \$6 million.

When HAMMER opened, much was said about it attracting trainees and their money from the Northwest and beyond.

The complex did not have many specific growth goals in 1997, Kruger said. HAMMER officials speculated then that

See **HAMMER**, Page B2

Security tightens up at nuclear facilities

By Chris Mulick
Herald staff writer

Security measures have been ramped up at Energy Northwest's Columbia Generating Station after Attorney General John Ashcroft's recent warnings of new terrorist attacks against the country.

Security also remains heightened at the north Richland nuclear fuel manufacturing plant operated by Framatome ANP, formerly Siemens Power Corp.

On Monday, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission recommended all nuclear power plants and fuel fabrication facilities increase security around the perimeters of the various sites. It also recommended site managers work more closely with local law enforcement agencies and determine whether National

Guard assistance is needed in securing the plants.

At Energy Northwest, a security checkpoint has been established on the main access road leading to the 1,150-megawatt nuclear plant. Identification badges are being checked there, and visitors are required to have an escort.

Some vehicles may be searched if security crews are suspicious. In the meantime, access to plants Nos. 1 and 4 is closed. The visitors center, which was shut down after the Sept. 11 attacks on the East Coast, remains closed.

Energy Northwest spokeswoman Laura Dovey said the 16-utility consortium had been considering implementing the measures for several weeks. Ashcroft's warnings Monday, which spawned the NRC advisory,

provided all the prodding that was needed.

There remains no specific reason to believe nuclear plants are being targeted by terrorists, said NRC spokesman Breck Henderson.

"We don't have any information on specific threats," he said. Energy Northwest officials have met with the National Guard and other law enforcement agencies but plan on relying on their own forces to provide much of the increased security presence.

"If we determine we need to augment our local staff, we would be able to call on them," Dovey said of the National Guard and other policing agencies.

Framatome spokeswoman Susan Hess said fewer visitors are being allowed into the company's facility along Horn Rapids Road,

and those who are face more scrutiny, involving inspections of all bags they bring with them.

"What you won't see is anything different on the outside," Hess said. "There are no armed guards."

Henderson said nuclear fuel manufacturers were included in the advisory simply because of the presence of nuclear material, even though virgin fuel assemblies and their components pose a much smaller threat to human health.

"The potential for a terrorism problem there is less," Henderson said. "There's some potential for mischief but not nearly as much as at an operating nuclear power plant."

■ Reporter Chris Mulick can be reached at the Herald Olympia bureau at 360-753-0862 or via e-mail at cmulick@tri-cityherald.com.

Congressional committee approves Hanford funding

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A joint U.S. House-Senate committee approved Tuesday spending almost \$1.818 billion on Hanford's cleanup in fiscal 2002.

That theoretically is enough to keep all of Hanford's cleanup projects on their legal timetables through fiscal 2002, which began one month ago. That also includes \$690 million to keep Hanford's top-priority waste glassification project on schedule.

The House and Senate expect to soon approve that compromise budget coming out of the joint committee.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a member of that joint committee, said President Bush has given no indication that he might veto the compromise energy and water appropriations bill, which includes Hanford's cleanup budget.

"It would be very foolish for him to veto this bill," Murray said.

The \$1.818 billion is \$418 million more than the Bush administration wanted to spend on Hanford's 2002 cleanup. And it is \$362 million more than what the federal government spent for fiscal 2001.

DOE's calculations said Hanford needs \$1.832 billion in 2002 to meet all its legal cleanup obligations. Before the compromise talks began, the Senate wanted to spend \$1.834 billion on Hanford, while the House pushed for \$1.814 billion.

"This is really good news that both the House and Senate are passing (the \$1.818 billion Hanford budget) because it will make it difficult for the administration to act contrary to it," said Mike Wilson, nuclear program manager for Washington's Department of Ecology.

The Bush administration, including Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, originally had proposed cutting DOE's nationwide nuclear cleanup budget and

See **Hanford**, Page A2

Energy secretary making 1st Hanford visit

■ *Spencer Abraham planning visit to FFTF, considering permanent shutdown*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

On the eve of the new Energy secretary's first visit to the Hanford nuclear reservation, organized labor pressed its case for a restart of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

It's a humanitarian issue more than a jobs issue, said Richard Berglund, president of the Building Trades Council.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham is scheduled to make his first visit to Hanford this afternoon since being appointed this year. He'll spend about five hours here on a driving tour of Hanford, a meeting with employees, an invitation-only community reception, a brief news conference and a tour of the Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, part of the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

He also is scheduled to tour Hanford's FFTF. He's considering whether to permanently shut down DOE's largest and most modern research reactor or proceed with a

plan to commercialize it. The reactor would be restarted for nondefense uses, such as producing isotopes for cancer treatment, isotopes to irradiate food and mail and research related to nuclear energy.

"The FFTF is perfect for making a variety of isotopes that can be used to treat different cancers and other diseases," Berglund said. "It would be a national disgrace not to use the FFTF to help so many people and save so many lives."

The reactor has not operated since 1992 for lack of a government use. Those who want it permanently shut down have accused supporters of pushing for a restart primarily to bring more jobs to the Tri-City economy.

But Berglund pointed out the Tri-Cities already should be flush with construction jobs in the next few years as DOE gears up for its \$4 billion effort to glassify Hanford's radioactive tank wastes. The project could require as many as 7,000 new employees during construction through 2011.

A proposal to restart FFTF through a commercial lease fits perfectly into DOE's efforts to diversify the Tri-City economy after cutting thousands of Hanford jobs in the 1990s, Berglund said. As DOE cut

nuclear production work nationwide, it spent millions to help communities turn to other industries to replace dependence on jobs financed with federal money.

Supporters of restarting the reactor believe it would draw businesses to the Tri-Cities that use isotopes, particularly in the medical industry. A restart would take advantage of not just buildings and equipment now unused, but also employ a work force rich in nuclear and scientific experience.

Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems, the company proposing a lease of FFTF, already is hearing from companies interested in building near the reactor if it's restarted, said Bill Stokes of ANMS.

Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver said commercializing FFTF would fit well with DOE's mission to transfer government-developed technology to commercial use.

ANMS of Richland is asking to lease the reactor for 35 years. It's assembled a team led by Duke Engineering & Services, one of the largest nuclear engineering companies in the United States, to operate the reactor.

Although another member of the team,

See **Visit**, Page B2

Vit plant interests suspicious of DOE

■ *Higher-ups talk of reviewing funding, goals*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy's upper echelons are talking about tinkering with Hanford's tank waste glassification spending and goals.

That has spooked most of Hanford's political universe.

Tri-City and Northwest Hanford interests, including Tri-City DOE officials, don't know what the intentions are at DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Throughout 2001, DOE's

Washington, D.C., leadership has been either closed-mouthed or has displayed ambivalence on meeting its legal obligations on nationwide nuclear cleanup.

"This is awkward because we haven't heard what was really discussed," said Todd Martin, chairman of the Hanford Advisory Board. The board met Thursday and continues today in Richland.

The 32-member board

See **DOE**, Page A2

Official says DOE looking at vit tweaks

■ *Manager of Office of River Protection briefs Hanford Advisory Board*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy wonders if Hanford's vitrification project could move faster legally and cheaper by not converting all 53 million gallons of the site's tank wastes into glass.

Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection, briefed the Hanford Advisory Board on Friday about what DOE is thinking on this subject.

He emphasized the agency is still in the preliminary brainstorming stage with no concrete proposals expected in the near future. And he said DOE will discuss any proposals publicly with Hanford's regulatory agencies and the public before trying to put them into action.

State officials and Hanford board members voiced suspicions and skepticism about the concept. But they did not rule out studying it to see if it has merit.

Hanford's regulators and Northwest Hanford interests have become increasingly distrustful in 2001 about DOE's intentions to build a complex to glassify central Hanford's radioactive tank wastes. A legal pact requires DOE to glassify all tank wastes by 2028.

The Bush administration, including Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, had requested Congress to allocate \$500 million

See **DOE**, Page A2



Boston

FRIDAY, NOV. 2, 2001
TRI-CITY HERALD

Briefs

Energy secretary reschedules trip

After canceling a trip to the Tri-Cities on Thursday, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham's office said he plans to visit Hanford within the next two weeks.

Abraham, who was to make his first visit to Hanford on Thursday, twice has canceled Hanford tours since Sept. 11.

He had urgent duties as a Cabinet member, said Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Department of Energy. Because of terrorist attacks, the secretary has had extra duties in recent weeks and has occasionally had to change his schedule on short notice, Davis said.

Abraham was disappointed not to visit Hanford, he said.

Republicans to hear medical isotopes talk

Commercial production of medical isotopes at Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility will be discussed at a public meeting Wednesday of the Benton and Franklin Mainstream Republicans.

Bill Stokes, president of Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems in Richland, will speak at 7 p.m. at the Lampson Building, 607 E. Columbia Drive, Kennewick.

His company is asking the Department of Energy to lease the Hanford reactor to produce isotopes to treat cancer and for other commercial uses.

Abraham to visit Hanford today

■ *Energy secretary's 4-hour visit to include stops at FFTF, EMSL*

By John Stang
and Annette Cary
Herald staff writers

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham is scheduled to take a whirlwind tour of Hanford today, which could include an announcement about extending Battelle's contract to operate the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

It will be Abraham's first visit to Hanford since he became Energy secretary 10 months ago. He had been scheduled to visit Hanford twice within the past

month, but canceled both times at the last minute.

The visit is expected to include at least one announcement about the Department of Energy's national laboratory.

Battelle is in the fourth year of a five-year contract to operate PNNL for DOE. The contract expires Sept. 30, 2002, and the Department of Energy either can extend Battelle's contract or open it up to bids. However, Battelle has operated PNNL since it was founded in Richland in 1965 and has received top ratings.

Abraham's visit will be quick.

He is to go to the Federal Building to talk to DOE employees and community leaders and then tour the Fast

Flux Test Facility.

Afterward, he is to be driven to the 200 East Area's AZ Tank Farm, near where Hanford will build its tank waste glassification complex. Then he will tour the Environmental and Molecular Sciences Laboratory in north Richland before holding a short news conference there.

Overall, Abraham is expected to spend about four hours in the Tri-Cities. He is to arrive at the Tri-Cities Airport at 11:20 a.m. and leave at 3:30 p.m.

By comparison, a typical Hanford public bus tour lasts four hours and does not include stops at the Federal Building, FFTF and EMSL, plus travel time to and from the airport.

See **Abraham**, Page A2

Vitrification vendors to learn at symposium

The Department of Energy and its primary contractors will hold a symposium to help small businesses learn more about how they can participate in the \$4 billion vitrification project.

The symposium is from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Nov. 15 at the Trade, Recreation and Agricultural Center at 6600 Burden Blvd., Pasco.

Contractors on the River Protection Project aim to spend about 25 percent, or \$1 billion, with small businesses.

For information or reservations, call the Tri-City Industrial Development Council at 735-1000.

Officials don't want cleanup delayed

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Mid-Columbia government officials tried this week to pop a trial balloon floated a couple of weeks ago about possibly delaying Hanford nuclear waste cleanup.

The issue revolves around local governments trying to predict what impact about 3,000 new Hanford workers would have on Mid-Columbia schools, roads, utilities and public services over the next four years.

Those workers, who are to build Hanford's tank waste glassification complex, would translate to about 7,000 new Tri-City residents. Construction is to be mostly finished in 2006, when the glassification work force would rapidly shrink.

In late October, Pam Brown, Richland's Hanford analyst, attended a national conference in Florida on cleaning up Department of Energy sites. There, Energy Undersecretary Bob Card, DOE's No. 3 leader, told Brown the federal agency had been wondering if it should delay building the glassification complex because it might

8 NOV. 01

Health foundation loans flu shots

■ *Hanford health foundation giving area health district 1,000 shots to help shortage*

By **Annette Cary**

Herald staff writer

With elderly and chronically ill residents of the Tri-City area unable to find flu shots, the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation is offering help.

The foundation is donating 1,000 doses of the vaccine to the Benton-Franklin District Health Department until the department gets more vaccine.

"It's a public health concern," said Dr. Bill Brady of the foundation. "There are a lot of elderly people who need the vaccine."

The two agencies worked out an agreement Tuesday morning, and by afternoon health department nurses were giving flu shots in the Richland and Kennewick offices.

Shots will be given today at the Richland and Pasco offices from 8 to 11 a.m. and from 1 to 4 p.m. If vaccine remains on Friday, it will be available in the Prosser office from 9 a.m. to noon and at the Richland, Kennewick and Pasco offices from 8 to 11 a.m. and from 1 to 4 p.m.

The 1,000 shots are intended to help

those most vulnerable to complications from the flu, including potentially fatal pneumonia.

People with priority for the shots include those:

- Ages 66 or older.
- With chronic lung, heart or kidney disease, asthma, diabetes or immune suppression.
- Children on long-term aspirin therapy.
- Pregnant women at least 14 weeks pregnant during flu season.
- Health care workers who could otherwise spread flu to people at high risk of complications.
- Family members of high-risk people.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expects adequate supplies of the vaccine this year, but manufacturing has fallen behind schedule.

The health department usually gives up to 10,000 flu shots in a weeklong clinic in mid-October and follow-up clinics at businesses and retirement homes.

But so far this year it has received only a partial shipment of its order. This weekend the first 900 doses arrive. The health department did no advertising other than posting signs in its clinic windows Monday that some vaccine had arrived. Word

See **Shots**, Page B2

Abraham orders cleanup review

■ *Energy secretary
seeks DOE cleanup
program efficiency*

By John Stang and Annette Cary
Herald staff writers

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham plans to overhaul the Department of Energy's nationwide nuclear cleanup program to make it faster and cheaper.

How?

The answer to that question has not been figured out yet, Abraham indicated on his first trip to Hanford on Wednesday.

That unanswered question also covers Hanford's future cleanup efforts.

During his 4½-hour visit to Hanford and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Abraham repeatedly said that when he took over DOE last January, he was shocked to find that the agency expected to take 70 years and \$300 billion to clean up all of DOE's Cold War contaminated production sites.

Consequently, he ordered a review of all of DOE's cleanup programs to see how they could become faster and more efficient.

Also Wednesday, Abraham was noncommittal about whether the dormant Fast Flux Test Facility should be revived or shut down. However, FFTF supporters became more optimistic after listening to Abraham.

Abraham toured the FFTF, a tank farm and PNNL's Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, where he also held a news conference. He also gave a 25-minute speech in the Federal Building on DOE refocusing its

See **Abraham**, Page A2



Herald/Molly Van Wagner

U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham and senior technical adviser Ellen Livingston arrive Wednesday in Pasco. During Abraham's 4½-hour visit to Hanford, he announced the Depart-

ment of Energy's plans to extend by five years its contract with Battelle to manage and operate Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

DOE to extend Battelle's PNNL contract

■ *Abraham emphasizes
importance of PNNL's work
related to national security*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy will extend Battelle's contract to operate Pacific Northwest National Laboratory for another five years, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham announced Wednesday after getting a look at some of the research there.

"Battelle has done an extraordinary job operating PNNL over the years," Abraham said.

More than 40 percent of the work at the Richland lab is related to national security. It's work that's critical to the nation since Sept. 11, Abraham said.

Technology being developed at the lab

includes an automated system to isolate bacteria from soil, water and air samples, which the lab demonstrated to the Energy secretary during his tour of the Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory there.

Biodetection Enabling Analyte Delivery System, or BEADS, can clean samples so micro-organisms can be identified in places such as food processing lines and water treatment plants. It also can be coupled with a detector to identify agents of biological warfare without requiring samples to be manually purified for identification.

Battelle Memorial Institute has held the contract to operate the laboratory since 1965. The lab now employs about 3,500 people and has an annual budget of about \$540 million.

Abraham could have requested proposals from other corporations to operate the lab. However, citing three years of "outstanding" ratings of the national laboratory, Abraham

authorized DOE's Richland office to start contract negotiations with Battelle.

In addition, the Richland lab was the first DOE Office of Science to win Gold Star status in DOE's voluntary Protection Program, lab Director Lura Powell pointed out.

The laboratory also has signed three major partnerships to collaborate with universities. That included an alliance formed in September with researchers at public and private universities across Washington.

Powell said she was pleased with the strides the laboratory has made in three initiatives, she said. Those include computational science and engineering, nanoscience and technology and biomolecular networks, which include research of cell behavior that advanced knowledge gained from the mapping of the human genome.

Abraham also used his visit to Hanford to announce DOE grants of \$8.4 million for

See **Contract**, Page A2

Group mulls leaving some wastes

■ Hanford Advisory Board skeptical of DOE plan

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A proposal to leave behind some of Hanford's most dangerous wastes after cleanup is complete was met last week with a mix of skepticism, curiosity and sense of urgency.

The idea is to speed up cleanup of Hanford's tank farms by not glassifying some of the highly radioactive wastes buried in underground tanks.

The Hanford Advisory Board tank waste committee discussed details of the concept with state and Department of Energy officials in Richland last week.

A few days earlier, Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection, floated some preliminary pieces of the plan by the entire HAB.

The idea calls for Hanford to go ahead with the first-phase of the waste glassification complex, which is scheduled to begin construction late in 2002, start turning wastes into glass in 2007 and finish treating 10 percent of Hanford's tanks wastes by 2018.

Construction of the bigger second-phase plants for the remaining 53 million gallons of wastes are expected to begin around 2010 and at a cost billions of dollars more, with the final price tag still far from certain.

No one in Hanford's universe, including Boston, expects the federal gov-

ernment to agree to pay for the second phase as it's currently envisioned.

That has led DOE's experts to wonder if some — mostly solid — wastes could be left in the tanks and still have the tank farms declared safe under the Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact governing Hanford's cleanup.

Under the plan, the glassification facility would be scaled back and some tank wastes neutralized by cheaper chemical methods or by mixing them with some type of concrete. It's not clear when DOE will make a formal proposal to the state on this idea, said Steve Wiegman, a senior technical advisor at DOE's Office of River Protection.

But in the meantime, federal officials need to know whether state approval is

possible for any of the cheaper alternatives.

That's because changes in dealing with the second-phase wastes will affect construction of the plant's first phase, said Al Conklin, the state health department's radioactive emissions manager.

Hanford's current round of brainstorming has leaned toward not ever building the larger glassification plants several years from now, but instead expanding the first-phase plants.

However, if DOE chooses that route, the state health and ecology departments need to approve the permits and designs for the bigger, more complicated concept before construction begins, Conklins said.

See **Wastes**, Page B2

Briefs

PNNL spinoff Wave ID bought by Californians

Wave ID, spinoff No. 19 for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, has been purchased by a California technology company.

Alien Technology Corp. of Morgan Hill completed the purchase of Wave ID from Battelle at the end of October, and key officials have already left their quarters in Richland. Wave ID formed under Battelle's technology spinoff program about a year ago and brought radio-frequency tag technology to the commercial marketplace.

The technology was billed as a way for users to track inventories. It was originally developed for the military. Alien Technology promises to help overcome some of the logistical problems, including the relatively high cost of the tags, to make the system more competitive.

Terms of the sale were not disclosed.

Hanford project a runner-up in international contest

A Hanford project was one of two runners-up for the Project Management Institute's International Project of the Year award for 2001.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group's successful effort to neutralize a thickening, rising crust of radioactive wastes in central Hanford's Tank SY-101 and then removing the wastes was one of the three finalists in the competition. Construction of an aluminum smelter project in Mozambique won first place.

Past winners included the 2000 removal of Oregon's Trojan reactor vessel, which ended up stored at central Hanford, and the 1998 Mars Pathfinder project.

Bush signs bill giving Hanford \$1.82 billion

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

President Bush signed a federal bill Monday that provides money to keep Hanford cleanup strategies on track through next fall.

The energy and water appropriations bill earmarks \$7.13 billion to the Department of Energy's nationwide nuclear cleanup efforts, including \$1.82 billion to Hanford. Originally, the administration wanted \$6.33 billion for national cleanup and \$1.4 billion for Hanford.

The president's action means Bechtel National Inc., lead contractor for the biggest part of the cleanup work, can proceed with its work through the current fiscal year, which ends next October.

Bechtel has added about 1,500 engineers and other workers to its payroll since March, when it took over the project to encapsulate nuclear wastes in glass logs.

The administration previously argued with congressional efforts to increase the cleanup money but did not protest the final amounts.

"This year's budget process did not begin well when the administration's budget recommendations included reductions in nuclear waste cleanup funding. This proposal was unacceptable and was rejected by Congress," said Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

"Congress' support for full cleanup funding has prevailed, and the federal government's legal, contractual and moral cleanup obligations will be met at Hanford," he added.

Hastings and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., led caucuses of representatives and senators from states with DOE sites to push for increased cleanup funding.

Hanford's allocation includes \$690 million to pay the 2002 bill for building the tank waste glassification complex. Originally, the administration wanted to underfund the glassification project by spending \$500 million.

Although the energy and water appropriations bill calls for a total of \$1.82 billion for Hanford, DOE traditionally tweaks and juggles Congress' allocations to each site after the president signs the appropriations bill each year.

In slightly more than three months, Hanford's budget debate begins again for fiscal 2003, when Bush unveils his federal budget request to Congress.

Currently, DOE is in the final stages of reviewing its cleanup programs to see if it wants to accelerate cleanup in some cases. That review is to be done by Dec. 31 and likely will affect the 2003 budget request.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

New tax law to add \$8 million to coffers

■ Taxes on vit plant materials to stay in area

By Wendy Culverwell
Herald staff writer

A new law aimed at streamlining taxes could bring a multi-million-dollar windfall of sorts to Tri-City-area governments.

Officials at Bechtel National Inc., the company building the Hanford vitrification plant, expect the law will drive \$8 million in "use taxes" to Tri-City-area cities and counties. Under the new law, companies that make major purchases pay the equivalent of sales taxes to the jurisdiction where the goods and products they buy is to be used. That's different from sales taxes, which are paid in the jurisdiction where the goods are purchased.

John Britton, spokesman for the vit project, said the company expects to spend about \$1 billion on everything from tools to construction supplies within Washington, but much of that will be spent outside the Tri-

Cities. The vitrification plant is to convert Hanford's radioactive tank waste into benign glass.

Under the use-tax legislation, though, the Tri-City area will receive the benefit of the transactions.

Bechtel is the first to take advantage of the legislation, which was approved last spring. The new law allows eligible companies to pay the equivalent of sales taxes directly to the state rather than to the vendor at the time of purchase. The "direct pay" system also subjects purchases to use taxes rather than sales taxes.

To be eligible for the direct pay system, a business must spend at least \$10 million a year on items subject to taxes. Bechtel and other contractors working on the River Protection Project are expected to spend \$4 billion.

See **Tax**, Page A2

FFTF advocates start train rally

■ Delegation spending 5 days on 2,000-mile trip educating people about nuclear medicine

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

With the fate of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility uncertain, about 50 people gathered at the Pasco Amtrak station hours before daylight Tuesday to do what they could to at least ensure people along the West Coast understand what's at stake.

Beneath an arch of red, white and blue balloons, they sent off a small delegation that will spend five days traveling down the coast, meeting with doctors, cancer patients, advocates, researchers, students and the media to discuss advances in nuclear medicine.

Supporters of the Hanford reactor want it restarted for the commercial production of isotopes for medicine, particularly for new drugs that selectively target and kill cancer cells with few of the debilitating side effects of older treatment. Medical isotopes are showing promise in clinical trials for treating a wide range of cancers, and two new cancer drugs that have successfully treated non-Hodgkins lymphoma patients just weeks from death could be approved before the end of the year.

"I don't know if medical isotopes would have been appropriate for my cancer," said Laurel Piippo, a cancer survivor. "But if medical isotopes save only 10 percent of the half-million people who die a year, what a gift."

Supporters of delivering radiation treatment with isotopes fear that without a major U.S. nuclear reactor to make isotopes in large

enough quantities for thousands of cancer patients, medical companies will find investing in the new medicines impractical.

They kicked off their 2,000-mile trip for nuclear medicine education with enthusiasm, despite a Nov. 8 article in Nucleonics Week that questioned whether a restart of FFTF fit into the goals new Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham has set for his department. Abraham may announce this month whether he wants to continue studying commercialization of the reactor or permanently shut it down.

During his recent visit to Hanford, Abraham toured the reactor but didn't comment on how commercializing the reactor might mesh with his vision of the department's mission. An aide said he knew of no Bush administration policy statement on how producing medical isotopes fit the department's mission.

See **Rally**, Page A2

Bechtel taxes could pay for services

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Future Bechtel tax money being rerouted to Benton County could pay for some of the extra school and government services needed because of Hanford's growing tank waste glassification project.

Earlier this week it was announced a new state tax law will result in about \$8 million in Bechtel National's taxes being shifted to Benton County. But it's not clear how much money will go to which government or school service and when.

On Aug. 1 a new state law went into effect that says a business can petition Washington's Department of Revenue for permission to pay "use" taxes instead of sales taxes — if the company spends at least \$10 million a year on items subject to taxes.

Under a use tax, the company buying taxable items pays taxes to the county where the items will be used rather than the counties where the items are purchased.

Bechtel National is the first — and so far only — company in Washington to get permission to reroute its taxes this way. The company is in charge of designing, building and testing Hanford's top-priority \$4 billion tank waste glassification complex through 2011.

Bechtel expects to buy about \$1 billion in taxable items for the project. That means about \$7 million in sales taxes collected in the Mid-Columbia plus a predicted \$8 million covered by the use tax.

In all, about \$15 million is expected to go to local government and school coffers. Most of that money is expected to materialize in the next three to four years, the period of the project's heaviest construction, said Ron Naventi, head of Bechtel's glassification team.

That also will be the period when the glassification project's work force will zoom from about 1,500 people to 4,000. Those workers are expected to translate to about 7,000 new Mid-Columbia residents. And local governments and schools expect those new residents to require more classrooms, additional police and firefighters and other services.

A ballpark estimate is that the local governments and three school districts will need \$20 million to cope with these extra demands, said John Darrington, Richland's city manager. He's also a representative of the Hanford Communities, a coalition of local governments cooperating on Hanford issues.

But it's difficult to figure out how much of the predicted \$15 million in taxes will actually be applied to that speculated need of \$20 million, Darrington said.

Because Hanford is in Benton County, that county will likely collect the use taxes and receive a good portion of the sales taxes. The county would then distribute the money to the appropriate cities, counties and school districts.

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Hanford group completes bankruptcy reorganization

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Washington Group International — a major player in Hanford's waste glassification project and the Umatilla Chemical Depot — has nearly completed its bankruptcy reorganization.

Boise-based Washington Group expects a federal judge to approve the reorganization plan soon in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Reno, Nev., where it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last May.

That filing and the pending approval of its reorganization are not expected to affect the firm's work on efforts to build a complex to convert Hanford's radioactive tank wastes into glass, said Bill Poulson, the Bechtel team's operations manager and the project's highest-ranking official from Washington Group.

His company is the permanent primary subcontractor in Bechtel National's glassification team. Washington Group's role in the project is to provide technical

expertise from its glassification plants at Savannah River, S.C., and West Valley, N.Y. Washington Group bought those projects in 1999 from Westinghouse Electric Co.

Right now Washington Group employs about 220 people on Bechtel's glassification team of about 1,500 workers and also is in charge of building and operating an incinerator to destroy 7.4 million pounds of deadly nerve and mustard gas agents at the Army's chemical depot, a project that employs about 500.

The company inherited the Umatilla project when it bought Raytheon Engineers & Constructors for \$53 million from Raytheon Co. in July 2000. Washington Group has blamed that purchase for its financial woes.

Last March Washington Group filed a suit in U.S. District Court in Idaho, claiming Raytheon hid \$450 million in liabilities on the projects it sold. Raytheon has denied those allegations and filed counterlitigation in the bankruptcy court.

Meanwhile, Washington Group encountered major cash flow problems and defaulted on some projects.

As part of the Chapter 11 reorganization, Washington Group and Raytheon dropped all their litigation.

The reorganization has many of Washington Group's creditors trading their claims in for equity in the corporation.

The company's secured lenders will receive 80 percent of the primary equity in the revamped corporation plus \$20 million in cash, Washington Group said. The company's unsecured creditors will receive 20 percent of the primary equity and some other benefits.

"We will have a strong balance sheet, a net worth of approximately \$500 million, and no debt except for draws under the working capital facility," Washington Group President Stephen Hanks said in a press release.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-city-herald.com.

Hanford alarm miswiring was human error

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Three fire alarms near the main vault of Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant were miswired and could not ring, posing a safety risk to people working nearby.

An investigation concluded human error was to blame — but could not pin down how the error occurred or who committed it.

The wiring problem was discovered Sept. 23 after the alarms did not ring during a Sept. 19 drill.

The alarms had worked during previous tests. The vault holds most of the PFP's 4.4 tons of plutonium. PFP workers routinely move different forms of plutonium in and out of the vault daily.

The investigative report — dated Nov. 8 — classifies the alarm problem as an "off-normal" incident, the least serious of three levels of cataloging Hanford's notable problems.

The wiring mistake did not stop a fire signal from going to Hanford's Fire Department, and it did not affect sprinklers that would go on automatically during a fire, said Scott Sax, Fluor Hanford nuclear materials stabilization deputy director.

No security problems materialized from the problem, said Pete Knollmeyer, Department of Energy assistant manager for Hanford's central plateau.

The fire alarms could not ring because a "jumper" within a circuit box was rerouted incorrectly. The investigation determined

the problem was not deliberate, Knollmeyer said.

The fire alarms worked properly during tests June 16 and July 14, the investigation found. Since June 16, there has been only one official job package that required circuits to be rerouted in the circuit box.

That job did not require any change in the jumper that was found misrouted in September. Also, no paperwork has been found that called for the rerouting, the report said.

As a remedial measure, Fluor and DOE are overhauling some of the supervision and double-checking those associated with such work.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-city-herald.com.

ALE, Basin refuge may join list of critical bird habitats

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

The Mid-Columbia just got two more feathers in its cap.

When a national committee of top-flight ornithologists and scientists meet in New York next Monday, they will consider adding two of the region's open spaces to an exclusive list of glob-

ally important bird areas.

The Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, which is part of the Hanford Reach National Monument, and the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge near Othello are expected to make the nation's short list of critical bird habitats.

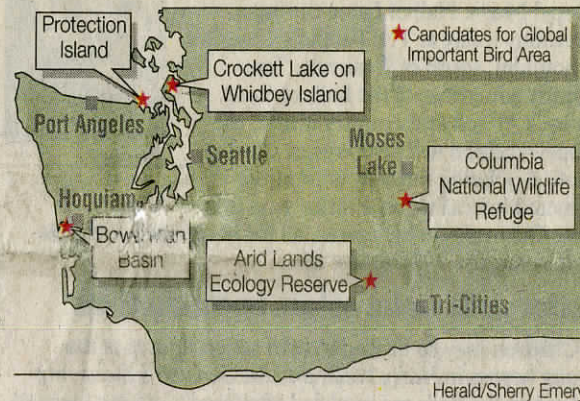
"We can't save everything," said Tim Cullinan, director of sci-

ence and bird conservation for Washington's Audubon Society. "We have to put our efforts into the most important areas. This helps us and the conservation community establish priorities on where we need to put our effort."

The designation would verify

See **Bird**, Page A2

Critical bird habitat areas



Herald/Sherry Emery

Hanford's cleanup funding still unclear

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy plans to spend \$1.776 billion on cleaning up Hanford in fiscal 2002.

That's:

- \$42 million less than the \$1.818 billion that Congress earmarked for Hanford in fiscal 2002.

- \$320 million more than the \$1.456 billion spent on Hanford in fiscal 2001.

- \$376 million more than the \$1.4 billion that the Bush administration originally wanted to spend at Hanford for fiscal

2002, which began last Oct. 1.

But what do those numbers really mean?

Hanford won't know until the middle of next week.

DOE's cleanup czar Jesse Roberson ordered all DOE cleanup operations — including Hanford's Richland office and its Office of River Protection — to provide her by Wednesday with a detailed breakdown on how their budgets will affect their work obligations.

This begins DOE's annual tweaking of what Congress appropriates for nationwide nuclear cleanup each year.

This year, DOE wanted Congress to appropriate \$5.913 billion for nationwide nuclear cleanup in fiscal 2002. Instead, Congress bumped that request by \$803 million to \$6.716 billion.

DOE's calculations stated that Hanford needs \$1.832 billion in 2002 to meet its legal cleanup obligation. Congress ended up telling DOE to give Hanford \$1.818 billion — \$1.07 billion to the Office of River Protection and \$748 million to Hanford's Richland office.

Then some national level factors came into play.

All federal agencies were required to

trim their budgets slightly as part of an overall budget balancing measure. That trickled down to an \$8 million reduction in the Office of River Protection's budget and an \$18 million reduction in the Richland office's budget, DOE officials said.

Then DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., "taxed" its field operations for some money for headquarters' programs. That cut another \$16 million from the Richland office's budget, but nothing from the Office of River protection.

The Office of River Protection has to

See **Unclear**, Page B2

Few ex-Hanford workers filing for compensation plan

■ *Lack of Mid-Columbia claims surprises officials*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Fewer former Hanford workers than expected are applying for a new program that would pay \$150,000 to workers or their survivors if those workers suffered cancer caused by on-the-job radiation exposure.

Nationally, the Department of Labor has received 14,500 claims from nuclear workers and some uranium miners in the first four months of the program. But the applicants include just 575 from Benton and Franklin counties.

"We expected Hanford to be the largest single site for claims,"

said Pete Turcic, director of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Task Force for the Department of Labor.

Labor officials aren't sure why more former Hanford workers are not filing claims, he said. During a visit here last week to consider the program's slow start, he heard several theories.

One possibility is that some former workers, proud of the job they did at Hanford, consider applying for compensation unpatriotic.

If that's the case, federal

See **Plan**, Page A2

PNNL question stumps 'Jeopardy!' contestants

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory got a few seconds of national television exposure Thursday night but may need a few more.

Jeopardy! contestants were stumped when the lab's name was used as a clue in the quiz show. Contestants were told PNNL was a national lab in Richland. They needed to come up with what the "PN" stood for in PNNL. According to Tri-City people who saw the show, the only guess was that it stood for plutonium.

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Briefs

Pipefitters win appeal in Hanford case

Eleven former Hanford pipefitters — who contend they were laid off because they raised safety concerns — won an appeal Tuesday that sends their case back to Benton County Superior Court.

However, the case's defendant, Fluor Federal Services, plans to appeal that decision to the state Supreme Court, said company spokesman Jerry Holloway.

This is the latest round in a see-saw legal battle stretching back to 1997. Back then, a pipefitting crew balked at participating in a hydraulic pressure test on a pipe valve the men feared was unsafe. The crew also raised other safety concerns.

The pipefitters and some supporters were later laid off, and they contend it was in retaliation for raising and pushing their concerns.

Fluor Federal denies any retaliation was involved. The company says the layoffs were part of normal job fluctuations in construction work.

The pipefitters filed a lawsuit in Benton County Superior Court in August 1999, seeking lost pay and unspecified damages. Last May, Superior Court Judge Carolyn Brown ruled that a March 21 U.S. Supreme Court decision on an unrelated California case backed Fluor's argument that the pipefitters' case should be sent to an arbitrator. The pipefitters appealed that decision to the state Court of Appeals in Spokane, which ruled in their favor Tuesday.

Tom Carpenter, an attorney with the Government Accountability Project that represents the pipefitters, speculated the currently unscheduled trial could take place this spring.

DOE proposes vitrification cuts

■ *Agency seeks to cut glassification by 75 percent*

**By John Stang
and Annette Cary**

Herald staff writers

PORTLAND — The Department of Energy wants to avoid converting 75 percent of Hanford's radioactive tank wastes into glass.

That concept was broached in a Nov. 19 memo from DOE cleanup czar Jesse Roberson to DOE's budget office. Todd Martin, chairman of the Hanford

Advisory Board, who obtained a copy of the memo, distributed it Thursday at a board meeting in Portland.

The memo shocked board members.

Such a move would drastically change Hanford's plan for dealing with its worst environmental problem, 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes in 177 underground tanks.

See **Cuts**, Page A2

Senate bill would block attempts to restart FFTF

■ *Democratic-led measure
limits secretary's powers*

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

The Energy secretary would be blocked from restarting Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility under the Senate energy bill crafted by Democrats, say supporters and opponents of the reactor.

The bill was released from the Senate

Energy Committee, which includes U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and one of FFTF's most outspoken critics, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

The bill includes a provision preventing the Energy secretary from restarting the reactor for any program if the government already has decided the program could be carried out at other facilities, according to the Government Accountability Project.

See **FFTF**, Page A2

Scouts, others help heal wildfire's wounds

■ *Volunteers plant thousands of sagebrush sprouts on Hanford fire land*

By Janine Jobe
Herald staff writer

Herds of tumbleweeds scampered across the steppes, driven by a wind sharp enough to steal your breath.

But that didn't stop a couple of dozen volunteers from lugging shovels and boxes across the base of Rattlesnake Mountain on Saturday to help heal the wounds from the Hanford wildfire in June 2000 that scorched 75,000 acres.

With tall sagebrush sprouts in hand, Boy Scouts with Troop 148 followed assistant troop leader John Westleigh across the rolling hills, carefully stuffing the root plugs in small holes and stamping the soil back around the plant.

"I guess I would rather be watching Saturday cartoons, but we're here doing something good," said Boy Scout Jeremy May, 12. "Once you get going, it's kind of fun."

While farmers and homeowners might be more likely to pull sagebrush than plant it, the native plant provides important food and shelter for birds, deer, elk and other smaller creatures, said Heidi Brunkal, wildlife biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It's a major structural com-



Herald/Evan E. Parker

Phil Birks of Kennewick helps his son Scott, 11, a Boy Scout with Troop 148, retrieve his hat on a windy Saturday morning on Rat-

lesnake Mountain. The two helped plant more than 5,000 sagebrush seedlings in areas burned in the Hanford wildfire.

ponent for the area and it doesn't resprout," she said. "The burn area here is so vast it wouldn't naturally regenerate."

The sagebrush starts were grown from seeds taken from nearby and grown in tall tubes. Once they reached about 8 inches high, the starts were packed into boxes of 98 and carted up the mountain.

"Using seeds from the area

increases the survival rate of the plants, which is about 70 percent," Brunkal said.

When the sagebrush is mature, it will be a bushy, chest-high plant.

Saturday's goal was to plant 5,000 to 7,000 seedlings in the Fitzner-Eberhart Arid Lands Ecology Reserve of the Hanford National Monument. About 140,000 sagebrush sprouts have

been planted since the fire.

Charred skeletons of sagebrush still can be seen in the area, and blackened clumps of scrub grass dot the hillside, mingling with the new growth.

Repeated fires have eliminated nearly all the scrub plants from that part of the preserve, and active restoration is required to get it re-established, Brunkal said.

Volunteers from Duratek also joined the Scouts on Saturday to brave the wind and chill to help with the revegetation.

"I wanted to do something to help the community and the environment," said Juan Rodriguez, a manager with Duratek.

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Group wants ground water cleaned up

■ *HAB tells DOE contaminated aquifer must be addressed*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

PORTLAND — The Hanford Advisory Board wants to add contaminated ground water to the contract for cleaning up old reactors and other Cold War remnants along the Columbia River.

The board approved Friday sending a letter to the Department of Energy that voices that stance, plus provides other advice

on cleaning up the river corridor through Hanford.

DOE is putting together a request for proposals for a long-term contract for final cleanup of the river corridor area, which is suppose to cost about \$2.76 billion and take until 2012.

This new agreement will replace Bechtel Hanford's current environmental restoration contract that is due to expire next year.

DOE has unveiled a draft request for proposals to get feedback from potential bidders and the public.

A final request for proposals is expected on Jan. 23, 2002.

Bids are tentatively due back by April 1.

DOE hopes to award the new contract in mid- to late summer, with the new contractor set up by Oct. 1.

HAB
Hanford Advisory Board worried about future. B3.

The draft request for proposals covers removing contaminated

soils; demolishing, cleaning out and sealing up the defunct plutonium production reactors; and cleaning up and demolishing the 300 Area structures.

The draft does not cover

dealing with the plumes of contaminants in the aquifer, which are flowing from Hanford's interior to the Columbia River.

"How can you call it a closure contract when ground water is not included in it?" asked HAB member Bob Larson, representing the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments.

In its letter to DOE, the Hanford Advisory Board said:

■ Ground water clean up should be included, or at least the agreement shouldn't be described as a complete cleanup of the river corridor area.

■ The new contract should mesh with Tri-Party Agreement dead-

lines and standards. DOE already agrees, said Beth Bilson, DOE's assistant manager for the river corridor at Hanford.

■ Talks should be held to determine how the river corridor stacks up against Hanford's other spending priorities, including the tank farms, K Basins, Plutonium Finishing Plant and ground water work.

■ More information on some contamination problems is needed to make accurate cost predictions.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford budget rumors force senator's \$1.8 billion request

By the Herald staff

U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., has fired a warning shot in the battle over Hanford's fiscal 2003 budget.

Smith sent a letter to the federal Office of Management and Budget on Nov. 29 requesting that OMB provide at least \$1.8 billion for Hanford in 2003.

The OMB prepares the administration's proposals for the president's annual budget request to Congress, which is unveiled in

February. Fiscal 2003 will begin Oct. 1.

OMB is traditionally mum on its budget calculations, but Smith wrote that he had heard the budget it is preparing "will recommend dramatically reducing funding" for Hanford cleanup. "It is critical that the (fiscal) 2003 environmental management budget include \$1.8 billion to allow a seamless continuation of Hanford's cleanup activities," he added.

Smith spokesman Joe Sheffo said Smith wanted to send a pre-

emptory signal to the OMB before the February figures are unveiled because he had heard rumors that cuts are being considered.

For fiscal 2002, the administration wanted to cut Hanford's budget from a 2001 level of \$1.456 billion to \$1.4 billion, even though at least \$1.8 billion was needed to meet all Hanford's cleanup obligations. Congress overruled the administration and increased Hanford's 2002 budget to \$1.818 billion, which DOE trimmed to \$1.776 billion.

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TRI-CITY HERALD

B3

Hanford Advisory Board worried about future

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

PORTLAND — The dissolving of its counterpart in north Texas has the Hanford Advisory Board worried about its own future.

The board discussed the matter Thursday in Portland.

Earlier this year a Texas version of HAB at the Department of Energy's Pantex plant near Amarillo, Texas, dissolved because of a combination of internal splits and DOE drastically limiting its role.

Pantex is a nuclear weapons production plant that also has caused environmental cleanup problems similar to Han-

ford's. For years Pantex's public advisory board dealt with both weapons and cleanup issues under the idea that the weapons mission contributes to the area's environmental problems.

But several months ago DOE limited the Pantex board's role so it could not provide advice on weapons production matters.

Meanwhile, the Pantex board operated in a manner similar to the Hanford Advisory Board, which represents 32 diverse Hanford constituencies. That similarity is that any decision must receive close to unanimous support from its board members.

The Pantex board had problems achieving that unanimity, said Todd

“
Pantex might be a portent of things to come.”

Susan Leckband,
member, Hanford Advisory Board

”
Martin, chairman of the Hanford Advisory Board.

Martin has discussed the matter with the leadership of similar public advisory boards at other DOE cleanup sites.

In accordance with a federal law, DOE set up the public advisory boards several

years ago.

Meanwhile, HAB members are worried about what they perceive as an increasing trend by DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., to shortchange public input into the federal agency's cleanup decisions.

And Martin said he and the leaders of the other public advisory boards plan to meet in February, with one of their agenda items possibly being to write a letter to DOE expressing concern that other boards might meet the Pantex's board's fate.

HAB member Susan Leckband, representing Hanford's nonunion workers, noted that the federal law creating the DOE advisory boards will expire in May

2002. "Pantex might be a portent of things to come. ... All they have to do is nothing. Present company excepted (referring to Hanford's DOE officials), DOE is very good at doing nothing," Leckband said.

HAB member Keith Smith, representing Hanford's union workers, contended the Hanford board has been much more productive than Pantex's board.

"We've demonstrated that we can put aside our differences to reach consensus," Smith said.

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Reach monument expected to survive cuts

By Mike Lee

Herald staff writer

The Hanford Reach citizens advisory committee will survive federal budget haggling, according Fish and Wildlife Service officials.

Specific budget numbers have not been released by agency headquarters, but Greg Hughes, manager of the Hanford Reach National Monument, "has been told that he should proceed with (advisory committee) meetings and the implementation of the committee's activity," said David Patte, congressional affairs liaison for the agency in Portland. "(Managers) have been given assurances there will be adequate funding."

Serious questions about the monument budget have left the advisory committee in limbo since late October and forced the cancellation of its December meeting.

The committee, representing several different agencies and organizations, is a primary way for the public to shape policies on operation of the 200,000-acre monument, which was created after much controversy about how much input the public would have with the federal agency.

Without hundreds of thousands of dollars of new money, however, agency officials will be hard-pressed to move forward with the advisory committee while keeping up with day-to-day operations and building a planning staff in Richland.

Officials close to the situation now are optimistic that a substantial slice of money will be set aside, even though it may not be all managers want.

"We have been assured by everybody that we'll have enough (money) to get up and get going and start our planning," said Jim Watts, chairman of the citizens committee.

Numbers are still being negotiated by Fish and Wildlife Service budget makers — and that means Mid-Columbians interested in public input on monument development still are leery.

"Originally, we talked about \$850,000, and we keep hearing a lesser figure than that," Watts said.

The recent assurances appear to close a confusing chapter in the short history of the Hanford Reach National Monument, which was formed by President Clinton in the summer of 2000 against the wishes of many Republicans.

That opposition created political friction over monument spending in Congress, which eventually gave the Fish and Wildlife Service an additional \$10 million for operations and maintenance without detailed directions about how to spend it. Instead, Congress said Fish and Wildlife "should place a high priority on the staffing and planning needs" at the Reach monument.

With the big question apparently resolved, Watts said Fish and Wildlife is in the hiring process for a new project planner. Duties will include developing plans from the citizens committee, expected to start meeting again in February.

Also, the Fish and Wildlife Service intends to officially open the Reach planning process in March. That is an important bureaucratic step that will kick off what is expected to be a two- or three-year effort to shape rules for monument use.

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DOE budget threatens plutonium removal

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The future of Hanford's plutonium has become fuzzy in the past few months as the Department of Energy juggles funding and the repercussions of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

DOE faces conflicting pressures that could either speed up or slow down the eventual removal of 4.4 tons of plutonium from Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

The unfolding and conflicting developments mean DOE needs to create a viable long-range nationwide master plan for dealing with its leftover Cold War plutonium, said John Conway, chairman of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, a federal advisory panel on DOE cleanup issues.

Hanford now is converting 4.4 tons of scrap plutonium into safer forms — eyeing a 2004 completion date. That plutonium is supposed to be shipped to Savannah River, S.C., between 2010 and

2014 to be "immobilized" inside a glasslike substance.

Hanford's immobilized plutonium would go inside canisters to then be surrounded by Savannah River's glassified high-level radioactive tank wastes to make it nearly impossible for terrorists to get the plutonium.

Hanford must get all its plutonium to Savannah River by 2014 to make a legal deadline of 2016 to clean out and demolish the PFP.

However, the Bush administration recently slashed money for DOE to build an up-to-date storage facility to hold plutonium from Hanford, Los Alamos, N.M., and Rocky Flats, Colo. And it did not provide any construction money in 2002 to build the immobilization facility.

Savannah River is fixing up two old storage facilities, which can hold plutonium from Rocky Flats and Los Alamos, but not Hanford.

The plan is that Hanford will hold onto its plutonium as long

as possible, and then ship it to Savannah River when that site is ready to glassify Hanford's plutonium, said Pete Knollmeyer, DOE's assistant manager for Hanford's central plateau.

The existing outdated Savannah River facilities are good enough to be only a temporary storage site, Conway said.

If construction of Savannah River's immobilization facility is delayed much longer, that could slow removal of the PFP's plutonium enough to jeopardize the 2016 deadline, Knollmeyer said.

Meanwhile, South Carolina officials view the immobilization plant's delays as a sign that DOE might permanently leave the imported plutonium at Savannah River, according to South Carolina newspapers.

South Carolina Gov. Jim Hodges vehemently opposes that possibility and has threatened to stop shipments at the border, news accounts said.

But DOE spokesman Tom

Welch said Savannah River will not be the permanent plutonium storage site. He also said Hanford will not be considered as a permanent site.

Conway said that leaves only the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico and the proposed spent nuclear fuel repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev., as possible permanent plutonium storage locations.

But he noted that WIPP — a half-mile-deep, man-made cavern — was not designed to handle massive amounts of plutonium. And the Yucca Mountain project is mired in technical and political problems.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks added yet another complication. Knollmeyer said DOE is now thinking about speeding up consolidating its plutonium at a yet-to-be-determined place to make it easier and cheaper to build a terrorist-proof facility.

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Hanford budget OK for cleanup

■ DOE funding lets Hanford meet 2002 cleanup obligations

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford is in good financial shape to meet its fiscal 2002 cleanup obligations, said Department of Energy officials after crunching the final numbers for the year.

That's true even though the \$1.776 billion Hanford will receive is less than the \$1.818 billion Congress had appropriated for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1.

The total was trimmed by some overall federal budget balancing, plus DOE's headquarters taking some money from its

field offices for some Washington, D.C., work.

So, the Office of River Protection ended up with \$1.062 billion, and DOE's Richland office received \$714 million for other cleanup work.

That means Hanford has the full \$690 million it needs to start construction of a radioactive tank waste glassification complex, said Jeanie Schwier, the Office of River Protection's assistant manager for integration and controls.

However, the \$380 million

See **Hanford**, Page A2

Bechtel to help replant, clean up Bateman Island

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Last summer's fire that scorched 80 percent of Bateman Island's vegetation is providing a chance to start over again.

Tonight, Richland's Parks and Recreation Commission members will consider an offer by Bechtel Hanford Co. to help clean up and replant the island.

The idea of the application by Bechtel and the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau is to improve the island as a place for walking, bird watching and nature viewing. The project also would replace and improve animal habitat, provide vegetation to protect Indian cultural artifacts and reduce the spread of exotic weeds.

The parks commission also is being asked to recommend the city

approve \$5,000 for the project.

Estimated cost of the work is \$22,500. Bechtel would give \$10,000 cash plus volunteer support. The remaining money would come from other donations.

Richland City Council members aren't expected to formally consider the project until their Jan. 8 meeting. However, they have expressed support for any partnership with Bechtel during the last several months.

Bechtel has taken a lead in other community projects as part of what it calls the Rivershore Legacy Program. That has included the construction of the Playground of Dreams and the Family Fishing Pond at Columbia Park in Kennewick.

See **Bechtel**, Page A2

Briefs

Hanford office gets boost from Congress

WASHINGTON — A joint U.S. House-Senate committee recently approved extending the lifespan of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection to 2010.

On Thursday the House approved the compromise, tucked in Congress' annual defense spending authorization bill.

Several weeks ago the House approved the same measure, but the Senate defense bill did not contain that language until the recent conference committee meeting. U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., expects the extension to survive an upcoming Senate vote.

Hanford project looks to recover

■ T Plant must pass test run to begin fuel removal

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Think of a line of dominoes stretching from central Hanford's T Plant to the K Basins near the Columbia River.

T Plant failed a test in late October. That failure could ripple dominolike over to the K Basins, maybe stalling the removal of radioactive sludge there.

The question is: Can the T Plant project get back on track fast enough so no ripple effect occurs?

"It's too early to tell," said Pete Knollmeyer, the Department of Energy's assistant manager for Hanford's central

plateau. October's test run was to see if T Plant was ready to remove commercial spent nuclear fuel from a water-filled pool so the chamber can then receive sludge from the K Basins.

Fluor Hanford agrees with DOE's criticism of the October test run and plans to submit a remedial plan by Christmas, said Fluor spokesman Jerry Holloway. After that it is unknown when DOE will schedule another Fluor test run, which it must pass to begin the nine-month fuel removal at T Plant.

Hanford is supposed to start removing the 17.4 tons of fuel from T Plant this month or in January, completing the project by Sept. 30.

That operation's success or failure will influence Hanford's chances of cleaning

“It's too early to tell (whether the T Plant project will be able to get back on track).”

Pete Knollmeyer,
DOE assistant manager,
Hanford central plateau

out the K Basins by the August 2004 legal deadline.

Last year the state and DOE moved the K Basins completion deadline from 2005 to 2004. A major factor in that acceleration is cutting one year from the sludge removal — the last step in the K

Basins project.

T Plant is one of Hanford's five World War II and Cold War "canyons," which are monster-size chemical plants that extracted plutonium-laced liquids from irradiated uranium reactor fuel rods.

Four of these canyons face probable futures as permanent, low-tech waste dumps. However, T Plant is earmarked as a processing and storage facility for several cleanup projects.

T Plant is Hanford's oldest and most historic canyon. It helped create Hanford's first plutonium in World War II. It is also the source of 1949's "Green Run" — Hanford's most notorious secret Cold War airborne emission of radioactive

See **Hanford**, Page B2

More eligible for nuclear compensation

■ *Law to expand qualifications to collect money*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Many more families of former Hanford workers may apply for \$150,000 in federal compensation under a law awaiting the president's signature.

"The thousands of families that Congress had in mind when it created the program will now be eligible for help," said Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao in a prepared statement.

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Program offers \$150,000 for workers and former workers who had cancer caused by radiation or lung disease caused by beryllium or silica from the nation's nuclear defense programs.

However, until now, in most cases either the worker or a spouse had to be living to collect compensation.

On Friday, Congress approved expanding the program to compensate the adult children of Hanford workers, if neither the worker nor a spouse is still living to collect the benefit. The presi-

dent is expected to sign it this week.

Until the new legislation was passed, only the children who were young enough to be dependents of a Hanford worker at the time of his or her death — usually under 18 or students under 23 — were eligible for compensation.

That excluded the families of many Hanford workers, particularly those who worked at Hanford during World War II.

Many who came to the desert to produce the first plutonium for weapons use were too old to sign up for combat during the war or had already served in the military.

Because of their ages, many of Hanford's earliest workers have died.

That was the case for Karma Yourdan's father.

He arrived at Hanford in 1943, after serving as a Marine, and got a job as a security officer. He worked his way up to chemical operator, remaining at the site

See **Compensation**, Page A2

DOE gives CH2M Hill low rating

■ *Tank farms manager cited for safety, loses \$3.43 million*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Safety concerns led to Hanford's tank farms management company getting the lowest annual rating in its five-year history.

The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection approved \$9.23 million for CH2M Hill but docked it \$3.43 million out of the total possible award of \$19.76 million the company could earn for fiscal 2001.

Experts hired by DOE won't finish until early next year calculating how much of the final potential \$7.1 million will go to CH2M Hill. At best, CH2M Hill Hanford Group cannot earn more than 82 percent of its possible award fee for fiscal 2001 — its lowest showing.

"I'm surprised and disappointed. ... The environment, the public and our employees were never placed at risk," said Fran DeLozier, CH2M Hill Hanford Group's president.

DOE spokesman Erik Olds acknowledged some safety improvements but explained the lower-than-normal score is based on stiff standards.

"The Office of River Protection is committed to the highest standards of safety and protection to the workers and the public," he said.

CH2M Hill is in charge of safely maintaining central Hanford's 53 million gallons of radioactive wastes in 177 underground tanks.

That includes pumping wastes from 149 old single-shell tanks into 28 newer double-shell tanks and preparing to send the wastes to a neighboring, yet-to-be-built vitrification plant that will turn the wastes to glass.

Its contract with DOE calls for 100 percent of its award fee — which translates to profits — to be directly tied to DOE's annual ratings. About 85 percent of that scoring is tied to objective goals,

with the rest linked to subjective grading, DeLozier said.

Penalties assessed to CH2M Hill included:

■ \$466,840 for failing to pump wastes from single-shell Tank A-101. However, CH2M Hill has pumped 129 tanks and is expected to meet its 2004 deadline to finish all 149.

■ \$841,364 for DOE's subjective grade for overall corporate performance.

■ \$122,015 for being late on the company's piece of the design work on the glassification complex.

■ \$2 million for responding too slowly or not rigorously enough to a rash of mistakes, near-accidents and safety problems identified in early 2001.

That \$2 million penalty surprised DeLozier the most.

In a Tuesday memo to CH2M Hill employees, she wrote that in 2001 the company reduced its injury and lost-work time rates, shrank accident-related costs and decreased skin and clothing contamination incidents.

"We did this even though our mission requires the skills of the four most hazardous occupations at Hanford," DeLozier wrote.

Last year, CH2M Hill brought in outside experts to compare the company's safety programs with similar firms — and found that CH2M Hill's performance was "not near the best," DeLozier said. "It was a very humbling experience."

But since then, CH2M Hill worked hard to improve its safety programs, while being coached by Energy Northwest, which has an excellent federal safety record, DeLozier said.

Now the company needs to ensure it and DOE interpret safety standards and requirements the same way, DeLozier said.

DeLozier is confident CH2M Hill Hanford Group will earn most or all of the final \$7.1 million.

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Hanford regulator resigns to start business

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Doug Sherwood, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's head regulator at Hanford, has resigned effective Feb. 8.

"I was just ready for some new challenges, and it was a time for a change," Sherwood said.

He submitted his resignation Tuesday.

Sherwood, 47, plans to start a Hanford-related technical

analysis business. The EPA's Hanford office is finishing some projects and negotiations and soon will start new ones.

Sherwood is timing his departure so he won't create conflicts of interest when he starts seeking Hanford work.

Sherwood joined the EPA's Hanford office in 1989 and became the EPA's Hanford site manager in 1993, leading to a stint that spans all of Hanford's

cleanup years. Before that he spent 10 years at Battelle as a research scientist who did a lot of environmental studies at Hanford.

Sherwood said he is proud to have contributed — along with many others — to efforts that stopped the discharges of liquid contaminants into Hanford's soil, began actual cleanup along the Columbia River, created a large Hanford landfill for contaminated

debris and finished cleanup at the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve and the Wahluke Slope.

One of his last major tasks at Hanford is finishing Tri-Party Agreement negotiations addressing the Department of Energy's proposed Columbia River corridor cleanup contract.

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Lifesaving defibrillators being installed at Hanford work sites

■ *Devices improve survival odds in first moments after heart attack*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

New defibrillators that are easy enough for untrained bystanders to use can dramatically improve the odds for heart attack victims.

But while the devices are common in Seattle and some other large cities — in airports, malls, stadiums and other busy public places — there have been few, if any, in the Tri-Cities until recently.

Hanford's changing that.

Contractor Fluor Hanford is installing the automated external defibrillators at plants where security measures can slow paramedics from reaching a heart attack victim.

Other businesses and organizations may follow. The Richland Fire Department has

applied for a grant and would like to see the defibrillators in places where many people gather, such as churches and the new Richland Community Center.

Across the nation, victims of sudden cardiac arrest have less than a 1 percent to 5 percent chance of survival because of the time needed to get to a defibrillator. But in Seattle, where defibrillators have been placed across the city, the chance of survival jumps to 29 percent, said Jerry Stevenson, a paramedic and worker at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

"There's just a tremendous amount of benefits and no downside," said Steve Gulley, a regional faculty member for the American Heart Association and PFP emergency preparedness coordinator.

In a heart attack, a blood clot destroys a portion of the heart muscle. As cells begin to die, they

See **Defibrillators**, Page B2

FFTF loses restart fight

■ Potential for nuclear production eliminated

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham found a proposal to restart Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility for commercial use too big a gamble and Wednesday ordered the reactor permanently shut down.

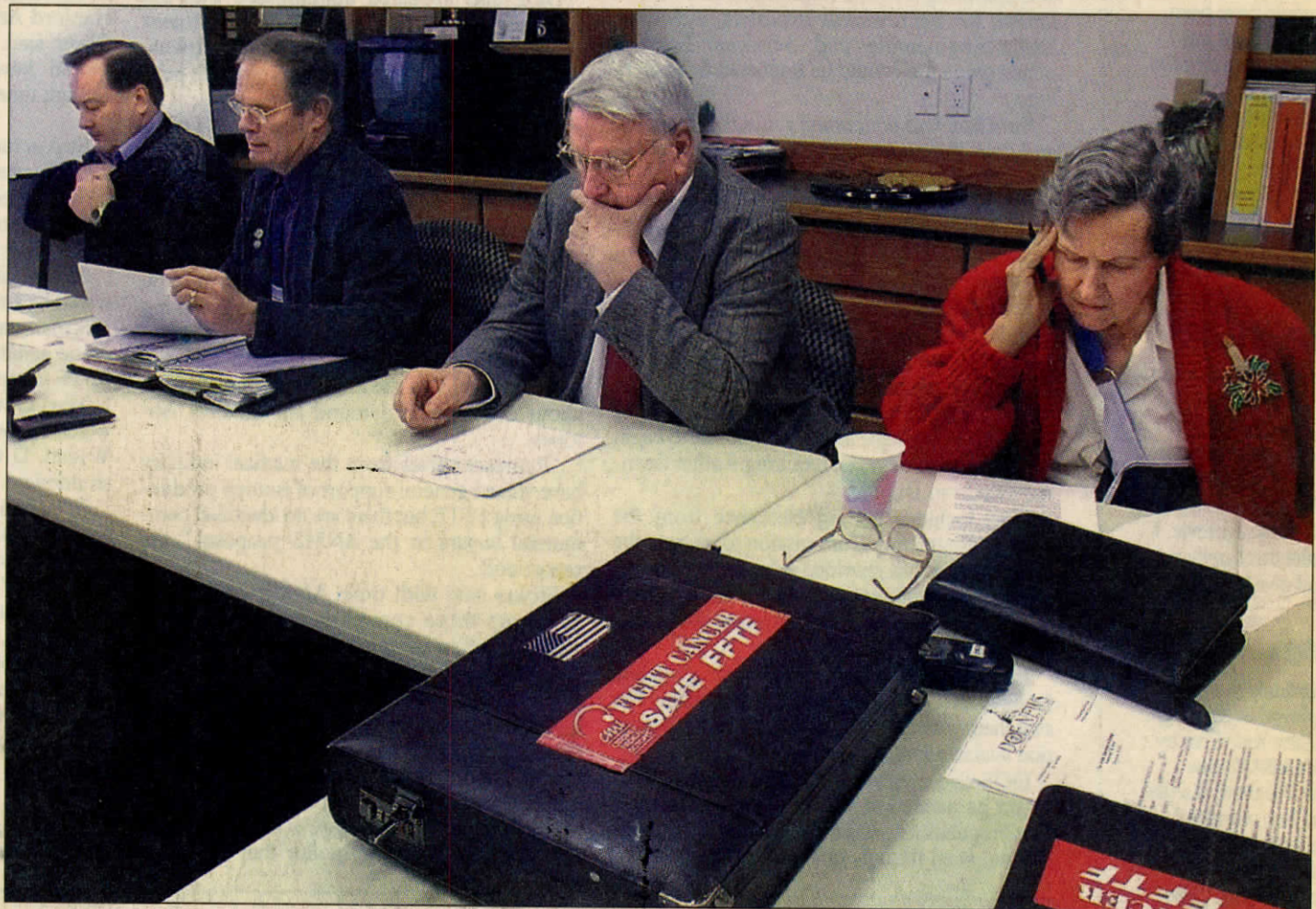
With the previous Democratic administration coming to the same conclusion as the current Republican administration, the announcement left little possibility that DOE's largest and most modern reactor will operate again. It also ends the potential for any nuclear production at Hanford.

"(I) understand that this decision may come as a disappointment to you and many in your community," Abraham wrote in a letter to U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash. "Nevertheless, I want to assure you that this review was conducted in an objective and thorough manner."

An analysis of costs concluded that if the commercialization plan went sour, DOE could be left with \$1 billion in extra expenses. That's in addition to the \$1 billion cost of an unbudgeted federal research project proposed for the reactor.

Supporters of restarting the research reactor called those estimates ridiculous. With leadership from Hastings, they've pushed for a restart of the reactor primarily to make isotopes for medical use, including

See **FFTF**, Page A2



Herald/Bob Brawdy

Longtime Tri-City Fast Flux Test Facility supporters from left, Bill Stokes, Claude Oliver, Harold Heacock and Wanda Munn, study a Department of Energy news release Wednesday

announcing a decision to shut down the test reactor. The group was holding a strategy session on how to respond to the announcement.

Analysis

Officials can't justify battle after review

By Les Blumenthal

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — It was a decision a string of energy secretaries tried to avoid, an issue that left Washington state's two Democratic senators walking a political tightrope and a top priority for an Oregon senator who never stopped trying.

But in the end, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham couldn't find a mission to rationalize keeping the Fast Flux Test Facility open, and even U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., whose district includes the Hanford reservation, appeared resigned to the fact the fight may finally be over.

"The secretary promised a fair, open and thorough review," said Hastings, who had

convinced Abraham to conduct an eight-month study of whether enough medical isotopes could be manufactured at FFTF to justify its restart. "While not the result we had hoped for, this was a battle absolutely worth fighting — and those in the Tri-Cities community who fought the battle with us have

See **Review**, Page A2

Reach monument gets formidable budget boost

By Mike Lee

Herald staff writer

The Mid-Columbia got a big Christmas present from the Fish and Wildlife Service on Wednesday when the agency gave the Hanford Reach National Monument the largest operating budget increase in the history of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

After weeks of haggling over finances, a

top agency official in Washington, D.C., announced the monument will get an additional \$612,000 this fiscal year. That will be added to the monument's old operating budget of \$571,000 to create a new total of \$1.18 million.

"It's not just for this year — it's the baseline budget" for the future, said Jim Watts, chairman of the Reach advisory committee. "It's a real coup."

The final budget shows an increase of

three staff positions at the Reach monument, along with increases for maintenance, invasive species control and equipment replacement.

Also, the Fish and Wildlife Service directed \$100,000 to the advisory committee, convened by the agency to bring local perspectives to monument planning.

The committee money is about two-thirds of what monument manager Greg Hughes estimated the advisory group

would need earlier this year. He was not available for comment Wednesday.

"That's plenty adequate to get us going," Watts said. "We got treated real good."

While the refuge staff in Richland has welcomed citizen involvement, the money was a sign from headquarters that top officials also support the local involvement

See **Reach**, Page A2

DOE pushes ahead with Hanford plan

■ Possible alternatives to melting waste into glassified form years away, cleanup czar says

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy is pushing ahead with its plan not to glassify 75 percent of Han-

ford's radioactive tank wastes despite uncertainties, said the agency's top cleanup official.

"It's a serious proposal, no doubt about it," said Jesse

Roberson, DOE's cleanup czar, in a telephone interview.

Details about possible alternatives to melting the wastes into a glassified form remain years away, she said.

That means approval by regulators also is years away, if ever.

The state Department of Ecology made it clear it wants to see a proposal on paper before discussing the idea.

"If this becomes an excuse for stalling (on cleanup), we won't go along with it," said Sheryl Hutchison, a spokeswoman for the Ecology Depart-

ment.

The proposal may just be the first controversy in a sweeping, nationwide overhaul of plans for cleaning up the radioactive and toxic mess left by Cold War nuclear weapons production.

See **Hanford**, Page B2

More funds needed for FFTF

■ *Shutdown will take more than 5 years, \$250 million*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

It likely will be months before Hanford crews begin closing the Fast Flux Test Facility.

Before then, millions of extra money must be found. More workers must be hired. Training must be updated.

It is expected to take almost \$250 million over five years and eight months to shut down the FFTF to the point where all it requires is one or two surveillance checks a year, according to a Department of Energy report issued in July.

That translates to about \$44 million a year. Right now, \$36.5 million is allocated

to keep the FFTF in standby mode for the 2002 fiscal year, which began Oct. 1.

FFTF critic Gerald Pollet, director of Heart of America Northwest, argued Wednesday that the shutdown could be sped up to take just three years and to save money.

The biggest parts of shutting down FFTF are draining its heated liquid sodium coolant and properly treating and packing its spent nuclear fuel.

According to various sources, here is how the shutdown should unfold:

One revolutionary aspect of the FFTF is the 260,000 gallons of liquid sodium used to cool the reactor. It flows through miles of pipes from the reactor's core to the distinctive squat, square-shaped cooling towers.

Once the sodium is drained, the reactor will for most purposes have reached the

point of no return. Within a fairly short time, flaws will begin developing in the cooling pipes. DOE was about to drain the sodium in 1995, but FFTF supporters convinced the agency to keep the reactor dormant for more studies — which led to Wednesday's shutdown decision.

But Hanford is not as ready today as it was in 1995 to begin shutdown. Training must be redone and procedures checked. Equipment must be upgraded. And a few workers must be hired to join the approximately 240 to 250 employees presently at FFTF.

Then, within a yet-determined number of months from now, crews will begin draining the liquid sodium coolant, which is heated to about 400 degrees.

Sodium will have to be cleaned off the spent fuel rods before they are stored in

special casks, which eventually are to go to a proposed DOE storage site in Nevada.

The FFTF now has 126 fuel assemblies stored in 18 casks, with another 100 to 200 fuel to be cleaned and stored.

An extra \$9 million will be needed for the first year of spent fuel work. It is unknown now whether that money will come from the current 2002 budget or in DOE's 2003 budget request, which goes to Congress in February.

One question is whether FFTF's closure will be financed from cleanup funds or nuclear energy funds. Its standby budget has come from nuclear energy funds. Hanford watchers such as Pollet will be watching to make sure the FFTF shutdown doesn't divert cleanup funding.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Battelle gets highest rating ever

■ *DOE's annual rating 'Outstanding'*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

Battelle received its highest score ever in its annual assessment by the Department of Energy's Richland Office and set a new standard for DOE's other national science laboratories Thursday.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, operated by Battelle, became the first national science lab to receive a rating

2001 Battelle rating

Areas rated on a 1 - 5 scale	Points	Rating	Weight	Weighted score
Science and technological	4.86	Outstanding	60%	2.92
Management and operations	4.86	Outstanding	20%	0.98
Leadership	4.84	Outstanding	20%	0.97
Overall rating		Outstanding	100%	4.87

SOURCE: DOE

Herald/Sherry Emery

of "Outstanding" for four consecutive years.

Battelle will be rewarded with \$7 million, the maximum amount DOE can give

the corporation for its performance.

"The high quality of scientific and technological work performed at PNNL is

gaining more national and international recognition," said Paul Kruger, DOE Richland's associate manager for science and technology.

DOE gave the lab a rating of 4.87 on a scale of 0 to 5. A score of 4.5 to 5.0 merits an outstanding rating. Last year, Battelle received a 4.6.

"It's been a great year," said PNNL Director Lura Powell after her first full year in Richland.

About 60 percent of the

See **Battelle**, Page A2

Benton commissioner aims to save FFTF

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

The federal government may not have been able to find a use for Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility, but maybe the community can, Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver said Thursday.

A day after Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham ordered the research reactor permanently shut down, Oliver began talking of finding a way to take over the reactor as government surplus.

"They say it's headed for the wrecking ball," he said. "Maybe we can have it."

At a Dec. 31 commission meeting, he'll broach a plan to commit \$250,000 of

county money, possibly from a public works fund, to saving the reactor, he said.

Commissioners Leo Bowman and Max Benitz Jr. said the plan has not yet been presented to them and they'll wait until then to discuss it.

The \$250,000 would be used to investigate legal and other issues and pull together a plan. Oliver envisions the community finding a wide range of companies and groups interested in the reactor.

The county is in a better position to do that than the Department of Energy, which took a look at just one proposal, a plan put together by Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems of Richland, Oliver said.

"Why can't we as a community be given

an opportunity to put together a proposal?" he asked. "I want to get away from politics and (DOE headquarters) saying we can't do things."

Wednesday the DOE announced that a plan to commercialize the reactor to produce medical isotopes carried too many financial risks to the government. The current Republican administration agreed with the former Democratic administration that DOE has no use for the reactor and it should be permanently shut down.

DOE figured that if the commercialization plan failed after the reactor was restarted, it could be left with as much as \$1 billion in expenses. That includes costs of disposing of unused fuel, the expense of

keeping the reactor in standby condition until isotope production began and costs of later decommissioning the reactor.

That compares with estimated costs of about \$250 million to shut down the reactor over the next almost six years.

However, supporters of restarting the reactor said the \$1 billion figure is inflated and doesn't take into account new money coming into the project, such as \$35.8 million from Germany to take unwanted nuclear fuel. Supporters want the reactor used to make isotopes primarily for medicine, including new ways of treating cancer.

■ Reporter Annette Cary can be reached at 582-1533 or via e-mail at acary@tri-cityherald.com.

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Hope still alive for Hanford's FFTF

■ *Benton commissioners propose \$250,000 plan; seek help from supporters*

By Kristina Lord

Herald Valley bureau

PROSSER — Benton County officials can't save Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility, but they might be able to help somebody else to do it, Commission Chairman Leo Bowman said Monday.

About 50 people attended a Benton

County Commission meeting in Prosser to hear the commissioners discuss a \$250,000 plan to save the research reactor.

Extra chairs and benches spilled out into the hallway of the Prosser Courthouse to accommodate the crowd, which included a handful of Citizens for Medical Isotopes members wearing red T-shirts that read, "Isotopes an answer for Cancer."

A day after Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham ordered the research reactor permanently shut down, Commissioner Claude Oliver began talking of finding a way to take over the reactor as government surplus.

The Department of Energy announced that a plan to commercialize the reactor to produce medical isotopes carried too many financial risks to the government. The current Republican administration agreed with the former Democratic administration that DOE has no use for the reactor and it should be shut down permanently.

Oliver proposed spending \$250,000 to save the reactor. The money would be used to investigate legal and other issues and pull together a plan. Oliver envisions the community finding a wide range of interested companies and groups.

But Bowman didn't think the county

could afford that with a possible budget deficit of more than \$3 million to fill in 2002, or that the project fell within the scope of county government. He offered to spend \$5,000 instead.

He said Citizens for Medical Isotopes should get a green light commitment from DOE first and propose a ballot measure to the citizens to pay for all expenses.

"My feeling is we can do that as a county. We can force (the \$5,000) out of our budget somehow, but anything above the planned cost needs to go to the citizens

See **FFTF**, Page B2

Firm asks DOE to rethink FFTF

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems is asking the Department of Energy to reconsider its decision to permanently shut down Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

The document on which the decision was based contains "numerous and substantive errors," wrote the company's president, Bill Stokes, in a letter to Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham.

The mistakes started with calling the sodium-cooled reactor a "thermal" reactor and extended to exaggerated costs, he said.

In addition, some of the questions DOE had about the project could have been addressed if ANMS had been allowed to proceed to the next step of finalizing financial details, Stokes said.

The company was given just 30 days to come up with a proposal and had been giving the government more details as talks progressed.

ANMS, a Richland company, had proposed leasing the reactor and operating it through a team of companies with nuclear experience.

The plant would be used to make isotopes, primarily for medicine, but DOE also could use some of the reactor capacity for nuclear research.

Last month, DOE concluded the proposal was too risky financially, saying it could cost DOE as much as \$2 billion. That figure was based on several parts of the plan going wrong and ANMS defaulting on the lease, leaving DOE with unexpected

Preliminary 300 Area cleanup approved

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Hanford's regulators formally signed off on the preliminary cleanup of a 300 Area nuclear fuel processing complex last month.

That means one section of the northern 300 Area is ready for removal of contaminated soil and buildings.

The complex includes the 70,000-square-foot 333 Building, which used to manufacture nuclear fuel for Hanford's now-defunct N Reactor. That process created huge amounts of acid wastes, which were neutralized in the nearby 60,000-square-foot 313 Building and the 303F and 334A buildings.

The neutralizing process also used two clusters of above-ground tanks — the largest of the 16 tanks holding 5,000 gallons — which were located in this area. When fuel was manufactured, the acid wastes ended up in one tank cluster before being shipped elsewhere.

The actual preliminary cleanup took place from Oct. 1, 1996, to Sept. 30, 1999. But Washington's Department of Ecology did not certify the project as finished until December, Department of Energy officials said.

Fourteen of the 16 tanks have been removed, and the remaining two have been cleaned up. Workers removed 15,400 pounds of contaminated pumps, pipes and equipment, plus another 176,000 pounds of debris.

The debris was buried in low-level radioactive waste burial sites at Hanford.

The project came in slightly under its \$1.9 million budget, DOE officials said. The work was a joint effort by DOE, Fluor Hanford, Bechtel Hanford, Waste Management Northwest and DynCorp Tri-Cities Services.

The remaining work includes analyzing the soil in that area to map out its removal and treatment, said Leo Guillen, DOE's 300 Area project manager, and John Remaize, DOE's senior engineer for the 300 Area's deactivation project.

Also, the four buildings and last two tanks will be removed by the corporate team that wins a long-range Columbia River shore cleanup contract later this year. That contract is expected to last through 2012.

Bechtel to revamp river shore

■ *Chamna Natural Preserve, Bateman Island among locations to receive face lift*

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

The Richland river shore will be getting a face lift this year thanks to an initiative launched Thursday by Bechtel.

The company and its partners are going to replant fire-scarred Bateman Island, landscape a new paved trail at Columbia Point and make visitor-friendly upgrades at the Chamna Natural Preserve along the Yakima River.

The projects represent a significant step toward making the rivers more accessible, which has been a major focus of community leaders for at least five years. Total cost of the improvements is \$55,000, with Bechtel picking up about \$35,000.

"It's an extension of our support for the river that that we do in our Hanford

work," said Sue Kuntz, manager of external affairs for Bechtel Hanford. "We pick projects that will last a long time."

They also will enhance the region's quality of life and tourism draw, said Kris Watkins, president of the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau. "We are always looking for a competitive advantage when it comes to bringing tourism dollars to our area," she said, adding that many towns don't have as much public property along a shoreline as the Tri-Cities.

"We have a great opportunity, and we have time where we can do this right," she said.

Bechtel — a corporate sponsor of popular Tri-City attractions such as the Family Fishing Pond in 1998 and the Playground of Dreams in 1999 — anticipated doing just one "legacy" project this year, but company leaders became convinced that three needed to be done.

Part of the reason is the company's

See **River shore**, Page B2



Herald/Richard Dickin

Tom Marceau, Bechtel's cultural resources supervisor, standing at the locked entrance of Bateman Island, will be leading a Bechtel-sponsored project to rehabilitate the 160-acre island. Plans are to clean up trash, spray for noxious weeds and replant with native species. Bechtel also is helping with restoration of the Chamna Natural Preserve in Richland and the riverfront trail that will connect Howard Amon Park with Columbia Point.

2 firms embroiled in Hanford lawsuits

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Think of it as a bitter divorce.

Fluor Hanford and a former major subcontractor are suing each other over how their relationship fizzled and died in 1999.

BWXT Hanford Co., formerly B&W Hanford, filed a lawsuit in District Court in Yakima on June 4 against Fluor Hanford, its parent Fluor Corp. and two other Fluor companies.

The lawsuit alleges the Fluor corporations lied to B&W Hanford during contract negotiations, then illegally yanked

away a promised contract extension so Fluor could keep the contract fees.

Then on June 22, Fluor Hanford filed a countersuit, alleging B&W Hanford is to blame for a two-year halt in moving and processing scrap plutonium at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant. The suit claims B&W's work was substandard and not acceptable to Fluor or its regulatory agencies.

That delay cut into fees Fluor Hanford could have earned from the Department of Energy, Fluor alleges. DOE also eventually fined Fluor and B&W Hanford \$112,500 for the safety violations that led to the two-year delay.

Both sides are seeking unspecified damages from each other in the case, which is to go to trial Sept. 17 in Yakima.

On Thursday in Yakima, District Judge Alan McDonald heard arguments over whether co-defendants Fluor Corp., Fluor Federal Services and Fluor Enterprises should be dismissed from B&W Hanford's lawsuit. He did not issue a ruling yet.

B&W Hanford was a major player in Fluor Hanford's original, much-ballyhooed 13-company team that took over running Hanford in 1996. The 13-company concept stumbled badly, and Fluor quietly eased out B&W Hanford in 1999.

Now the dueling litigants blame each other for B&W Hanford's unhappy departure.

B&W Hanford was in charge of converting 4.4 tons of plutonium into safer forms at the PFP, operating the Fast Flux Test Facility, closing and doing the preliminary cleanup at B Plant and PUREX, managing the 300 Area and supervising a 200 Area indoor pool holding radioactive cesium and strontium.

B&W Hanford inherited the PFP from Westinghouse Hanford Co. on Oct. 1, 1996. It soon became one of Hanford's

See **Lawsuits**, Page B5

PNNL develops security system

■ DOE sites testing new network to lock up classified materials

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

If workers try to leave certain rooms at the Department of Energy's national headquarters near Washington, D.C., without locking up classified documents, an alarm sounds and a red light flashes.

It's part of a new system developed at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland that will be tried at DOE sites around the nation as part of the federal government's push for tighter security.

People working on classified or sensitive documents must return them to safes and lock them up, even if a worker is just stepping down the hall to the restroom.

"They are humans. They make mistakes," said lab spokeswoman Staci Maloof.

The new system reminds workers if a door or drawer to a safe is even slightly ajar when they try to leave the room.

DOE interest in the system, called Secure Safe, was high even before Sept. 11, particularly for areas where staff work with nuclear secrets or on other national security projects, said project manager Mike Schwartz.

Security has been a more pressing issue for DOE since 2000, when a nuclear scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory was accused of stealing nuclear secrets. He pleaded guilty to mis-handling classified information

See PNNL, Page A2

Program graduates 1st class

■ Hanford fills shortage with HAMMER graduates

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford officially took care of most of its shortage of radiological control technicians Thursday when 38 people graduated from the inaugural HAMMER program.

Last year, Hanford zeroed in on a shortage of radiological control technicians — also known as health physics technicians — who monitor radiation for safety purposes at the site's cleanup projects.

Hanford has about 400 of these technicians. The HAMMER training complex's 38 graduates fill in most of that shortage, said Kerry Adams of EnergX, the company hired to train the new technicians.

See Hanford, Page B2

Politicians optimistic about Hanford cleanup budget

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Doc Hastings voiced cautious optimism Thursday that President Bush's upcoming fiscal 2003 federal budget proposal will adequately fund Hanford's cleanup.

Hastings was a bit more optimistic. Murray was a smidgen more cautious.

Both said the Bush administration's latest hints leaned toward proposing to give Hanford enough money in 2003 to meet its legal cleanup obligations.

"I'm confident when the president submits his budget, it will be there," Hastings, R-Wash., told the Herald's editorial board.

Murray, D-Wash, said she thought a few weeks ago that the administration might propose drastically underfunding Hanford's cleanup, but she said the latest hints indicate the administration might support fully funding the site's cleanup.

"But that came with the caveat that (cleanup funding) could be 'creative.' ... That 'creative' makes me very nervous," Murray said after meeting with Hanford leaders Thursday.

Bush's overall federal budget request for 2003, including proposed allocations to the Department of Energy and Hanford, is expected to be unveiled in early February.

DOE has not unveiled what it believes would have to be appropriated to Hanford

to fully meet all legal cleanup obligations in fiscal 2003. The budget calculations are now within the federal Office of Management and Budget, which is close-mouthed until the president sends his budget request to Congress.

Last year's Washington, D.C., budget battle has made Hanford observers wary. Last year, the administration, including Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, wanted Congress to cut the federal agency's nationwide cleanup budget in 2002 to \$5.913 billion. That translated to \$1.4 billion for Hanford when \$1.832 billion was needed.

Congress overruled the administration and raised 2002's nationwide cleanup

budget to \$6.716 billion, with DOE eventually allocating \$1.776 billion to Hanford.

Although no figures have been released so far, DOE's current master approach to Hanford indicates that about \$1.8 billion likely would be needed for 2003.

However, Hanford's 2003 budget situation features some new unknowns, including:

■ A "top-to-bottom" review of all of DOE's cleanup programs is expected to release a draft report this month.

The review's purpose is to slash \$100 billion and 30 years from DOE's current estimates that its nuclear cleanup

See Budget, Page B2

Fluor Hanford

Fluor Hanford would like to say "THANK YOU" to the local businesses that participated with us in the cleanup efforts of the Hanford Site during the first quarter (Oct. - Dec.) of fiscal year 2002. The value of these Fluor Hanford subcontractors into the local community was \$47 million during this time period. It is only through the continued support of local community businesses like these that Fluor Hanford will succeed in its cleanup efforts. This list below is for those companies with activities over \$40,000 during the quarter.

A Industrial Supply
A & B Asphalt, Inc.
AMG Marketing
Apollo Sheet Metal, Inc.
AS-Industrial Scale Co.
AT&T Wireless
Babcock Services, Inc.
Basin Department Store
BJ Crosby Consulting Mgmt.
BNFL, Inc.
BNL Technical Services
BOSS Computer Solutions
Brutzman's Office Solutions
Career Services, Inc.
Casco Enterprises
City of Richland
Cogema Engineering Corporation
Columbia Energy & Environmental Svcs.
Columbia Rigging Corporation
Cozy Bear, Inc.
D&R Auto Parts
Dana Engineering, Inc.
DMJM H+N
E2 Consulting Engineers, Inc.
Energy Northwest
Environmental Quality
Excelsior Design, Inc.
Exitech Columbia Corporation
Express Personnel Services
Harris Office Equipment
Hiline Engineering & Fabrication
HPM Corporation
Industrial Vacuum

Inficon, Inc.
Inspection Service, Inc.
J & D Sales, Inc.
Kennewick Industrial
Les Schwab Tires
Lockheed Martin Services, Inc.
Lucas, Inc.
Mactec, Inc.
Mid-Columbia-Engineering, Inc.
Monarch Machine & Tool
Morrison Construction
Netzsch, Inc.
Norco
Oceanering International, Inc.
Oxarc, Inc.
Pacific First Computer
Parsons Infrastructure & Technology Group, Inc.
PLCS Plus, Inc.
Puget Sound Pipe & Supply
Quality Services Group
R H Smith Dist. Co., Inc.
Rayburn Dale O'Donnell
Raymar Sales
Richland Industrial
RTS Enabling Technology
SAFR Systems Engineering
ST&MS, Inc.
Stoneway Electric Supply
Technical Resources, Inc.
Thompson Mechanical Contractors
US Testing Equipment, Ltd.
Vista Engineering Technology
Xron Associates, Inc.

Richland to look at saving FFTF

By the Herald staff

The Richland City Council voted to spend up to \$5,000 and use some staff time to look at possibilities for saving Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

Citizens for Medical Isotopes, headed by Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver, is proposing that Richland, the Port of Benton and Benton County band together to look at using government surplus regulations to find a use for the reactor.

Republican and Democratic administrations have concluded the Department of Energy has no use for the reactor and cannot afford to keep it in operating condition.

Citizens for Medical Isotopes is proposing local interests market the reactor, which is among DOE's largest and most modern, for the production of isotopes for medicine and security and industrial uses.

Oliver believes Richland-area governments could quickly find out if there are companies qualified to use FFTF.

The isotopes group puts the value of FFTF at \$1 billion and the related Fuels and Materials Examination Facility at an additional \$1 billion.

The Port of Benton has agreed to support efforts to try to find a use for the reactor but has no money to contribute.

Oliver plans to present the plan to the Benton County Commission next.

Oliver and other supporters of the reactor also have asked for support from Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., and Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

They sent a letter this week asking that Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham not allow destruction of reactor equipment until the community has a chance to make its case.

Hanford forum covers cash, deadlines

■ Meeting in Seattle 1st of 3 public feedback sessions

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

SEATTLE — Questions about money and deadlines dominated a meeting on Hanford cleanup Tuesday evening in Seattle.

"What can we do more of ... to say we demand enough money?" asked Ruth Yarrow of Seattle, representing Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Yarrow pointed out that the nation's defense spending dwarfs nuclear cleanup spending. "You can't tell me the money isn't there," she said.

Many of the 80 people at Tuesday's question-and-answer session with Han-

ford officials at Seattle Pacific University applauded her remark.

"The answer is for you people to participate. There needs to be a national outcry," said Harry Boston, manager of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection.

Tom Fitzsimmons, director of the Washington Department of Ecology, noted that the money materialized last year after state officials threatened DOE with a lawsuit if Hanford's top-priority tank waste glassification project wasn't adequately funded. The state is willing to repeat the lawsuit threat this year, Fitzsimmons said.

The meeting was the first of three public feedback sessions sponsored this week by DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Ecology.

The second session is tonight in Port-

land, and a third is scheduled at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Columbia Basin College's Workforce Training Center in Pasco.

Much of Tuesday's session addressed qualms that the federal government might not provide enough money for Hanford's cleanup to meet legal deadlines.

DOE is supposed to submit next year's national cleanup budget to Congress in early February. So far DOE has not indicated whether it will seek enough money to meet Hanford's legal obligations for fiscal 2003.

DOE is completing a "top-to-bottom review" of all its cleanup programs. The results are supposed to guide the department's latest long-term cleanup plans.

Even though the unveiling of its 2003 budget request is a couple of weeks away, DOE has not yet released a draft of the cleanup review. DOE has said it will seek public feedback on that draft

before releasing a final report.

Susan Gordon, director of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, a coalition of environmental organizations based in Washington, D.C., chastised DOE officials Tuesday for the lack of public participation so far in creating the draft report.

"We asked to participate in the top-to-bottom review, and we've been shut out," Gordon said.

Fitzsimmons agreed there has been no public participation so far, but he added that the state Ecology Department has discussed the review three times with DOE, and he believes the state's input is sufficient.

"Participation is not as bad as you perceive, but it is not as good as it should be," Fitzsimmons told Gordon.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tricityherald.com.

Kaiser moves extrusion press to new home

■ Press originally built for Hanford's N Reactor

By Wendy Culverwell

Herald staff writer

A \$12 million metal extrusion press originally built for the N Reactor at Hanford has a new home today.

In 1994 the Department of Energy transferred the never-used press to Richland Specialty Extrusions, where the Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp. subsidiary operated it in the 300 area.

Wednesday the company had the massive blue press hauled a few miles south to its permanent quarters in the Manufacturing Mall on Stevens Drive.

An extrusion press operates by pressing heated aluminum logs through forms or dies, and Kaiser/Richland Specialty Extrusions manufactures seamless aluminum tubing used in products ranging from baseball bats to airplane parts.

Kaiser previously moved a 3,150-ton extrusion press from a sister facility in Torrance, Calif.

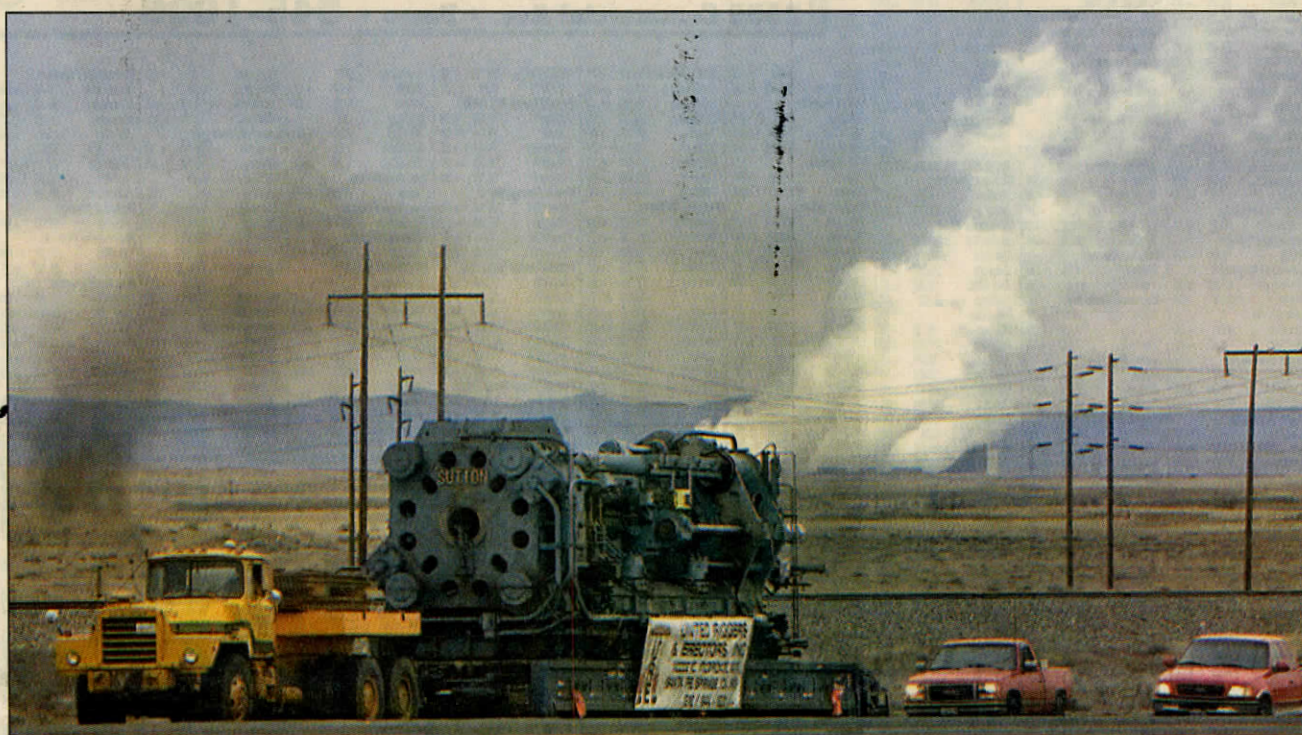
The move consolidates Kaiser's presence at the former 1167 Building, which is leased from the Port of Benton.

Wednesday's slow-moving parade along Stevens Drive drew a small crowd of people who have worked to move unused Hanford gear into the private sector to promote economic development.

Jerry Schneider, Fluor Hanford manager, said the Kaiser transfer is one of the most successful partnerships to date.

The equipment causing all the commotion is a 4,000-ton Sutton extrusion press. The 4,000-ton figure refers to the press capacity, not its weight.

Broken down for transport, it weighed about 320 tons, more than enough to require a small fleet of support vehicles on its journey down Stevens Drive to its new home.



Herald/Bob Brawdy

A \$12 million, 4,000-ton metal extrusion press makes its journey Wednesday morning to a permanent home in the Manufacturing Mall on Stevens Drive in Richland. The press

is used by Kaiser/Richland Specialty Extrusions to manufacture seamless aluminum tubing by pressing heated aluminum through forms and dies.

Dismantling it for transport took a little more than a month, with workers assigned to round-the-clock shifts.

DOE originally acquired the press for the N Reactor, where it was a backup press for making fuel.

It was never used, and when the N Reactor was decommissioned in 1990, DOE officials and their contractors started a push to transfer DOE equipment to the private sector under the banner of weaning the Tri-Cities from its dependency on federal spending, said Michael Minette, who managed the Kaiser transfer for Fluor Hanford on behalf of DOE.

The government worked with Richland and the Port of Benton on the transfer, and Kaiser took the press over in 1994,

operating it in the 313 Building. Under terms of the transfer, Kaiser could use the press only in Richland.

Kaiser signed a 10-year lease on the 1167 Building about 13 months ago, setting the stage for it to bring up the smaller press from California.

The company pays nearly \$8,000 a month in rent and has the option to extend the lease for four additional 10-year terms. It currently employs about 50 people at the plant, up from the 38 it employed when it first leased the building.

The 1167 Building is in the Richland Manufacturing Mall, formerly the Hanford 1100 Area.

DOE transferred the area, which includes 768 acres and various facilities,

to the port in 1998, again under the banner of promoting Mid-Columbia economic development.

Kaiser has a third, inoperable press it could rebuild if demand warrants the investment. The manager of Richland Specialty Extrusions said Wednesday that while the Richland operation has been a good business for Kaiser, the recession is having an effect.

The 313 Building is part of the river corridor project and is to be cleaned.

It could be used for short-term drum storage, but beyond that its future is unclear.

■ Reporter Wendy Culverwell can be reached at 582-1537 or via e-mail at wculverwell@tricityherald.com.

Radiation exposure threatens Indians

■ Differing lifestyle, eating habits probable cause

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

American Indians may have been exposed to more radiation from Hanford releases into the Columbia River than earlier estimated, a new study suggests.

"There's always been that big concern," said Bill Burke, one of the chiefs of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Indians may have eaten more fish than others living in the area and prepared it in a way that exposed them to more potentially cancer-causing radiation than other people living near Hanford, according to a draft report prepared for the federal government by Risk Assessment Corp.

The federal government spent \$25 million in the 1990s to develop comprehensive estimates of the amounts and types of radiation people were exposed to in the years Hanford was operating.

But there have been concerns that the Indian lifestyle was so different from that of white farmers and others living in the region that radiation exposure to Indians may have been underestimated.

A draft study presented Wednesday in Kennewick at the Inter-Tribal Council for Hanford Health Projects made no new estimates on exposure levels to tribal members. But it concluded past estimates may be too low because they did not adequately consider the Indian lifestyle.

Much of the Hanford Environmental Dose Reconstruction, or HEDR, project has been used to estimate exposure to radioactive iodine released into the air from the nuclear reservation and carried downwind in the 1940s and primarily the early 1950s.

But HEDR also considered radioactive isotopes that contaminated water used to cool fuel rods and then was returned to the river.

Rumors surround Hanford official

■ Many wonder if Boston will stay at tank farms

By John Stang and Mike Lee
Herald staff writers

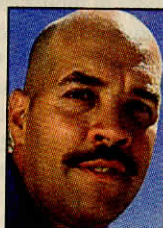
From Olympia to Washington, D.C., the rumor mill is thick with speculation about Harry Boston's future.

Is the manager of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection on the way out?

Or is he staying?

For several weeks, speculation has run wild among Hanford observers and overseers. By Thursday, the talk reached the point that Todd Martin, chairman of the Hanford Advisory Board, heard conflicting rumors: Boston will stay and Boston will leave.

And Tom Fitzsimmons, director of Washington's



Boston

Department of Ecology, in the Tri-Cities for a public hearing on Hanford, told the Herald's editorial board that he had lobbied on Boston's behalf in discussions with top DOE officials in Washington, D.C.

Boston himself has heard numerous rumors.

But he insisted Thursday that DOE has never approached him about transferring. Nor has he talked to DOE on his own initiative about moving, saying he is happy in his job.

Boston is in charge of Hanford's biggest single problem and fix-it project, central Hanford's 177 leak-prone underground tanks that hold 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes. More than 1 million gallons already have leaked into the ground.

The solution is to build plants to convert those wastes into glass — a multibillion-dollar

See Rumors, Page A2

Hanford public forum raises questions

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

It took the hometown crowd to ask Hanford and environmental officials a question they did not expect to hear on the third night of public feedback sessions about Hanford.

Might he have a bit of high level liquid radioactive waste? asked Gene Weisskopf at the Pasco meeting Thursday night. He's the president of the B Reactor Museum Association that's trying to save the world's first production-sized reactor.

He'd like to preserve a tea-

spoon of the first fission isotopes to help future generations understand the nation's nuclear history, he said.

But much of the rest of the meeting focused on how to get the money to turn high level waste from 40 years of plutonium production into a form that can be safely stored and preventing any more spread of radioactive contamination.

The meeting, attended by about 90 people, followed a session Tuesday in Seattle and Wednesday in Portland where crowds of about the same size

had similar concerns.

One new question brought up in Pasco was the effect of the proposed Black Rock Reservoir, which could be built on Hanford's doorstep in east Yakima County.

Theoretically, about 1.7 million acre-feet of water would be pumped into Black Rock when the Columbia River is full of spring runoff, then saved there until needed by farmers and industries.

But couldn't that speed up the flow of contaminated ground water on the Hanford reservation toward the Columbia and Yakima

ivers? asked Rick Leamont, of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society.

It was a question for which Department of Energy and state and federal environmental officials did not have an answer.

But it's a question that "better be answered" before such a project goes forward, said Tom Fitzsimmons, director of the state Department of Ecology.

Leamont said he also was concerned about how the proposed reservoir might affect the flow on the Hanford Reach.

See Forum, Page B2

Vit spending bill could get tanked

■ Money to help Tri-Cities handle worker boom unlikely

By Chris Mulick
Herald staff writer

OLYMPIA — Bills to help Hanford communities handle a population jolt from construction of the vitrification project finally found the hopper late this week, but prospects are dim.

Though the 2002 session is only

Olympia



2002

Feb. 12.

Neither House Bill 2693 nor Senate Bill 6674 is scheduled to be heard next week, leaving only a few

two weeks old, the first legislative cutoff is just two weeks away.

At least one of the two bills must be given a hearing and moved out of committee by

potential hearing dates remaining.

Worse, Senate Ways and Means Chairwoman Lisa Brown, who will write the chamber's version of a plan to patch a \$1.25 billion state budget hole, is turning away almost everyone asking for new spending. There may be more money included for community colleges to boost worker retraining programs but not much else.

"Other than that, I'm saying, 'No,' to everybody," said Brown, D-Spokane. "It's nothing personal

See Tanked, Page B2

\$5,000 backs plan to look at FFTF

■ Decision on FFTF restart must be made by June

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Benton County commissioners agreed Monday to spend \$5,000 and staff time to look at possibilities for saving Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

However, commissioners Leo Bowman and Max Benitz Jr. urged the Citizens for Medical Isotopes, headed by commission Chairman Claude Oliver, to better focus its plan of action.

The isotopes group proposes that Richland, the Port of Benton and Benton County work together to find a private company to take over the reactor.

The group says production of medical isotopes would be among

the reactor's possible uses.

Proponents believe the reactor could bring in about \$30 million a year in taxes to the state, schools and county. Restarting the reactor also would provide high-paying jobs.

Whether the reactor would be sold or remain under federal oversight is unknown. Also unknown is who would be liable for the reactor.

"I still have some concerns on what the plan is and what we are trying to accomplish," Benitz said. "What is the county spending money on? ... Three presidents have said no (to restarting FFTF) ... and that's a pretty strong mandate."

Oliver said the latest deadline for a decision on a FFTF restart is June.

Three presidents have said no (to restarting FFTF) ... and that's a pretty strong mandate.

Max Benitz Jr.
Benton County commissioner

In the interim, Bowman and Benitz want the group to formalize the partnerships with Richland and the Port of Benton through an interlocal agreement.

They also want a weigh in on the proposal from Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., as well as Gov. Gary Locke.

While the reactor's proponents

See FFTF, Page B2

Fluor gets millions for duties

■ Team earns profit of at least \$16.5 million for work in Hanford cleanup

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Fluor Hanford's team has earned at least 82 percent of its potential performance fee for overseeing environmental cleanup of the nuclear reservation in 2001.

That translates to a profit of at least \$16.5 million out of a potential \$20.1 million the site's lead cleanup and management contractor could earn for the fiscal year.

"We're on a roll here. We're making progress. I'm really proud of what (Fluor's) team has done," said Dave Van Leuven, who is acting president for the company as President E. Keith Thomson recovers from heart surgery.

The Department of Energy calculates Fluor's performance fee two ways — with an objective portion and a subjective portion.

Objectively, Fluor earned at least \$10.1 million out of a possible \$12.5 million for meeting specific cleanup goals.

DOE still has to calculate how much Fluor will earn for converting plutonium into safer forms at the Plutonium Finishing Plant, Van Leuven said. He expects Fluor to do well on the objective portion of the PFP evaluations and raise its current 82 percent tally.

Fluor also earned almost \$6.4 million out of a possible \$7.6 million in subjective evaluations of its management and safety programs.

In fiscal 1997 Fluor stumbled badly and earned only 58 percent of its potential fee. In 1998 Fluor posted 72 percent, and in 1999 it earned 86 percent.

In 2000 DOE drastically overhauled how it calculates Fluor's fees — raising standards and making apples-to-apples

See **Fluor**, Page A2

Nuclear wastes dumped into river, scientist says

■ Buske contends Hanford secretly worked to produce uranium 233 for nuclear bomb materials

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Scientific gadfly Norm Buske believes he is on the trail of a stash of nuclear waste coming from old "semi-secret" Hanford uranium 233 experiments.

Some of Buske's critics want his latest theory to go through a peer review of scientists to see if his contentions hold up under scrutiny. Those critics said none of his past studies have been formally double-checked by outside experts, a standard practice in scientific circles.

Buske agreed to that request.

In Kennewick on Friday, Buske gave the Hanford Health Effects Subcommittee a preview of a report he is working on for two watchdog organizations, the Government Accountability Project and The RadioActivist Campaign.

Buske of Belfair is a maverick independent scientist who spent the past few years studying Hanford's radioactive ground water seeping into the Columbia River.

In earlier studies Buske concluded underground radioactive substances are flowing faster into the river than Hanford's scientists believe. In the past Hanford scientists contended Buske's techniques are flawed.

Buske is most famous for swiping some contaminated Hanford mulberries in 1990, making them into a radioactive jam and mailing a jar of it to then-Gov. Booth Gardner.

On Friday, Buske talked about taking mud and silt samples from the Columbia River and detecting radioactive europium 152 in them.

In 2000, the Government Accountability project obtained some old Department of Energy documents about Hanford's plutonium-production reactors experimenting with producing uranium 233 in the early 1960s.

He linked major gaps in the information in Hanford's uranium 233 experiments and the presence of europium 152 in his samples to extrapolate Hanford conducted "semi-secret" work in the 1960s to produce uranium 233 for nuclear bombs. Buske said he eventually will prove uranium 233 made up about half of Hanford's production of atomic bomb materials. And he contended this uranium 233 production led to solid radioactive wastes being dumped in the Columbia River.

Buske acknowledged he has not confirmed Hanford ever tackled large-scale uranium 233 production nor the presence of uranium 233 or solid nuclear wastes in the river. But he believes his current studies will lead to those conclusions.



Buske

Uranium 233 is a form of uranium that was examined many years ago for possible use in atomic bombs or as a nuclear fuel. Normally, this nation's nuclear weapons used cores of uranium 235 or plutonium. DOE's Rich-

land office has a handful of 1963 documents that briefly discuss Hanford's experiments to create uranium 233 to use as fuel or atomic bomb cores.

However, a 1999 DOE report said uranium 233 was never used for bomb cores or fuel because of technical reasons.

The United States has about 2.2 tons of uranium 233, most of it stored at DOE's Oak Ridge site, awaiting a decision on what to eventually do with it.

No information was available Friday on if Hanford produced more than a handful of uranium 233 and if any was stored at the site.

Darrell Fisher, a Pacific Northwest National Laboratory senior scientist who represents some scientific societies on the Hanford Health Effects Subcommittee, said several flaws exist in Buske's sampling and analytical methods, including the fact that europium 152 can occur naturally in the river.

Ted Poston, manager of PNNL's environmental surveillance program, attended Friday's meeting. He said europium 152 also is found in water flowing from a reactor in standard plutonium production mode.

Consequently, the presence of europium 152 is no surprise, he said.

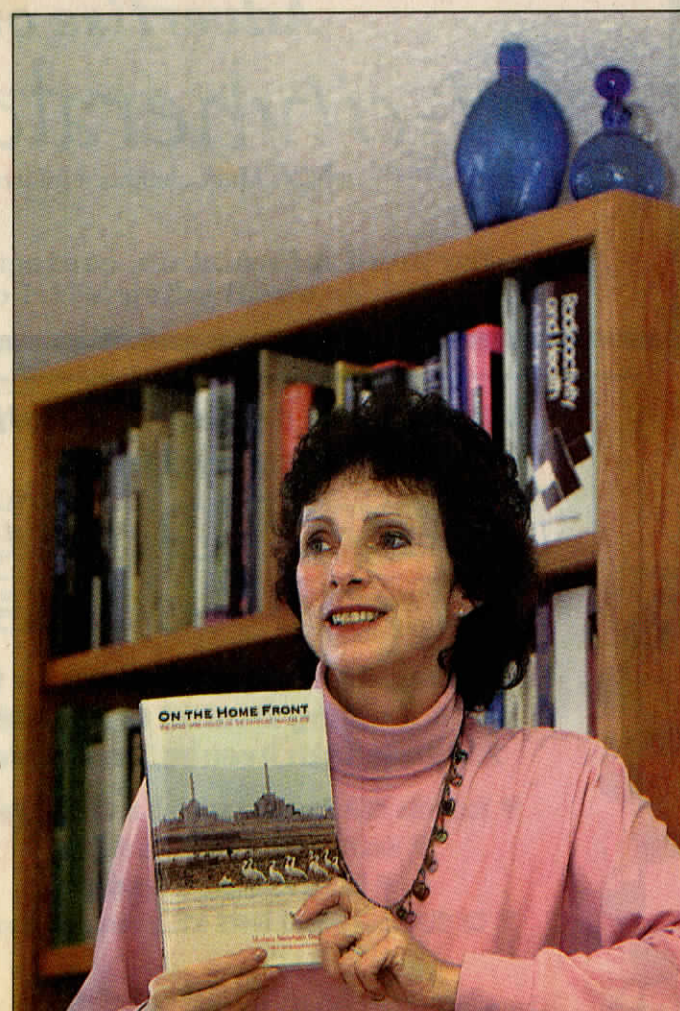
Poston said no evidence exists that Hanford ever intentionally dumped solid nuclear wastes, including uranium, in the river.

He said a chance exists that a ruptured fuel rod might have sent a piece of uranium into the river during the Cold War.

According to *On The Home Front*, a Hanford history book, a K East Reactor fuel rod ruptured in 1963 to send a pound of irradiated uranium into the river.

The book did not say what type of uranium escaped from the reactor.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.



Herald/Molly Van Wagner
Fluor Hanford employee Michele Gerber of Richland recently published a new edition of her book *On the Home Front*.

Hanford historian releases book

■ 3rd edition of 'On The Home Front' likely last

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

In Michele Gerber's eyes, Hanford's history entered a new chapter with the 21st century.

The site has evolved from its 20th century persona. So has the nation. And so has science.

Consequently, Gerber believes the third edition of her Hanford history book — *On The Home Front* — will likely be the last. The edition — with 40 new pages running from 1997 to early 2001 — should be in local bookstores soon.

"At some point, the story shifts. I may have to start another book. Hanford is now making a different type of history. (*On the Home Front*) is the 20th century story of Hanford. ... There's really a paradigm shift between the 20th century and 21st century," Gerber said.

Gerber has been Hanford's official and later unofficial historian since about 1990. Hanford's numerous reorganizations phased out her historian's position, and she now works in Fluor Hanford's communications depart-

ment. However, she continues her historical research and writing on her own time.

Hanford's role in history fascinates her.

She noted that the Newseum in Virginia ranked the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the 20th century's greatest news events.

The United States' atomic bombs and Hanford exist almost exclusively because of each other.

"To understand Hanford is to understand ourselves. ... Hanford is as significant in the 20th century as Gettysburg was in the 19th century, or Yorktown in the 18th," Gerber said.

On The Home Front was first published 1992 and then updated in 1997. In it, Gerber traces the site's history from World War II to the present.

The book looks at Hanford's Manhattan Project roots, when the site created the plutonium for two of the nation's first three atomic bombs — the first one that exploded in New Mexico and the one that destroyed Nagasaki. Uranium from Oak Ridge, Tenn., powered the Hiroshima bomb.

Gerber's book follows Hanford through the Cold War years, when it was an engineering marvel. Eventually, nine plutonium production reactors were built and numerous chemical plants sprang up.

And unimaginable amounts of radioactive and chemical wastes were created as a byproduct of making nuclear weapons.

Hanford became the most polluted chunk of ground in the Western Hemisphere — with moral, political and sociological issues overshadowing technical matters in the 1990s.

On The Home Front also examines that transition. The latest edition ends about when Hanford's cleanup kicked into high gear in 2000 and early 2001.

While "can-do" engineering and emerging environmental

Law extends benefits to Hanford children

President Bush has signed an amendment that allows the adult children of former Hanford nuclear workers to apply for \$150,000 in compensation if they suspect their parent developed cancer because of radiation and is no longer living.

However, if a spouse of the deceased worker still is living, the spouse may claim the benefit instead. Previously, only the children of the worker could claim the benefit if they were still young enough to be dependents at the time of the death.

The compensation also applies to workers who developed lung disease from exposure to the metal beryllium, which was used at Hanford, or silica, which was used elsewhere.

For more information, call the Energy Employees Compensation Resource Center in Kennewick at 783-1500 or 888-654-0014.

Those who already have a claim in progress now can call their claims examiner in Seattle at 888-805-3401.

See **Historian**, Page B2

Small company has big plans for Hanford land

■ *Firm agrees to pay \$50,000 a year to lease 1,000 acres, but hurdles remain*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A tiny Nevada firm has agreed to pay \$50,000 a year to lease 1,000 acres of Department of Energy land at Hanford that contains two unfinished Energy Northwest reactors.

But Composite Power Corp. still has to clear several hurdles before the 50-year lease goes into effect. The biggest is that Energy Northwest already has a lease on the land through 2005 and potentially longer.

Consequently, Composite Power apparently cannot do anything on the land in the near future without Energy Northwest approval.

Composite Power — originally from Las Vegas but now with headquarters in Richland — has ambitious plans for the site of the unfinished WNP-1 and WNP-4 reactors.

It wants to build up to five 500-megawatt, natural gas-fired power plants to produce 2,500 megawatts of electricity. Energy Northwest's nearby nuclear reactor generates 1,150 megawatts.

To provide some of the fuel for the natural gas plants, Composite

Power is thinking about drilling for natural gas on the privately held side of Rattlesnake Ridge. And the firm also wants to build wind turbine generation near the Oregon border and manufacture a new type of power transmission pole on the Hanford site.

Composite Power President Roger McCombs said the company expects to create roughly 3,500 construction jobs and 1,000 permanent Tri-City-area jobs over the next five years.

"This will be the biggest thing to hit the Tri-Cities since the atomic bomb," he said.

The 13-year-old company has never built a power-generation plant, nor mined natural resources, nor sold any electricity. It has a half-dozen employees split between offices in Richland and Las Vegas.

Composite Power has designed, developed and in 1991 patented a new type of power transmission pole. But it has not manufactured or sold any.

So far, the company's only income has been investments by about 450 shareholders, McCombs said. "It's a long-term investment," he said.

State Rep. Shirley Hankins, R-Richland, sat in on a Composite Power briefing last year. It consisted of a broad range of plans with very little detail to back them up, she said.

"I never saw any kind of

See **Plans**, Page A2

Hanford tank work behind schedule

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Some work digging trenches and installing pipes at central Hanford's tank farms has fallen behind schedule.

A combination of preventable and unpreventable reasons has delayed the jobs by several months, said Steve Wiegman, a senior technical adviser at the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group, which manages the tank farms, has submitted a recovery plan that DOE is reviewing. "We hope to catch up this year," Wiegman said.

Information was not available on the number of months that the project is behind or on costs of the delay.

One of CH2M Hill's jobs is to fix old pipelines and install new pipelines to move liquid radioactive wastes to tanks on the east side of the 200 East Area, where they are supposed to be eventually pumped to a yet-unbuilt glassification plant.

This work also deals with upgrading highly radioactive concrete pits that serve as junctions for pipes to meet and wastes to be rerouted.

DOE and state officials said this work has gone slower than expected because old pipelines and pipe connections have failed, lines plug up, the soil and material are radioactive, the overall project is complicated, some management glitches showed up and some routine safety measures were not followed.

"Folks in the field are always dealing with the unexpected," Wiegman said.

"We are concerned that work has started to slow down," said Melinda Brown, an external budget analyst with Washington's Department of Ecology.

Wiegman and Brown briefed some Hanford Advisory Board committees earlier this week about the situation.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Fluor Hanford names new vice president

A Duratek Inc. vice president has been named Fluor Hanford's new vice president in charge of waste management.

James Van Vliet is now in charge of about 600 Fluor and subcontractor employees, including about 60 people working at major Fluor subcontractor Duratek Hanford.

Fluor's waste management program manages Hanford's solid and liquid waste processing facilities, burial grounds and the storage of cesium and strontium canisters.

Van Vliet is a Naval Academy marine engineering graduate with a master's degree in energy resources and environment from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He previously worked for years at the Department of Energy's Idaho Falls complex. He most recently was Duratek's senior vice president of commercial waste processing at DOE's Oak Ridge, Tenn., site.

Display explores life of famous Hanford elk

A memorial display on the life and times of a bull elk named Melvin opens this month at Washington State University at Tri-Cities.

Melvin ruled a harem of cows and roamed the Hanford reservation for about 18 years. He died in 1996 of old age.

The exhibit includes a collection of the antlers he shed each year, photographs of his life on the range and a general historical account of his life as patriarch of the Rattlesnake Hills herd.

During the special open house at 7 p.m. Wednesday through Feb. 8, a group of scientists from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory will answer questions about Hanford wildlife as well as Melvin's long life.

The exhibit remains on display through Feb. 27 in the Consolidated Information Center at WSU Tri-Cities in Richland.

Hours are from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and from noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. Admission is free.

Hanford to move radioactive barrels to safer location

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hundreds of barrels of radioactive uranium and oil just north of the 300 Area will be moved to a safer site in central Hanford.

Bechtel Hanford Inc. recently awarded a \$3.9 million contract to Federal Engineers & Constructors and Thompson Mechanical Inc. to move those barrels and contaminated debris from Hanford's 618-4 and 618-5 burial grounds.

The 618-4 site is three miles north of Richland and has been a high-profile Hanford headache since 1998.

In 2000, Hanford's massive range fire came within a few hundred feet of about 300 exposed barrels holding uranium chips and oil in the 618-4 site. It was the closest the fire came to burning radioactive materials.

The barrels were discovered during routine excavation work in 1998, stopping cleanup efforts there until Hanford's experts could figure out what to do.

The 618-4 site holds about 1,500 barrels of uranium chips, including the 300 dug up before work was stopped. The barrels are filled with oil to prevent the uranium from spontaneously catching fire.

The 618-5 burial ground is near the 618-4 site. Bechtel is

unsure what is buried in the 618-5 site, but speculates it could hold barrels of wastes similar to those found in the 618-4 site, said Bechtel spokesman Todd Nelson.

Federal Engineers and Thompson Mechanical are supposed to finish moving the barrels and other contaminate materials to a huge central Hanford landfill by July 2003.

There, the barrels will be stored temporarily on concrete pads until Hanford figures out how to deal with the mixed hazardous and radioactive wastes inside them, Nelson said. The 618-4 and 618-5 sites are a few hundred feet from the Columbia River, which prompts their move to central Hanford.

"We, along with our joint venture partner, Thompson Mechanical Inc., look forward to successful completion of the project and making an impact on Hanford cleanup," said Dick French, Federal Engineers' president.

French is the former president of a former major Hanford contractor Kaiser Engineers Hanford Co. and former manager of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection. He founded Federal Engineers last March.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Hanford to auction off surplus equipment

The Tri-Cities Asset Reinvestment Company will auction surplus equipment from the Hanford site starting at 9 a.m. Tuesday at Energy Northwest.

Auction items include desks, chairs and computers as well as light industrial equipment such as air compressors, brake presses and pumps. A preview will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday.

To reach the site, follow Stevens Drive to the Energy Northwest entrance at Power Plant Road. Follow the yellow TARC Asset signs to Warehouse 252.

Murray attacks budget proposal

■ *Hanford could face \$262 million cutback*

By Les Blumenthal

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., lit into the head of the White House budget office Tuesday over Bush administration

FFTF

DOE says FFTF shouldn't be maintained for restart. **B2.**

proposals to cut \$262 million from Hanford nuclear reservation cleanup.

Murray called the cuts a slap in the face to her constituents and warned it could lead to a lawsuit by Washington state.

For his part, Mitch Daniels, head of the Office of Management and Budget, sought to defend the cuts at Hanford and other Department of Energy nuclear weapons sites.

Responding to Murray at a Senate Budget Committee hearing, Daniels said the department's cleanup program had been "poorly run," terming its timetables for cleanup and its mounting costs unacceptable.

Murray would have none of it. "I would tell you, Director

See **Murray**, Page A2

DOE directive targets FFTF maintenance

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The Fast Flux Test Facility no longer should be maintained in condition for possible restart, the Department of Energy has ordered.

The directive, dated Thursday, reflects DOE's decision to close the dormant experimental reactor permanently. Robert Lange, DOE associate director for nuclear facilities management, sent the memo to DOE Hanford Manager Keith Klein.

"You are requested to take

immediate action to reduce FFTF surveillance and maintenance costs. In particular, the restart potential for FFTF systems and equipment should no longer be maintained," Lange wrote.

In 1993 DOE put FFTF in a dormant state. Since then Northwest and Washington, D.C., factions have hotly debated whether the reactor should be revived or shut down. In December Spencer Abraham became the second energy secretary in a year to order the reactor permanently closed.

Benton County, Richland and Port of Benton officials have been

attempting to persuade DOE to give the reactor to Benton County.

Its closure is expected to take five years and eight months and cost about \$250 million, or about \$44 million a year.

DOE has requested Congress to appropriate about \$36 million for shutdown efforts in 2003, Klein said. That appropriation is to come from DOE's nuclear energy funds, not from the agency's environmental cleanup accounts — an important distinction in the upcoming political battles over Hanford's 2003 budget.

Any extra appropriation above that \$36 million likely would come from environmental cleanup funds, Klein said. Consequently he does not expect to ask for extra FFTF money for 2003 but will prepare larger shutdown budget requests for later years. Klein said preparations for closing or reviving FFTF are somewhat the same.

It's uncertain what step in the shutdown process would make the reactor's revival impossible.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

Fluor Hanford to lay off more workers in cost-trimming effort

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Fluor Hanford plans to lay off about 100 people this spring as part of an ongoing effort to trim costs.

"Although reductions such as this are always difficult, this action is necessary as we continue to seek cost efficiencies that allow us to continue our momentum in cleanup," said Fluor acting President Dave Van Leuven in a Wednesday memo to company employees.

Fluor does not expect to identify who will be laid off until March, said Dom Sansotta, Fluor Hanford's director of human resources. The layoffs are expected to be completed by April. The layoffs will likely be scattered across Fluor's work

... (T)his action is necessary as we continue to seek cost efficiencies that allow us to continue our momentum in cleanup.

Dave Van Leuven, acting president, Fluor Hanford

force, Sansotta said, with most of the workers coming from the field of landlord maintenance, such as road workers, firefighters and utility workers.

Subcontractor DynCorp Tri-Cities Services handled those duties until Fluor took over that work and those employees last

October. Fluor is trying to trim and consolidate much of its site maintenance people under the new umbrella.

Right now Fluor Hanford employs about 4,200 people in addition to an estimated 300 more among its three permanent subcontractors. Fluor has not determined yet whether the subcontractors' employees will be affected by the layoffs, Sansotta said.

Fluor officials plan to help laid-off workers find jobs elsewhere on the site.

Fluor laid off 200 to 300 employees last spring for efficiency-related reasons. Despite that measure, Fluor's work force grew slightly last year.

■ **Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.**

HAB seeks answers on Hanford budget

By the Herald staff

A Hanford Advisory Board caucus wants to know how Hanford plans to get enough of a \$800 million federal incentive fund for the site to meet its legal cleanup obligations in 2003.

About 20 HAB members tried to digest the Department of Energy's 2003 Hanford budget request last Thursday. They were preparing for a 1 p.m. Friday public budget discussion with DOE's two Hanford managers Keith Klein and Harry Boston, at the WestCoast Tri-Cities Hotel in Kennewick.

The HAB members pondered DOE's request for a guaranteed \$1.46 billion for Hanford's cleanup, which is a \$262 million drop from \$1.722 billion for 2002. However, Hanford and other DOE sites can apply for extra money from a \$800 million fund set aside for sites that produce accelerated cleanup plans.

HAB members had trouble reconciling this budget approach with a parallel DOE study that calls for accelerated cleanup. The study

calls for speeding up removing spent nuclear fuel from the K Basins and accelerating converting plutonium into safer forms.

Under DOE's new approach, it would review plans to speed cleanup, and then allocate part of the \$800 million to those plans that meet its approval.

HAB members voiced worries that if the Northwest does not agree to changes that DOE wants, DOE will not allocate enough money to Hanford to meet its obligations under current timetables, such as the Tri-Party Agreement.

Later Klein said the Hanford board needs to give this new concept some time to see how it works out. There is a possibility that Hanford could get more than \$262 million in extra money as DOE allocates the \$800 million, Klein said. DOE has said it will seek extra money from Congress if more than \$800 million is needed.

DOE does not want to distribute the final \$800 million until it is sure the appropriate sites are set up to accelerate their cleanup efforts, Klein said. DOE's head-

quarters wants Hanford to show it can speed up cleanup before allocating the money.

Klein said DOE's new approach is tailor-made for Hanford because the site has worked for months on accelerated cleanup.

Before the \$800 million fund enters the final budget-crunching picture, DOE's Richland office would see its \$695 million 2002 appropriation drop to \$557 million in 2003, a \$124 million decrease. Hanford's glassification project's budget would drop \$51 million from \$670 million in 2002 to \$619 million in 2003. And Hanford's tank farms budget would drop \$94 million from \$320 million in 2002 to \$226 million in 2003.

HAB members were puzzled by a DOE budget that had the K Basins' budget dropping from \$153 million in 2002 to \$90 million in 2003, at the same time DOE wants to speed the project.

Klein said the \$90 million is the "floor" for the K Basins' 2003 funding with more money to be allocated to it after Hanford shows the project is accelerated.

Vendor Forum

Bechtel National Inc. will sponsor a Vendor Forum to provide an opportunity to learn about how to do business with the Waste Treatment Plant project. Upcoming procurement opportunities will also be presented. Special topic will be a presentation by Bill Martin, President of TRIDEC.

Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2002

Auditorium

**3000 George Washington Way
Richland, WA**

5:00pm - 6:30pm

Space is limited to the first 150 registrants due to room capacity.

Please register for this Vendor Forum by e-mail at tlwallac@bechtel.com.

Mark your calendar for the upcoming Vendor Forums to be held at the same place and at the same time:

March 19, 2002

April 16, 2002

May 14, 2002

7 FEB. 02 Reach monument on the horizon

■ *Wood-and-rock signs at entrances part of construction plans to begin this summer*

By Mike Lee
Herald staff writer

The Hanford Reach soon will look more like a national monument.

By summer the Fish and Wildlife Service plans to erect substantial wood-and-rock signs — complete with a giant fall chinook salmon jumping out of an artful Columbia River — at major entrances.

"We are going to do it right," promised Greg Hughes, monument manager. "This is just a taste of what is to come."

Within a few months the agency aims to add seven new employees in Richland, including

technical specialists and a lead planner for the monument.

And eventually the Reach likely will have two visitor centers where the public can learn more about its rich history.

At present, Hughes admits, "As you drive up the highways, you don't even recognize it is national monument."

Hughes unveiled the sign design at a Wednesday meeting of the Reach citizen advisory board in Richland, where the 13-member committee completed background work necessary to start building its vision of the Reach's future.

The Hanford Reach National Monument, created by President Clinton in 2000, includes



Hughes

about 200,000 acres of shrub-steppe land and a 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River upstream of Richland. The river is critical for salmon spawning, and the land provides habitat for many dwindling or rare species.

Richland, of course, has designs on the Reach's future. On Tuesday night the city council offered the Fish and Wildlife Service a spot at Columbia Point for the official Reach visitor center, saying it would be "a powerful future tourism and economic development magnet for the entire Tri-City region."

Kennewick also has expressed interest, and there is some sentiment that another center should be placed at the north end of the monument near Mattawa.

"To me the issue of how many interpretive centers there are going to be should be

See **Reach**, Page A2

7 FEB. 02 DOE considers review results

■ *Top-to-bottom look at cleanup programs to help speed up work*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy wants to speed up work at Hanford's K Basins and Plutonium Finishing Plant at the same time it wants to cut up to \$262 million from Hanford's budget.

DOE's "top-to-bottom" review of all its cleanup programs calls for accelerating those two projects, plus hunting for ways to neutralize Hanford's "low activity" radioactive wastes without glassifying them.

The top-to-bottom review's

DOE

HAB looks at budget request. **B2.**

Report criticizes cleanup. **B3.**

findings and recommendations came out Monday — the same day Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham unveiled DOE's fiscal 2003 cleanup

budget request to Congress.

Hanford's DOE officials are digesting the budget request and the review's conclusions. They are expected to discuss both with the Hanford Advisory Board on Friday in Kennewick.

Abraham ordered the review last spring, saying he was shocked by an estimate that

See **DOE**, Page A2

9 FEB. 02 Hanford fire victims fund still has cash

■ *Red Cross chapter wants to ensure remaining \$60,000 goes to help Benton City area*

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

More than a year and a half after the Hanford fire destroyed the homes of 10 Benton City families, the Red Cross is starting again on its efforts to help victims.

It still has a little more than \$60,000 of nearly \$87,000 donated specifically to help those fire victims, according to an audit. That's in addition to about \$54,000 donated for Mid-Columbia disasters within the year after the fire, some of it prompted by concern for the Benton City victims.

But the board of the Benton-Franklin chapter points out that it has hired a new executive director to give the chapter a fresh start and is committed to making sure all of the remaining \$60,000 goes to help the Benton City area.

See **Fund**, Page A2

9 FEB. 02 HAB hears DOE's new cleanup approach

■ *Officials explain Hanford budget, new master plan*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford's federal leaders say they have a long list of projects that could speed up under the Department of Energy's new budget-and-cleanup approach.

The site is in a good position to grab a major chunk of \$800 million to \$1.1 billion that DOE says it will distribute to cleanup projects nationwide that show plans to accelerate their work,

Keith Klein, DOE's Hanford manager, and Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection, told the Hanford Advisory Board on Friday.

"These (accelerated plans) are things we've already been doing. We just have to tie it up, wrap it in a ribbon and present it to the powers-that-be back there (in Washington, D.C.)," Klein said.

These plans range from finding new ways

Official

Tank farms manager moving to D.C. **B1.**

B2 TRI-CITY HERALD FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2002

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DOE officials brace for cleanup questions from HAB

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Keith Klein got a preview Thursday of numerous Hanford cleanup budget questions that the Hanford Advisory Board plans to ask him and Harry Boston today.

Klein, the Department of Energy's Hanford manager, and Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection, are scheduled to discuss DOE's 2003 Hanford budget proposal and DOE's plan to accelerate cleanup nationwide at 1 p.m. today at the WestCoast Tri-Cities Hotel in Kennewick.

DOE unveiled its budget request and the acceleration concept earlier this week.

Both have prompted questions and skepticism among Hanford Advisory

Board members and the site's regulators.

On Thursday Klein asked the board to give DOE's new budget-and-cleanup approach a chance before criticizing it.

Board members have criticized DOE's 2003 budget request to Congress for Hanford, which guarantees \$1.46 billion to the site. Then the site can apply for extra money for accelerated cleanup from an \$800 million DOE incentive fund. This budget scenario materialized simultaneously with DOE calling for speeding up cleanup at Hanford and other sites.

The \$1.46 billion for 2003 is \$262 billion less than the \$1.722 billion the site received for 2002.

And DOE has not said how much Hanford needs to meet its legal cleanup obligations in 2003. Unofficial specula-

tion puts that figure at \$1.8 billion to \$1.9 billion.

"Essentially, the rhetoric to accelerate is not reflected in the budget request at all," said HAB member Gerald Pollet, representing Heart of America Northwest.

However, Klein said Hanford is in a good position to earn a significant amount from the \$800 million incentive fund to bump up the \$1.46 billion figure. He said DOE headquarters in Washington, D.C., wants to ensure it will get speeded-up work for that \$800 million. "That's responsible management," he said.

He also noted that DOE's master acceleration plan calls for speeded-up projects to have their budgets locked in

through 2008 to make long-term planning easier.

The Hanford board's questions earmarked for today include:

■ How does Hanford plan to earn \$262 million or more from the \$800 million incentive fund?

■ What was DOE's rationale for the cuts that trimmed the guaranteed budget to \$1.46 billion?

■ What is the process to earn part of the \$800 million?

■ How will DOE handle planning for fiscal 2003, which begins Oct. 1, if it won't know for a few months how much money will go to Hanford?

■ Is DOE seeking changes in the Tri-Party Agreement?

■ If the Northwest does not agree to DOE's changes, will Hanford lose federal money?

■ Will the HAMMER training complex and other training programs be funded?

■ How much does Hanford need to meet all of its obligations in 2003?

■ How did DOE analyze what should be sped up?

■ Will the Hanford Advisory Board's funding be cut in 2003? Since the law that set up the HAB and other DOE sites' advisory boards expires in May, will action be taken to continue their existence?

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Possible cuts ahead for Hanford's PILT money

By Nathan Isaacs

Herald staff writer

President Bush's budget has proposed some cuts to the popular Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes program.

However, it's too soon to say whether those cuts will include the Department of Energy's annual payments to Benton, Franklin and Grant counties for the Hanford reservation.

"I've heard that's in question," said Benton County Treasurer Darwin Parker. "But we go through this every year. It's really decided by DOE and Congress."

Parker said the administration's recommendations may just apply to other federal agencies, such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife, which pay local governments for untaxed federal property.

Hanford's PILT money is part of a DOE Richland office budget that

includes money for several projects.

That fund has shrunk by about \$23 million under DOE's fiscal 2003 nuclear cleanup request sent to Congress this week.

DOE's Richland office still is studying whether that will affect Hanford's PILT payments, said Bob Tibbatts, chief financial officer for DOE's Richland office.

Hanford's 2001 PILT payments totaled \$2.5 million, Parker said. Of that

money, the Richland School District got about \$891,000, Benton County Public Works received about \$396,000 and the Mid-Columbia Library District got about \$100,000.

Another seven taxing districts share in the money. Also, a fund is set up with about \$650,000 for countywide school districts to dip into to pay off debts.

The county first received Hanford PILT money in 1996 after a long struggle

by Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver, who was then the county's treasurer.

"Claude fought the long hard battle with DOE to do this, and then I picked up the torch to keep it going," Parker said.

■ Reporter Nathan Isaacs can be reached at 582-1556 or via e-mail at nisaacs@tri-cityherald.com.

DOE's Boston headed to D.C. headquarters

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Harry Boston, the federal manager of Hanford's tank farms, announced Friday plans to move to the Department of Energy's headquarters in Washington, D.C.



Boston

DOE's cleanup czar Jessie Roberson recently asked Boston, manager of DOE's

Office of River Protection, to make the move, Boston told the Hanford Advisory Board.

Boston said he told Roberson that he wants to stay at Hanford long enough to ensure the site's tank wastes glassification project's construction is solidly under way.

He declined to elaborate on what Washington, D.C., job would await him or how long until the move. Details remain undecided, he said.

Questions arose at Friday's meeting about plans for Boston and Hanford Manager Keith Klein. The advisory board

prefers that both stay in their current jobs. Klein said he has no plans to leave.

Roberson has been planning to move around about one-third of DOE's senior managers to broaden their experience.

For the past few months, Hanford has been thick with rumors about Boston leaving.

Boston is in charge of Hanford's biggest single problem — 177 leak-prone underground tanks that hold 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes.

The proposed solution is to build plants to convert those wastes into glass — a multi-bil-

lion-dollar program. Construction of the complex is expected to begin late this year.

Boston replaced Dick French as head of the Office of River Protection in October 2000, after DOE fired French during disputes over the glassification construction contract.

Boston was Lockheed Martin Hanford's vice president for tank waste retrieval and disposal from 1996 to 1999, before serving as deputy manager at DOE's Richland office for nine months.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Area braces for influx of 7,300 newcomers

By Nathan Isaacs

Herald staff writer

While Kuleen Patel is trying to figure out how to treat Hanford's radioactive wastes, Tri-City leaders are trying to figure out what to do about Patel and 7,300 other newcomers expected to arrive in the next few years.

Almost 60 years of Tri-City history provide a crystal ball to predict what's ahead: Boom times mean prosperity, as well as lots of headaches.

It's more surmise than science to predict the impacts of this déjà boom, but Patel and community leaders are hoping their for-

tunetelling will help keep the Mid-Columbia a great place to live.

With a \$4 billion effort under way to build a vitrification plant to turn the wastes into glass, there are lots of questions:

'Déjà boom' series

Today the Herald kicks off an examination of how more than 7,300 anticipated newcomers soon will change the Tri-City community.

As construction begins on a massive plant to turn Hanford's highly radioactive wastes into glass, it will be déjà boom time.

It's a cycle the Tri-Cities has been familiar with since 1943, when the government seized hundreds of square miles of Eastern Washington desert for the secretive Manhattan Project.

Since then, federal projects have brought repeated economic booms, followed by economic busts as the work went away.

Each time, this predictable cycle has brought new problems and challenges.

"Déjà boom" will look at the impacts our communities are facing this time, and if they are prepared.

What happens as new workers and their families boost the area's population by 5 percent?

How many children will have to cram into crowded portable classrooms? How

much higher will apartment and housing prices soar? Will there be enough coffee shops, grocery stores and doctors?

How bad will traffic jam up as workers commute between home and Hanford? And will the overload on understaffed police and fire departments put public safety at risk?

Answering these questions, while facing shrinking budgets from the passage of tax-cutting measures like Initiatives 695 and 747 with no significant new revenues in sight, is a daunting task.

"If you don't do anything, you rely on your existing revenue sources to deal with this influx of people," said Richland City Manager John Darlington.

Without more money, he said, "you remove any slack in the system ... and there isn't any slack."

Vit plant workers may add 20 minutes to rush hour

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Twenty minutes.
That's the estimate for about how much longer the Tri-City rush hour will last once 4,450 employees headed for work at Hanford's waste glassification project join the daily commute.

But Joann Rung and her husband Michael already have figured out how to avoid the aggravation.



Both have used van pools to get to their Hanford-area jobs for a couple of years, and for a decade

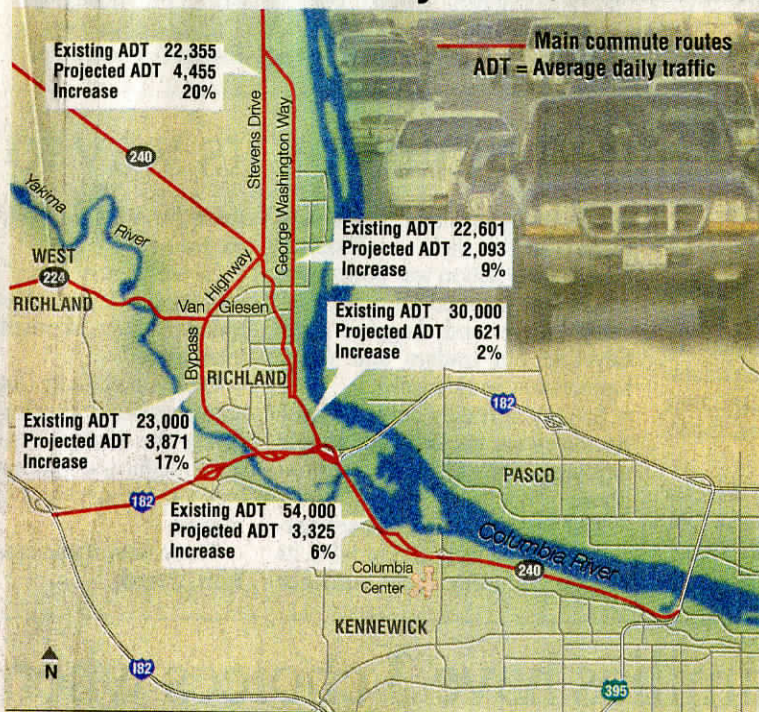
before that, they took the bus.

"It works, not having to put up with the traffic," she said. "More people should try it."

It's also cost-effective, said Roger Wright, an engineer with SCM Consultants of Kennewick.

He estimates that for every extra minute Tri-City commuters spend in gridlock, the tab is about \$1.7 million a year in lost time and wasted fuel.

Routes most affected by additional workers



SOURCE: SCM Consultants

Herald/Sherry Emery

Total annual bill for the additional 20 minutes: \$34 million.

Many of the new employees migrating to the Tri-Cities will

chuckle at the extended Tri-City commute. It's still much better than what they have experienced elsewhere — in Seattle, Portland,

San Francisco and Los Angeles.

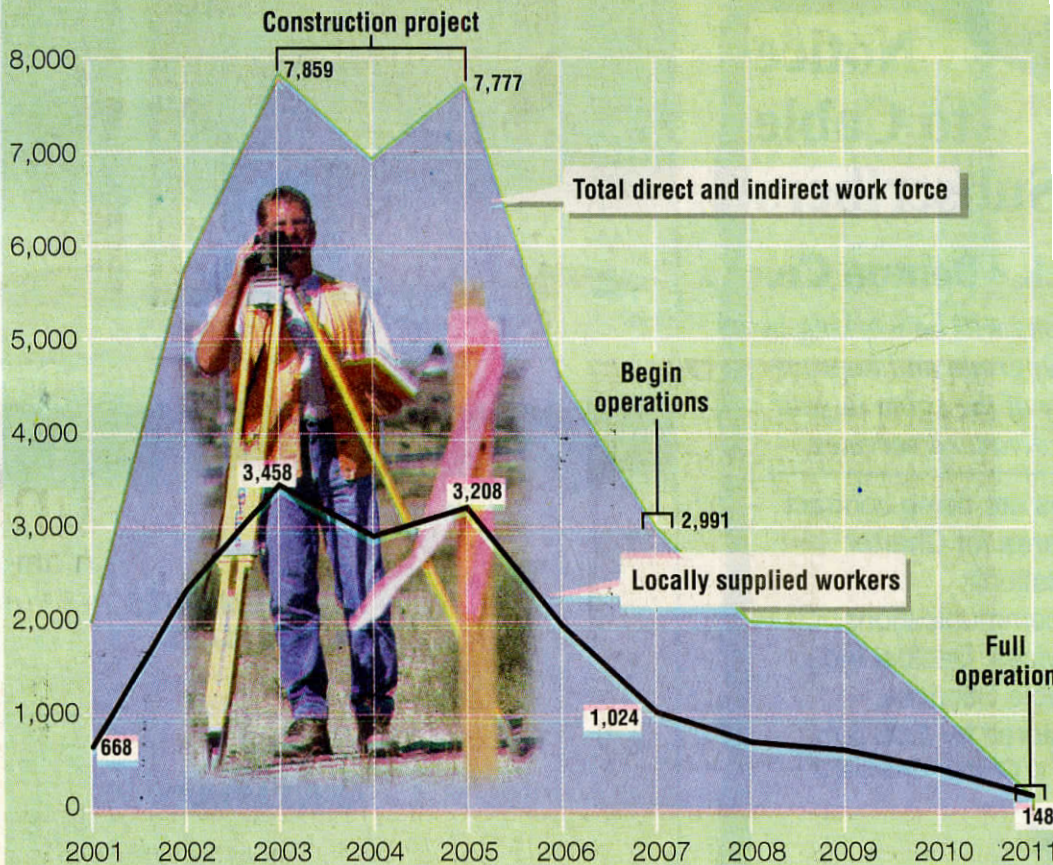
But local officials who are anxious to maintain the area's standard of living are rankled.

"Why compare us to a city that has major congestion?" said Richland Councilwoman Carol Moser. "We need to insist on a level of service that maintains our quality of life. I don't want to be in the same situation as Seattle, where people are leaving because the traffic is so bad. I want people to move to the Tri-Cities because traffic is so good."

In June, the Hanford Communities — a coalition of most Tri-City-area city and county governments — spent about \$65,000 to have Pertteet Engineering of Everett, Thomas/Lane Associates of Seattle and SCM Consultants of Kennewick do a study on community impacts associated with the glassification project.

Among the report's findings: ■ Existing Hanford and Tri-City-area traffic will remain level or get worse in the next 10 years, even without the glassification project, at the rate of 3.3 percent a year.

Project-related jobs peak in 2003



SOURCE: Perteet Engineering Inc.

Herald graphics/Sherry Emery

Job security

■ *Influx of families will bring need for more teachers*

By Kristin M. Kraemer
Herald staff writer

Tina Dahl isn't worried about job security in the Tri-Cities over the next decade.

A student teacher at Badger Mountain Elementary School in Richland, Dahl will

receive her degree in May, just in time to get in on the Tri-Cities' population boom.

"I think it's an excellent time. A lot of my friends who are student teaching, we've been talking about different jobs and layoffs and the uncertainty" of the market, she said. "Teaching is the one, we said, where there are always openings and they need them."

At least seven Mid-Columbia school districts will need more teachers than normal in the next few years as the Tri-City-area population is expected to swell with workers coming for Hanford's glassification plant.

But with the influx of people come concerns about overcrowded classrooms and inadequate resources in the public school system.

In June, the Hanford Communities — a coalition of most Tri-City-area city and county governments — spent about \$65,000 to have Pertteet

Engineering of Everett, Thomas/Lane Associates of Seattle and SCM Consultants of Kennewick do a study on impacts associated with the waste project.

The consultants estimate 7,344 people will move into the region for jobs associated with the plant. That will mean at least 1,437 more school desks will be needed in 2005 to seat additional students in Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, Kiona-Benton City, Prosser, Finley and North Franklin districts.

And that doesn't count the usual district growth.

"If the kids come, no matter when they come and for what reason, we have an obligation to provide for those kids," said Kennewick Superintendent Paul Rosier. "The scale of it might be a little bit larger, but it is really not that dif-

ferent from what we face every fall."

So far, Mid-Columbia school districts have yet to see enrollments reach the levels projected as the project ramps up. Because of that, many administrators have decided to err on the side of caution and budget conservatively instead of buying too many portable classrooms and hiring new teachers for children who might not show up.

Richland Superintendent Rich Semler said the impact study is based on mathematical estimates and so far hasn't reflected reality.

"What if those numbers are not accurate or are realistic or too high?" he asked. "We don't want to be spending taxpayers' money on space we don't need yet. So we have to be very prudent as we buy portables and kind of balance

that with seeing the whites of their eyes."

The report projected 188 new students related to the project would come to the Richland School District during 2001. But as of January, the district's enrollment of 9,620 students was up only 172 from its average the previous year, Semler said. Some of those students probably aren't related to the vit plant, he added.

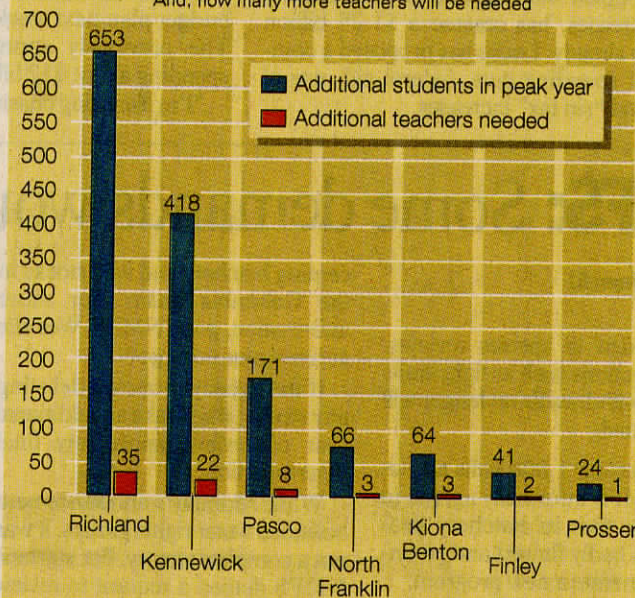
The actual increase "seems to be at a much smaller scale. We're just kind of watching each month but they haven't shown up in droves yet," Semler said. "It may be that they're coming a little bit later or some of the workers are coming without their families."

The report forecast an additional 504 children would

See **Job security**, Page A2

Enrollment increase in 2005

And, how many more teachers will be needed



SOURCE: Pertteet Engineering Inc.

Herald/Sherry Emery

'Déjà boom' series

■ **Today:** School districts will scramble to find space for 1,445 new students, meaning new jobs for teachers and more portable classrooms.

■ **Wednesday:** City and county leaders will need more than \$10 million to hire additional police and firefighters during the project, and where that money will come from is uncertain.

■ **Thursday:** The Tri-City housing market already is showing effects of the Hanford project, and more are to come.

■ **Friday:** Mid-Columbia leaders are trying to convince the state Legislature to fork over about \$10 million from taxes generated by the project.

■ **Saturday:** Who will be the winners and survivors, and what will happen after the boom?

Hanford cleanup may get a boost

■ *DOE financial head says more funding may become available*

By Les Blumenthal

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — The Department of Energy's top financial officer sought Tuesday to diffuse criticism of the administration's proposed \$262 million cut in cleanup funding for the Hanford nuclear reservation, indicating there eventually might be more money available to keep the cleanup effort on track.

But at one point in his testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Bruce Carnes, DOE's chief financial officer, said the administration was not necessarily prepared to provide enough funding to ensure compliance with cleanup deadlines in the so-called Tri-Party Agreement with Washington state.

"Will you commit to full funding of the Tri-Party Agreement?" asked U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., a committee member.

"I can't," Carnes said. "I realize this is important to you. We are not indifferent to your concerns."

After a break to allow senators a chance to vote on a farm bill amendment on the floor, Carnes said he needed to clarify his earlier remarks. "We will carry out the law," he said.

Cantwell, however, was less than satisfied.

See **Cleanup**, Page A2

Savannah River official to fill tank farms post

■ *New manager set for DOE's Office of River Protection*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The Department of Energy official in charge of Savannah River's tank farms will be the new manager of DOE's Office of River Protection.

No information was available Tuesday on when Roy Schepens will replace Harry Boston as the federal leader of arguably the nation's biggest and most complicated radioactive waste cleanup venture. Boston will go to DOE's Washington, D.C., headquarters for a yet-to-be-announced post there.

Friday, Boston said he told DOE's cleanup czar, Jessie Roberson, that he wants to stay at Hanford long enough to ensure the site's tank waste glassification project's construction gets solidly under way.

That construction, already several months behind schedule, is expected to start later this year.

Boston declined to comment Tuesday, indicating he needed more details from Washington, D.C. When contacted Tuesday evening Schepens declined to comment, preferring to work through DOE's communications department at Savannah River, S.C.

Roberson announced

Schepens' appointment in a Tuesday letter sent to Hanford's various constituencies.

Schepens is DOE's assistant manager for high-level wastes at Savannah River. That puts him in charge of the site's 51 massive tanks holding 34 million gallons of radioactive wastes. DOE has closed two of those tanks. Also, Schepens is in charge of DOE's largest, although temporarily off-line, radioactive waste glassification plant.

At Hanford he will be in charge of 177 tanks containing 53 million gallons of wastes. None has been closed. And Schepens will lead Hanford's efforts to build and operate a waste glassification complex, which legally is required to convert its first wastes into glass by 2007. DOE has hinted that it might aim for a 2006 startup date.

Schepens will be the Office of River Protection's third manager since it was created in early 1999. DOE fired the original manager, Dick French, when he and DOE's headquarters argued over how a glassification contract should be set up. Boston, then one of DOE's two deputy Hanford managers, replaced French in October 2000.

Boston's and Schepens' upcoming transfers are part of Roberson's overall plan to shift about one-third of DOE's 70 senior managers to expand and

See **Post**, Page B2

Alarmed over security

■ *Increase in Hanford workers will create more demand for fire, police officers*

By Kristin M. Kraemer
Herald staff writer

Tri-City drivers may be reaching for the aspirin as their daily commute slows over the next few years,

but the Richland Police Department's five traffic officers

face an even bigger headache.

Nearly 1,500 more drivers are expected to join the daily Hanford commute through Richland in the next three years as work on the new glassification plant goes into high gear.

Already, the traffic unit is seeing more auto accidents and traffic violations and complaints of road rage.

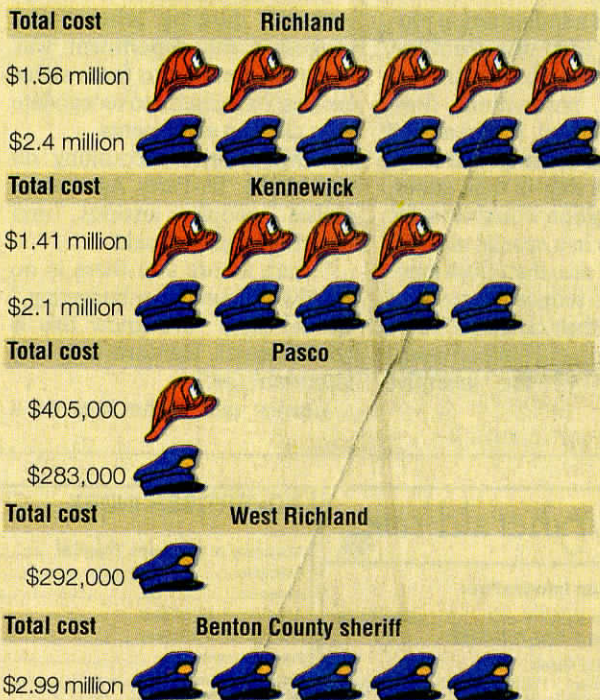
Sgt. Chris Vowels, supervisor of the traffic unit, admits it won't be an easy task dealing with the effect of the 7,344 people expected to come to the Tri-Cities. But he expects his officers to cope.

"We'll deal with whatever happens, and I don't see it being that major yet," he said.

"I think our approach is basically going to be more selective on where we're going to be enforcing, a more coordinated approach with (the media) and a little bit more public about why we're doing

Cities anticipate additional fire, police officers needed by 2003

Average training time for new recruits is 6 - 12 months



SOURCE: Pertee Engineering, Inc.

Herald/Sherry Emery

what we're doing and even what our results are — even if they're negative."

Tri-City firefighters also are gearing up for the heavier traffic volume. More cars on the road mean more accidents that might require emergency aid. And the jammed roadways

also have the potential to slow response times to emergencies.

"We'll continue to provide the best possible services, but delays in traffic conditions, time of response and delays to multiple calls making units unavailable are certainly going to be more common than they

'Déjà boom' series

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Read the entire Déjà Boom series on the Internet at www.hanfordnews.com/.

already are," said Richland Fire Chief Glenn Johnson.

His counterpart in Kennewick, Bob Kirk, thinks the greatest hit to fire departments will be in number of emergency calls.

"You're going to be having very active people coming into our community, and active people tend to get hurt," he said. "Typically, they're associated with car wrecks and broken legs and activity injuries."

See **Security**, Page A9



15 FEB 02
■ *Governor plans to discuss Hanford budget with DOE secretary*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Gov. Gary Locke plans to take concerns over Hanford's cleanup budget to Washington, D.C., within 10 days, he said Thursday after a day at the nuclear site.

His plans call for meeting with Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and members of Congress to argue for adequate cleanup spending at Hanford.

"I'm concerned that for the second year in a row, the Bush administration proposes to cut (Hanford's) budget," Locke said.

The governor spent Thursday in Richland, touring Hanford and discussing cleanup issues with DOE officials and Hanford contractors.

Locke said the state is willing to work with

DOE on finding ways to speed Hanford's cleanup — the stated goal of DOE's controversial new budget approach.

"The bottom line for us is that we work within the framework of the Tri-Party Agreement," Locke said.

That means the state won't agree to delays in legal deadlines, or to cleanup standards that are less stringent than what's outlined in the agreement between DOE and regulators, Locke said.

No firm number has been set to say how much it will cost to meet next year's legal cleanup obligations. Unofficial estimates range from \$1.76 billion to \$1.9 billion.

So far, DOE's budget request for 2003 would guarantee at least \$1.46 billion for Hanford. But that is \$262 million less than the current budget,

and at least \$300 million short of meeting the site's legal cleanup obligations.

An additional \$800 million or more could be available if Hanford produces plans for faster cleanup. Any proposal would have to meet the approval of DOE's Washington, D.C., headquarters.

DOE officials say Hanford is in good shape to capture a major chunk of the extra money, although the standards for winning headquarters' approval remain unclear.

DOE's Hanford Manager Keith Klein speculated a firm Hanford budget figure should be nailed down by summer at the latest, which is when Congress starts going over the federal budget request in detail.

Locke said a lawsuit against DOE is possible if Hanford's cleanup efforts are not adequately funded.

See **Locke**, Page A2

FFTF

14 FEB, 02

closure moving quickly

■ *Benton commissioner wants shutdown delayed; some systems down today*

By Annette Cary and John Trumbo

Herald staff writers

Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver got an answer he didn't want when he wrote the Department of Energy this week seeking 48-hour notification of any activities to deactivate Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

Today reactor workers will take several steps to shut it down, replied Michael Schlender, deputy manager for site transition.

"We intend to expeditiously implement the secretary's decision to permanently deactivate FFTF," he wrote.

Oliver had asked DOE to delay until June any activities that would hamper the ability to restart the reactor. Supporters wanted time to see if a coalition of Richland, the Port of Benton and Benton County could find a user for the mothballed research reactor.

Republican and Democratic administrations have said the government has no need for it and have ordered it permanently shut down. But Mid-Columbia governments are researching whether the reactor may be declared surplus and marketed to private industry or other governments, possibly to make isotopes for medicine.

"They're just doing damage to a perfectly good reactor," Oliver said. "If serious damage is done between now and June, people won't want to come near it."

Work scheduled today includes cutting off a particular electronic system and the system used to cool it, turning off effluent monitors used only to create a data base and stopping monitoring of the purity of the sodium in the reactor's cooling system.

See **FFTF**, Page B2

14 FEB 02

Influx of workers for Hanford cleanup will put pressure on housing market

By John Trumbo
Herald staff writer

Hanford's \$4 billion vitrification project bodes well for the region's economy for the next decade, but it will strain the housing market.

Thousands of new

workers coming to the Tri-Cities will create a classic supply-

demand crunch.

Translation: It's going to be tough to find a place to live soon.

The Hanford Communities — a coalition of most Tri-City-area city and county governments — spent about \$65,000 last summer to assess the community effects associated with Hanford's environmental cleanup.

The study by Pertee Engineering, Thomas/Lane and Associates and SCM Consultants concluded:

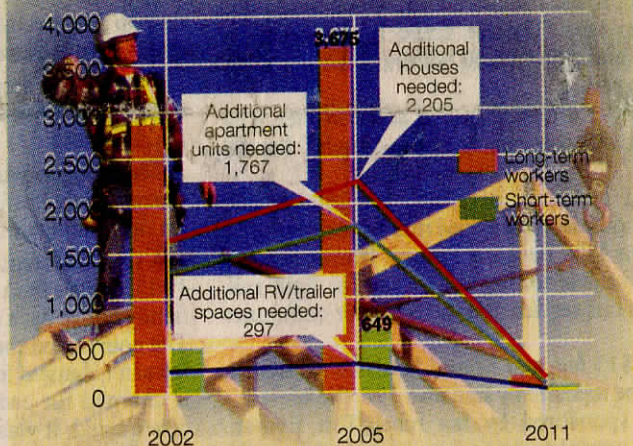
■ About 1,600 new workers will come to Richland, and another 1,200 are expected to move to Kennewick.

■ Pasco's share of the vitrification work force will be 500 or so, and West Richland can expect 400.

■ Benton City will have to make room for about 200.

■ The wave of new workers will send ripples as far out as Prosser.

Vit plant workers need housing



SOURCE: Pertee Engineering, Inc.

Herald/Sherry Emery

Approximately three-quarters of the vit work force of 4,500 will be new to the region, needing homes, goods and services, said Jim Jordan of Pertee Engineering. There also will be a couple of thousand people coming to fill new secondary jobs created to help satisfy needs of the new population.

Add the numbers and it means the Tri-Cities will have to make room for about 7,800 employees and their families.

The peak demand will be for 4,270 housing units, with 51 percent of them homes owned by the workers and 41 percent rentals. The rest will be RVs or trailers.

Although the vit project is barely a year old, the effects are evident as more than

1,700 people have been hired so far.

Matt Daggett is among Bechtel National's vit vanguard. He arrived in Richland in October, bringing his newly acquired chemical engineering degree from the University of Washington in Seattle.

Daggett considers himself fortunate to have latched onto a one-bedroom apartment after only one long day of following leads from newspaper classified ads.

"I came expecting Eastern Washington prices, but what I found is closer to what I was seeing in Seattle," Daggett said. Instead of \$400 to \$675 a month for a one-bedroom unit, he found rates starting at \$550 and higher.

"It's tough now, and when the construction starts (for

'Déjà boom' series

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the vitrification plant), it is going to be worse," he said.

"People told me, 'Good luck,' and put me on their waiting lists. They said it would be about 1½ months," Daggett recalled. Luckily, he entered the Water's Edge Apartments just as a tenant was moving out. "I paid the deposit on the spot," he said.

Sylvia Erickson, president of Crown Property Management, has watched rental prices climb 20 percent from March to September 2001. "It's the one-bedroom and studio units that have increased the most," she said.

The rental vacancy rate in the Tri-Cities was a very sparse 2 percent last September. It has eased slightly to about 4 percent now, Erickson said.

See **Housing**, Page A7

additional firefighters and police.

Likewise, Kennewick will need about \$2.3 million. And local school districts will need \$1.5 million for more classrooms or portables. The list goes on — about \$10 million total.

Unfortunately, the federal project isn't paying property taxes or utility fees, which would help. The project will pay sales taxes, either associated with the construction or from what workers spend in the community.

But only the state and Benton County will get sales tax money from the construction, about \$67 million and \$9.9 million

See **Legislators**, Page A2



way to produce that cash.

"We're not creating something that's new," Darrington said.

"There is plenty of tax revenue to deal with the problem, it's just an issue of distribution."

Darrington said Richland would need more than \$5 million to mitigate effects over the 10-year life of the \$4 billion project. That money would likely pay for

14 FEB 02

First wave of Hanford workers to move to the Tri-Cities already is seeing strain on the housing market as new employees scoop up remaining apartments, houses

By John Trumbo
Herald staff writer

Janet Thomas loves her new job as an administrative specialist for Bechtel National Inc. at Hanford.

At the end of her work day Thomas heads toward home, a 36-foot motor coach now parked at Elm Grove RV Park in Benton City.

The spacious 2001 Monaco is comfortable and offers just about anything a homeowner would need — except a front porch, a hot tub tucked away on a brick patio with wisteria dangling from redwood lattice or a good-sized shop and barn.

Those amenities can be had with a house, but they don't come with RVs.

Thomas is one of 1,700 employees who've been hired in the last year as the first wave of about 4,500 workers associated with the \$4 billion vitrification project at Hanford arrives in the Tri-City area.

Coming from Las Vegas, where she lived in her luxurious Monaco while working for Bechtel's Yucca Mountain project, Thomas is excited to be in a new part of the country that is closer to her family in Seattle.

"The prices here look pretty good," said Thomas, who noted that the gambling capital of the West, one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation, is pretty pricy.

After living two years in the Monaco, however, Thomas, 59, would like to find some ground in the Tri-Cities on which to build a permanent residence. She might even retire here, she said.

Until then, the RV will have to serve as home sweet home.

Another recent arrival is Tim Pace, 26, a Benton City native returned to the land of his roots.

Pace was hired in September by Washington Group, a subcontractor for Bechtel, and has been frustrated in his search to buy a decent duplex or fourplex in the Tri-Cities.

"What I've seen is either well-used or trash," he said.

The market is so hot for duplexes that Pace found he couldn't even buy an A house in Richland, sight unseen, for the asking price of \$109,000. An agent with the listing office beat him to the deal two hours after the property became available.

"The prices are \$120,000 to \$260,000. Even repossessed houses are going for top

dollar," said Pace, a simulation engineer who is living at his parents' home for the time being.

By 2003 there will not be enough housing to accommodate the incoming work force, according to a study done to assess how the vitrification project will affect the region.

What I've seen is either well-used or trash.

Tim Pace, on his search to buy a decent home

Apartment will be in short supply, and home buyers will be scrambling to get in line in a seller's market.

Sharion Rabb isn't waiting.

Rabb jumped across America a year ago to follow a career opportunity as an engineer human resources lead for Bechtel. Her hus-

band and three children still are in South Carolina, while she and her mother are staked out in the Tri-Cities, searching for a suitable family home.

Rabb missed out on one house she liked, then had three lots slip out of her grasp in the past year before finally buying a lot in Canyon Lakes. If all goes well, construction on their new home will begin in April and it should be ready to receive the whole family by summer.

■ Reporter John Trumbo can be reached at 582-1529 or via e-mail at jtrumbo@tri-cityherald.com.

Benton County may join FFTF partnership

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Benton County commissioners plan to consider today formally joining an inter-governmental partnership to campaign to save the Fast Flux Test Facility.

The interlocal agreement with Richland and the Port of Benton is to be discussed during the workshop segment of the commission meeting, but it could be considered for final adoption.

"I would certainly like to move it forward as quick as possible," said Commission Chairman Claude Oliver.

The commission meets at 8 a.m. in the Prosser Courthouse. The agreement is scheduled to be discussed at 8:30.

Oliver said the formal partnership would give standing to efforts to see if some entity can take over the research reactor.

The three partners are spending about \$15,000 to investigate whether the research reactor may be declared surplus

and marketed to private industry or other governments. Possible uses include making isotopes for nuclear medicine.

Both Republican and Democratic administrations have said the government has no need for the reactor and have ordered it to be shut down.

Oliver said the agreement could allow the group to pursue a legal injunction to prevent any irreversible damage to the reactor from the shutdown process.

"With an interlocal in place, that can be explored," he said. "It's not a fatal blow right now, but as it gets closer those options are going to be looked at in greater detail."

The agreement creates an executive board with one member from each party. The board would be responsible for FFTF-related decisions, including spending additional money.

The agreement also spells out the percentage each party would be required to pay for costs — 34 percent for Benton County, 33 percent for Richland and 33

percent for the Port of Benton.

Any new partner — private or public — could join the agreement later by agreeing to the cost-sharing plan. And any party can quit the agreement with written notice.

Gary Ballew, Benton County economic development manager, said the agreement would be forwarded to the other potential partners soon.

Oliver did not expect any hurdles to getting the agreement signed.

He has said he'd like until June to pursue options for the reactor. He said keeping it could save money for other Hanford cleanup projects.

He was helping put together marketing packages Monday in the Citizens for Medical Isotopes offices.

He plans to travel to Washington, D.C., in two weeks to discuss FFTF and other issues.

■ Reporter Nathan Isaacs can be reached at 582-1556 or via e-mail at nisaacs@tri-cityherald.com.

15 FEB 02

Cities ask Legislature to help ease vit plant boom

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Mid-Columbia governments are on the lookout for money to ease growing pains when more than 7,300 newcomers arrive to work on Hanford's waste treatment plant.

They may have found their answer from another newcomer.

Richland City Manager John Darrington joined the city in 2001 after serving a similar role in Gillette, Wyo. He's suggesting legislation modeled after Wyoming law as a



way to produce that cash.

"We're not creating something that's new," Darrington said.

"There is plenty of tax revenue to deal with the problem, it's just an issue of distribution."

Darrington said Richland would need more than \$5 million to mitigate effects over the 10-year life of the \$4 billion project. That money would likely pay for

Hall of Fame to honor Hanford managers

■ 10 charter members
to be inducted in May

By the Herald staff

The Hanford Chapter of the National Management Association plans to celebrate its 25th anniversary by creating a hall of fame for outstanding past and

present members.

The chapter plans to induct about 10 charter Hall of Fame members in May, said Terry Winward, president-elect of the National Management Association's Columbia Basin Area Council. Right now Hanford's chapter is hunting for potential hall of fame applicants.

The National Management

Association provides mentoring for upper, middle and lower level managers. Also, the Hanford chapter has been extremely active in the Tri-Cities, developing the Junior Achievement program and numerous other youth and civic programs.

The Hanford chapter has been named the National Management Association's top

chapter nationwide for community service six times in the past 15 years. Hanford's chapter has about 300 members.

That number does not include past members who have retired. The Tri-Cities has two other chapters — one for Energy Northwest and one for the Tri-Cities' public employees.

Nominees for the Hall of

Fame can be any member or retired member who has spent at least 10 years in the chapter.

The selection will be strictly on a scoring system, with points given for holding offices, developing programs and participating in some activities.

People seeking applications should call 372-2433. The application deadline is April 10.

Hanford river project receives federal award

Fluor Hanford's River Corridor Project recently became the sixth Hanford organization to receive the federal government's highest safety recognition — Star status under the Voluntary Protection.

The award comes after inspectors looked at the project's safety training, procedures and track record.

Other Hanford organizations to obtain Star status are Protection Technologies Hanford, Fluor Federal Services, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the former DynCorp Tri-Cities Services that has been absorbed by Fluor and the Fast Flux Test Facility.

About 900 businesses have achieved this level of federal recognition, as well as 18 Department of Energy companies and organizations.

New Hanford manager comes to see site

Roy Schepens, the incoming manager of the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection, visited Hanford on Thursday for the first time.



Schepens

Schepens will replace Harry Boston as the lead DOE manager of Hanford's tank farms and waste glassification project. Boston is being transferred to Washington, D.C., for a yet-to-be-determined post at DOE's national headquarters.

No date has been set for Schepens' and Boston's transfers.

Schepens is expected to visit Hanford again before his transfer.

Schepens, 49, is DOE's assistant manager for materials and facility stabilization at its Savannah River, S.C., site.

Duratek signs contract with Fluor Hanford

Duratek Technical Services signed a new contract with Fluor Hanford to handle much of the work it has done since late 1996, the company announced Wednesday.

Duratek Technical is one of the remaining spin-off "enterprise" companies created by Fluor Hanford's original corporate team in 1996.

An enterprise company was guaranteed a specific amount of Hanford work in its early years before being cut loose to compete equally with other corporations for Hanford work.

Duratek has been cut loose from Fluor's apron strings and had to compete with other firms for the new contract.

The new contract is guaranteed for three years with Fluor keeping options to renew it for a fourth and fifth year.

The contract guarantees \$4.3 million a year to Duratek Technical in basic work and up to \$3 million annually in additional work, the company said.

TRIDEC luncheon celebrates vit plant

The Tri-City Industrial Development Council will hold a luncheon to mark the progress made toward building a \$4 billion facility to treat Hanford's radioactive tank waste.

The luncheon starts at 11:30 a.m. Thursday at the Richland Red Lion Inn. The cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for others.

It has been nearly a year since the Department of Energy awarded the 10-year contract to Bechtel National Inc. and its primary subcontractor, Washington Group, Int., to develop the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant to vitrify the wastes.

For information or reservations, call 735-1000.

— By the Herald staff

No Hanford fine for radioactivity glitch

■ *DOE, Bechtel cooperated to fix measuring problem*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency won't fine Hanford for a two-year glitch in measuring radioactivity.

That's because the Department of Energy and Bechtel Hanford cooperated with the EPA in finding and fixing the problem, Dennis Faulk, the EPA's acting Hanford site manager, wrote in a Feb. 11 letter to DOE.

However, a violation of federal law and of the Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact which governs Hanford's cleanup, did

occur, Faulk wrote.

The letter criticized Fluor Hanford for being slow in providing complete data that the EPA sought in the investigation — saying the EPA, DOE and Bechtel Hanford had to make “a significant effort” to get the information.

However, in past interviews with the Herald, Fluor admitted its initial mistakes and said it immediately began tracking down problems and fixed them several months ago.

The issue was how Fluor checked radioactive wastes from Bechtel's decontamination and demolition of the highly radioactive 233-S plutonium processing building in Hanford's 200 West Area.

Bechtel hired Fluor to determine if the removed 233-S materials were

transuranic wastes or low-level radioactive wastes such as radioactive tools, clothes and debris.

Transuranic wastes can contain certain elements such as neptunium and plutonium. And radiation from those wastes lasts a long time and is more potent than the short-lived radiation found in low-level wastes.

Hanford buries low-level radioactive wastes in a huge landfill.

Transuranic wastes are stored in above-ground metal buildings, awaiting eventual shipment to a permanent underground storage site in New Mexico.

In May 1999, Fluor made mistakes in calculations and in calibrating two radiation detectors.

That meant the devices were not sensi-

tive enough to detect the difference between transuranic and low-level radioactive wastes.

The problem was not discovered until another company's radiation checks did not agree with Fluor's figures in May 2001.

Twenty-eight containers holding about 600 items from the 233-S project were buried in the Hanford landfill after going through the miscalibrated checks.

Experts tracked down the most radioactive one of those 28 containers and moved it to a transuranic waste storage building.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

4 area competitors in 21 FEB **Project of the Year contest**

There are four Tri-City-area competitors for the regional 2002 Project of the Year contest sponsored by the Columbia Basin Chapter of the Project Management Institute.

The eighth annual winner will be announced March 12 at the chapter's awards banquet at the Richland Red Lion hotel.

The winner will then compete against other regions for the chance to go to the institute's international competition.

CH2M Hill Hanford Group was a finalist in last year's international competition with its work on the radioactive wastes in Hanford's Tank SY-101.

Projects are judged on originality, meeting or improving on budgets and deadlines and the complexity of the task.

The four finalists are: CH2M Hill Hanford Group's site preparations for Hanford's proposed waste glassification complex; Fluor Hanford cleaning out the highly radioactive B Cell in Hanford's 300 Area; Bechtel Hanford studying what to do with Hanford's "canyons," five monster-size defunct plutonium processing plants; and Energy Northwest's uninterruptible power supply modification project.

Hospitals sign contract with PNNL for project

The three Tri-City hospitals signed a joint contract with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland for a project to evaluate health care services.

The lab team will use risk analysis practices similar to those used in the nuclear and aviation fields to help the hospitals continue to improve patient safety and meet national hospital accreditation standards.

The project will cost \$10,000.

A glassy grave

4 MAR. 02

Glass logs will end up in huge trenches in central Hanford

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford's biggest single mission is to convert the radioactive liquids and gunk inside its underground tanks into glass.

But that begs the question:

Novel idea

Hanford rethinks storage of cesium, strontium capsules. **B2.**

What happens to the glass?

Part of the answer is that the glassified "low activity wastes" will end up in six massive

trenches to be dug in central Hanford.

Each trench is expected to be 860 feet long, 260 feet wide and 30 feet deep.

That's about the same space covered by each of Hanford's "canyons" — the colossal plutonium processing plants that were idled at the end of the Cold War.

"In fact it's wider" than a canyon, said Dewey Burbank, CH2M Hill Hanford Group's project engineer for the trench project.

Right now, the trenches are going through planning stages.

Hanford researchers work to pass the time

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Think of it as time caught inside a test tube.

That captured time then kicks into warp speed.

Five to 10 minutes zip by in one second.

Conceivably, a month could pass in one laboratory hour. A laboratory year could equal a few centuries at Hanford.

This time acceleration takes place on one tabletop in a small lab room inside southern Hanford's 331 Building. That table holds what essentially is two elaborate chemistry sets complete with vials, tubes, sensors and other thingamabobs.

The setups use hot temper-

atures and fast water and chemical flows through tubes and glass particles to simulate an accelerated passage of time.

Computer simulations and a device resembling a CAT scanner examine the glass after it is aged and weathered in the lab.

"The whole thing is put together on a computer, and we can look out into the future," said Pete McGrail, a senior research scientist at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

The purpose of all this: Figure out how long it will take low-activity radioactive glass to split, chip, crumble or dissolve.

See **Time**, Page A2

to be ready to receive the first cylinder of glassified waste from Hanford's radioactive waste glassification plants, which have yet to be built.

For now, 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes are stored in 17½ underground tanks.

Hanford's master plan calls for building a complex of plants just east of the 200 East Area to begin in 2007 to convert those wastes into glass.

Before glassification can occur, Hanford has to chemically separate the tanks wastes into two categories — "low activity wastes" and very radioactive "high level wastes." Each type of waste requires a different glassification process.

The idea is that the glass will safely hold the radioactive substances until their radioactivity decays to much less dangerous levels.

The glass created from the highly radioactive waste will be put inside an existing huge underground vault in central Hanford that also holds canisters of spent nuclear fuel removed from the K Basins. Eventually, that glass is supposed to be shipped to a planned permanent storage site inside Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

Meanwhile, the majority of

See **Glass**, Page A2

Design updates and public hearings should take at least two years before Hanford can realistically get the necessary state and federal permits to go ahead with the project.

"We have to convince the Department of Energy and the (Washington) Department of

Ecology that we can predict how the (glassified radioactive) materials will behave over a long time," said Fred Mann, a team leader at CH2M Hill.

Requests for construction bids on the trenches are expected to go out in 2005, and two years later the first trench is supposed

2 MAR. 02 Hanford cleanup budget figures remain fuzzy

■ *DOE soon will be legally obligated to offer numbers*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Some cleanup proposals but no dollar figures have begun to materialize out of Hanford's foggy budget picture.

Soon, probably this month, the Department of Energy will be legally obligated to run some revamped fiscal 2003 Hanford cleanup budget figures by Washington's

Department of Ecology and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Will the state and EPA like those plans and figures? Their approval is needed for DOE to tackle its plan to accelerate cleanup at Hanford.

Will DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., like those plans and figures? Its approval is needed to keep Hanford from slipping behind on its current cleanup obligations.

The Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact governing Hanford's cleanup, requires

DOE to brief the state and EPA on its budget request within 30 days of it going to Congress.

Those 30 days end Monday. But the state and EPA have granted DOE one or two weeks of extra time to sort out 2003's extra-complicated budget picture.

So, the state's and EPA's feedback is expected in the near future.

But no one, even in Washington, D.C., knows when DOE's headquarters will say what it likes, what criteria it will use and where it will send extra cleanup money.

Even though no dollar figures have been nailed down, DOE's two Hanford field offices think they are in good shape to sell their plans and numbers to Hanford's regulators and DOE's headquarters.

"We think we measure up well," said Bob Rosselli, DOE's deputy manager for site support functions.

Best-case scenario is Hanford gets lots of extra money. The site's highly radioactive cesium and strontium capsules will be

See **Hanford**, Page A2

Suit against DOE targets tank wastes

■ *Lawsuit claims DOE can't leave radioactive wastes in tanks after they officially close*

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

A recently filed lawsuit claims the Department of Energy cannot legally leave radioactive wastes inside its tanks after they are officially closed.

DOE has been pondering whether it can or should permanently leave some solid wastes in its tanks at Hanford, Savannah River, S.C., and Idaho Falls.

Two environmentalist organizations and the Yakama Indian Nation filed a lawsuit against DOE on Friday in U.S. District Court in Boise that claims such a move is illegal.

The Yakamas, the Idaho-based Snake River Alliance and the Washington, D.C.-based Natural Resources Defense Council

also want a judge to ban DOE from leaving wastes in the tanks.

DOE has 53 million gallons of highly radioactive wastes in 177 tanks at Hanford, 34 million gallons in 51 tanks at Savannah River and 900,000 gallons in 11 tanks at Idaho Falls.

The federal agency's master plan has been to remove all those wastes and convert the material into significantly safer glass. Much of the wastes are liquids and goos that can be pumped out. But significant amounts of wastes are various types of solids, which will be difficult to remove.

In the past three months, DOE has talked seriously about finding cheaper and quicker ways than glassification to dispose of some tank wastes. One idea has been to leave some of the hard-to-remove solid wastes in the bottoms of the tanks, cementing them in and closing off the tanks.

The lawsuit added: "And hope for the best."

Hanford's regulators, Washington's

Department of Ecology and the Environmental Protection Agency have neither embraced nor rejected that concept yet.

To leave solid wastes inside its tanks, DOE will have to reclassify the materials so they no longer are legally "high-level radioactive wastes," the lawsuit claimed.

DOE does not have the legal authority to make such a reclassification, the plaintiffs alleged. They also claimed such a move would be a mere name change that would give DOE an excuse to improperly leave highly radioactive wastes in the tanks.

"This is regulatory sleight-of-hand," said Gary Richardson, director of the Snake River Alliance.

Hanford's Office of River Protection referred questions late Tuesday afternoon to DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., which was closed because of the time zone difference.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

Mid-Columbia

Hanford eyes new technology for cleanup

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

Hanford's push to make a 2028 deadline to get rid of its tank wastes depends on technologies that have not received green lights.

The Department of Energy is looking at a new process called "steam reformation" to enable it to finish neutralizing Hanford's radioactive tank wastes by a 2028 legal deadline. DOE wants to speed up its efforts to get rid of 53 million gallons of Hanford tank wastes. And it hopes to nail down approved plans and guaranteed congressional funding for that effort this summer and fall.

But DOE won't know until late 2002 or early 2003 whether steam reformation is viable.

Hanford's biggest problem is its tank wastes, for which it is building a complex to convert those materials into much safer glass.

DOE calculates that its current glassification plan won't finish that project until 2048 or later — at least 20 years behind its legal timetable.

On Thursday, Harry Boston, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection, briefed the

Hanford Advisory Board on plans to make the 2028 deadline.

Right now, DOE has hired Bechtel National to build and test plants to separate the tank wastes into high-level and low-activity wastes, and glassify them. One melter is to be built to convert the high-level wastes into glass. Three other melters would do the same to low-activity wastes. Extra melters would be added several years later.

Under this plan, glassification would begin in 2007 and end in 2048 or later.

To speed up this project, DOE proposes initially building two high-level melters, which would complete their work by 2028. Those melters would produce 10 percent of Hanford's expected glass, which would contain 97 percent of the tank wastes' radioactivity, according to DOE calculations.

If all of the low-activity wastes are glassified, that would produce 90 percent of Hanford's expected glass, which would contain 3 percent of the wastes' radioactivity. This is the segment that would last to 2048 or beyond.

Boston said DOE wants to replace one of the three low-activity waste melters with a steam reformation device. DOE also aims to

start glassification in 2006 instead of 2007.

Melters have problems glassifying wastes with high percentages of sulfur and organic chemicals — conditions found in much of Hanford's low-activity wastes. That's a major reason why the low-activity wastes efforts are expected to last far beyond 2028.

With steam reformation, the appropriate low-activity wastes and other chemicals would be put in a huge tube. The substances would be heated in the range of 1,500 degrees. That is supposed to destroy the organic materials, leaving steam, carbon dioxide and crystals of wastes.

DOE is optimistic about steam reformation with initial studies showing good results. But DOE does not expect to start testing steam reformation in a lab with real Hanford radioactive wastes until this summer. Those studies probably won't produce results and recommendations until late this year or early 2003, Boston said.

"If (the studies say no to steam reformation), we'll work on another plan," Boston said.

■ Reporter John Stang can be reached at 582-1517 or via e-mail at jstang@tri-cityherald.com.

HAB concerned about cleanup risks

By the Herald staff

The Hanford Advisory Board wonders if the Department of Energy could be shortchanging risks to people and the environment in its plans to speed up nuclear cleanup.

The board sent a memo Friday to DOE to voice its concerns on the issue. DOE is making a big nationwide push to accelerate its nuclear cleanup efforts, saying the environmental problems posing the greatest risks should get top priority. The board supports that

concept.

But the board's memo contended DOE's master plan does not say how it selected which projects should get top priority.

Consequently, the board outlined its positions on how DOE should develop detailed acceleration plans. These are:

■ Credible studies of health and environmental risks must precede any DOE move to relax cleanup standards to cut costs and speed up its efforts.

■ There should be public discus-

sions prior to DOE's decisions on specific acceleration proposals.

■ Risks from chemical contamination should be considered along with radioactive contamination.

■ The state and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should keep their roles and clout intact under any acceleration proposal.

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B3

Port of Benton gives FFTF rescue efforts office space

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Claude Oliver, Benton County Commission chairman, is getting some free office space from the Port of Benton to boost his efforts to save Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

"There is a heavy demand on my schedule to coordinate things with FFTF," Oliver said. "The clock is ticking. ... Deadlines are approaching"

Oliver is heading efforts to get the reactor restarted so it could make cancer-treating medicines.

"The project is world changing with its significance and immediate health benefits," he said.

The county, port and Richland are teaming to convince the federal government to allow them to find a private company to take over FFTF.

But the government said restarting the reactor for medical research and commercial use is too big a financial gamble, and work already has begun to

decommission the reactor.

That's why Oliver said he needs the office space. He said the agreement between the port, county and Richland allows them to share resources.

He said his "office" is a corner of a conference room in the north Richland building. He has a desk, computer, phone and a chair — and access to coffee.

Oliver said the space is convenient because of its proximity to key players involved in FFTF. He said his time in the port digs is flexible, or whenever they have meetings scheduled. "Folks can still reach me by calling the Prosser office anytime," he said.

And he said the two other commissioners and county staff can reach him throughout the day.

He estimated he spent about 15 hours at the port office this week.

Commissioners assign responsibilities and projects important to the county amongst themselves each year. Oliver has been working on FFTF for the last 1½ years.

5 APR 02

Cleanup delays won't be accepted

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Plans to accelerate Hanford cleanup won't sacrifice established deadlines, a Department of Energy official said Thursday.

The Tri-Party Agreement's cleanup schedules won't be altered, said Wade Ballard, Department of Energy assistant manager for planning and integration at Hanford.

DOE wants to add \$433 million to Hanford's 2003 budget to expedite the work. As a condition of accepting the plan, state regulators won't agree to any delays in the deadlines, said Mike Wilson, Washington Department of Ecology nuclear program manager.

Ballard, Wilson and others discussed DOE's plans and budgets at a Hanford Advisory Board meeting in Richland.

DOE asked Congress for \$1.46 billion for Hanford cleanup in fiscal 2003, an amount below that needed to meet the deadlines.

But DOE wants Congress to add an extra \$800 million to \$1.1 billion, to be distributed among its sites that produce plans for faster cleanup.

Hanford is months ahead of other DOE sites in such planning. So DOE said it might provide the site with \$433 million of the extra money, which would be enough to meet Tri-Party Agreement obligations and speed up some work.

But DOE headquarters in Washington, D.C., said it will provide the extra money only if DOE, the state and the Environmental Protection Agency agree to an acceleration plan.

DOE's two Hanford offices are supposed to send their draft plans to the regulators on May 1. Then DOE's timetable calls for agreement on a final plan by Aug. 1.

DOE is optimistic Hanford will get the extra \$433 million because all parties have been discussing acceleration proposals for almost a year.

But it's uncertain how far apart DOE and the regulators will be when they move from discussing broad concepts to negotiating specifics.

For example, DOE's acceleration plan moves the end of Hanford cleanup from 2070 to between 2025 and 2035. But 2070 was solely DOE's date, which the state never accepted. The state's legal finish date has been 2028,

See **Delays**, Page B2

8 MAR. 02
**Vitrification plant topic
of March 19 meeting**

Ron Naventi, the senior vice president for Bechtel National, will discuss the status of the waste vitrification plant at Hanford at 7:15 p.m. March 19 at the Richland Shilo Inn.

He'll speak at a joint meeting of the Tri-Cities Chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Eastern Washington Section of the American Nuclear Society. Those who also would like to attend a dinner meeting at 6:30 p.m. will be charged \$15 and should make reservations by March 15 by calling 375-8246. There is no charge to attend the talk.

12 MAR. 02
**DOE seeks firms
to clean up river shore**

The Department of Energy has formally begun seeking bidders for a long-term contract to speed up cleanup along Hanford's Columbia River shore.

DOE issued its request for proposals last week for a new contract to do the bulk of Hanford's river shore cleanup by 2012. This proposed contract will replace the one currently held by Bechtel Hanford. Bechtel Hanford plans to bid on the new contract.

Deadline for bids is May 20. DOE plans to award the new contract in late August, with a 90-day transition to follow. Details of the request for proposals are on the Web at www.hanford.gov/procure/solicit/rcc.

13 MAR. 02
Group targets Hanford contracting

■ **New business association
calls on contractors to seek
out services of local firms**

By Wendy Culverwell
Herald staff writer

Prime contractors at Hanford say they're exceeding their goals for using small businesses to clean up the nation's worst radioactive mess.

But to hear from some of the Tri-Cities' leading businessmen, the Department of Energy has written contracts that push companies such as Bechtel National Inc.

to internalize the work to avoid the expense of supporting small, local firms.

Sid Morrison, a former congressman and state transportation director, is heading up the newly formed Tri-Cities Local Business Association. Dick French and Bob Ferguson, both former DOE officials who now lead private companies, are behind the effort, as are leaders from Informatics Corp., Lampson International, Meier Enterprises Inc., Morrison Construction Services, Nuvotec Inc., Thompson Mechanical Construction and Wastren Inc.

The approach so far is conciliatory, and association members say they're not

looking to feed at the public trough.

In its first public act, the association dispatched letters Monday to the heads of DOE's prime Hanford contractors, including Bechtel, Fluor Hanford, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and CH2M Hill, calling on them to aggressively seek out Mid-Columbia companies to share in the billions of dollars worth of work at Hanford.

"(T)he TCLBA encourages the Hanford site prime contractors to issue annual acquisition plans for services, which will allow the prime contractors and local companies to better plan and manage their work activities and personnel," wrote

Morrison, who signed the letter.

The letter also went to members of the Northwest congressional delegation, along with a request that delegation members write DOE asking it to intervene in the contracting process.

Corporate leaders such as French and Lampson said the \$4 billion contract awarded to Bechtel to develop the vitrification plant actually encourages the company to perform work itself rather than hire outside experts. Bill Lampson, president of the Kennewick industrial crane company that bears his name, said his

See **Hanford**, Page B2

10 MAR. 02
Super magnet

By Annette Cary
Herald staff writer

In 1993, scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland put in an order for a 16-ton superconducting magnet that would be the largest in the world.

Such a super-sized magnet would be used for work on a super-small scale. With it, scientists could manipulate the spinning of the nuclei of atoms, allowing them to study molecules and cells on a microscopic scale.

More than a few other scientists laughed.

"They thought that we could not do it," said David Koppenaal, an associate director at the Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory (EMSL).

The concept was not new. Scientists

*PNNL will be home
to world's largest
superconducting magnet*

already were studying cells without destroying them with nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometers — essentially large magnets — in technology similar to the magnetic resonance imaging devices hospitals use to peer at organs within a body.

But at the time, the largest such magnet used for nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer had an operating frequency of 600 megahertz. Richland scientists wanted one 50 percent larger.

"We knew when we ordered it that we

were being bold, pushing the frontiers of technology, pushing the frontiers of science," Koppenaal said.

But he and fellow scientist Paul Ellis didn't anticipate how difficult the magnet would be to build. They expected to take delivery from England's Oxford Instruments in late 1996.

Instead, it wasn't until last week that the two watched via Web cam as a ship carrying the magnet floated through the Panama Canal. The magnet cleared customs Friday in Tacoma and should arrive at EMSL this weekend.

It took nearly 10 years, but Oxford Instruments figured out how to make a 900 megahertz magnet that's stable, durable and accurate.

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Columbia

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2002

TRI-CITY HERALD

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Benton officials worry land transfer may cause loss of revenue from DOE

By Nathan Isaacs
Herald staff writer

Benton County commissioners are dubious about the Department of Energy's plans to transfer land to the Department of the Interior as part of managing the Hanford Reach National Monument.

Benton Commission Chairman Claude Oliver said the board isn't opposed to the transfer — just to losing the money.

They are concerned the money DOE pays Benton, Franklin and Grant counties to offset the loss of taxes would go away or be dramatically reduced.

The board discussed the issue Monday with DOE Hanford Manager Keith Klein. However, talk of the transfer began last July when a DOE audit reported that about \$1.5 million in PILT — payment in lieu of taxes — could be saved per year by transferring 143,000 acres to the Interior agency.

Monday, Klein told the commissioners that Benton County would lose \$788,000 in PILT money, Grant county would lose \$598,000 and Franklin County would lose about \$272,000.

"We're not interested in any more subtraction," Oliver said. The proposed transfer "makes us pay the costs for having a monument."

When Oliver was county treasurer he spearheaded efforts to get the federal money for lost taxes as required under the Atomic Energy Act. Benton County received \$2.5 million last year, which was then divvied among taxing districts such as the Richland School District.

Oliver said Commissioner Leo Bowman would coordinate the local response of the various public agencies in the next several weeks.

The first land transfer is expected to begin in September 2004.

In other commission action:

■ Commissioners plan to send a letter to state legislators opposing some laws and other state mandates that require the county to spend about \$8 million a year without reimbursement from the state.

■ Commissioners were given a final report from an ad-hoc Treasurer's Office Oversight Committee. The group was created to help oversee the correction of numerous problems in Treasurer Darwin Parker's office. Bowman said the group is dissolving because it "now finds that there is nothing for us to accomplish, because of the lack of follow through on agreed upon actions." Specifically, the group is upset Parker has failed to set a timetable for beginning a new computer program, which the committee believes will fix many of the accounting problems.

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12 MAR. 02
Hanford's state fine ends at \$305,000

■ **State will excuse fine if
funding for glassification
project comes through**

By John Stang
Herald staff writer

The state's \$10,000-a-week fine against federal operations at Hanford has stopped accumulating after 31 weeks.

Washington officials signed off Friday and Monday on a Department of Energy plan to make up for lost time because DOE missed a July 31 deadline to begin construction of a complex to convert

radioactive tank wastes into glass.

The state fined DOE \$5,000 for the first week after the missed deadline and tacked on \$10,000 weekly until federal officials showed they had a viable recovery plan and guaranteed money in 2003 to get the plan rolling to begin glassification by the 2007 deadline.

Consequently, the final penalty is \$305,000.

The state plans to forgive the fine if the promised full funding for the glassification complex work in 2003 actually materializes and if construction actually begins this year, said Sheryl Hutchison, spokeswoman for the Washington Department of Ecology.

DOE could not begin building the complex last July for several reasons, chiefly because it fired prime contractor BNFL Inc., and had to hire Bechtel National as the replacement, which delayed design work.

Bechtel's contract calls for it to begin construction by December, although it's talking about starting in October.

The State Pollution Control Hearings Board still has to approve the state-DOE agreement. Hutchison expected that will easily come after a 45-day public comment period.

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Extra money could speed PFP cleanup

■ *Contaminated complex slated to be demolished by 2009-10, officials say*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Cleanup and demolition of Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant could finish six or seven years ahead of schedule — if enough extra federal money materializes.

Right now, the PFP aims to convert 4.4 tons of scrap plutonium into safer forms by a May 2004 deadline.

"We're tracking to beat that," said Pete Knollmeyer, DOE's assistant manager for Hanford's central plateau.

DOE and contractor Fluor Hanford believe they can finish that high-priority job by February 2004.

Meanwhile, the state's and DOE's Tri-Party Agreement negotiators tentatively have agreed on a plan to reduce the PFP complex to a concrete foundation in 2009

or 2010. The Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact governing Hanford's cleanup, currently has a 2016 deadline for that task.

State and DOE officials are mulling that tentative agreement before unveiling it for public feedback.

After the public has its say, they will consider changes before adopting the agreement.

The PFP is considered Hanford's third-biggest problem behind radioactive tank wastes and the K Basins' spent nuclear fuel.

During the Cold War, the PFP was Hanford's last step to convert plutonium-laced liquids into pure plutonium "but-ton" that were the size of hockey pucks.

The complex has 4.4 tons of plutonium mixed within 19.6 tons of different types of scrap materials.

DOE and Fluor have set up several processes to deal with those different forms of plutonium-laced scrap.

"Now it's just a matter of cranking away," said George Jackson, Fluor's vice

president for nuclear materials stabilization.

Most of the material goes through one of nine muffle furnaces — either the size or twice the size of a microwave oven — that bakes the plutonium into safer powders.

Some plutonium is in liquids.

Fluor and DOE have tried two ways of precipitating plutonium granules out of the fluids before settling on a third precipitation method. The precipitation work should be done by this summer.

Some plutonium materials are reduced to ashes to be packed in enclosed pipes.

The rest of the powders or metal chunks of converted plutonium are repacked in special canisters.

Ultimately, Hanford plans to send some plutonium material to an underground storage site in New Mexico.

But most of the plutonium was supposed to go to DOE's Savannah River site in South Carolina to be immobilized in glass there to be shipped eventually to

Nevada. However, DOE has abandoned the glass option. Instead, it plans to convert Hanford's and other sites' plutonium into mixed-oxide reactor fuel at Savannah River if tests show that can be done.

But South Carolina's government is leery of DOE's plan. South Carolina frets that could lead to Savannah River becoming a permanent plutonium storage site for the rest of the nation. South Carolina has threatened to block DOE from moving plutonium to Savannah River unless it can get better guarantees that the plutonium eventually will leave the state.

Originally, Hanford was scheduled to ship its plutonium to Savannah River between 2010 and 2014.

But if the PFP's cleanup efforts speed up, Hanford will look at shipping its plutonium to Savannah River in 2005, Knollmeyer said.

If South Carolina is blocking plutonium shipments at that time, Hanford will need

See PFP, Page B2

DOE defends plan to give more money to Hanford cleanup

■ *Additional money will spur renegotiation of Tri-Party Agreement*

By Les Blumenthal

Herald Washington, D.C., bureau

WASHINGTON — While Department of Energy officials defended a new plan Thursday that adds \$433 million to Hanford's budget request and speeds cleanup by 35 years, an Idaho congressman warned the proposal still faces close scrutiny on Capitol Hill.

Keith Klein, manager of DOE's Richland operations office, said that under the plan the department hoped to shave the long-term costs of cleaning up Hanford by about half, from a current estimate of \$89 billion to between \$40 billion and \$50 billion.

"We are getting real about how we will do it," Klein said at an annual Capitol Hill briefing on the Hanford cleanup for lawmakers, congressional staff and reporters.

The department's decision to inject \$433 million into the Hanford program, raising its request for next year from \$1.46 billion to \$1.893 billion, would be enough to satisfy Washington state that DOE will meet its legal obligations in fiscal 2003.

But in exchange for the additional money, the state has agreed to renegotiate the Tri-Party Agreement, which governs the cleanup.

There are no guarantees, for now, that either DOE or Congress will fully fund an accelerated cleanup.

But Klein was optimistic the proposal could lead to more stable funding for Hanford in the future.

"As we get more details, more out-year things will solidify, and we won't go through the annual (budget) pain," Klein said. "We are still trying to flesh things out."

But an Idaho lawmaker, Republican Rep. Mike Simpson, told Klein and Jessie Roberson, DOE's assistant secretary for environmental management, that he was none too happy that Hanford would be getting more than half of next year's special fund.

Twice he asked Roberson whether the decision to give Hanford so much would hurt other sites. Simpson's comments presumably included the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory in his state.

"I don't think so," Roberson said. The department has said it may seek to increase the \$800 million in the special fund if other sites come up with innovative revisions to their cleanup plans.

Simpson persisted, saying he feared the department was using the special fund to force states to overhaul their cleanup agreements with DOE.

"This is the hammer we have all worried about," Simpson said.

"It is not," Roberson insisted, adding the agreement with Washington state will allow the department to accelerate innovative programs already under way at Hanford.

But Simpson said he wasn't sure what the department had in mind.

"Some of us have problems with the budget," he said.

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Hanford budget to get \$433 million boost for cleanup

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Washington state and the federal government announced Wednesday a sweeping new plan for Hanford funding that would inject \$433 million into the Hanford cleanup budget, stabilize funding through 2006 and cut the projected horizon for cleanup by at least 35 years.

The Department of Energy would put the extra money into Hanford's budget beginning in 2003.

That will be enough to satisfy the state that Hanford will meet its legal cleanup obligations for 2003, said Sheryl Hutchison, spokeswoman for Washington's Department of Ecology.

The plan means Hanford will

Hanford's cleanup budget

2001	2002	Original 2003 request	Accelerated 2003 request
\$1.456 billion	\$1.722 billion	\$1.46 billion	\$1.893 billion

Herald/Sherry Emery

get more than half of the \$800 million DOE wants to set aside for accelerating its cleanup projects nationwide.

The extra money DOE has promised accompanies an agreement that DOE, the state and the Environmental Protection Agency signed Tuesday to work out plans by August to significantly speed cleanup.

The agreement's goal is to complete Hanford's cleanup between 2025 and 2035 instead

of 2070 as currently planned.

"We're going to get Hanford cleaned up faster and better — and save money, too," said Gov. Gary Locke.

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said: "This agreement appears to keep the federal government's promise ... to clean up Hanford."

DOE has until May 1 to come up with draft plans to accelerate cleanup with specific goals for between now and 2012. DOE,

the EPA and the state then are supposed to work a mutually acceptable plan by Aug. 1. Hanford cannot get any of the extra \$433 million until DOE, EPA and the state sign off on their master plan.

When that happens, DOE guarantees it will seek full funding for that master plan through 2006. Each year until now, DOE traditionally requested less than full funding for Hanford, with Congress adding the extra needed money later.

"(DOE) and the Office of Management and Budget are promising that the days of fighting over nuclear cleanup budgets are behind us. I sincerely hope they are," said U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

State and federal officials are optimistic about reaching agreements by Aug. 1 because they have worked on acceleration plans for more than a year.

That helped Hanford become the first DOE site to get DOE's headquarters in Washington, D.C., to approve its acceleration proposals. U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said: "Hanford has become the model for other nuclear sites across the country."

Some potential Hanford acceleration plans include:

■ Awarding a contract later this year to finish cleaning much of Hanford's Columbia River shore by 2012.

■ Emptying and sealing Tank C-106 by 2004, instead of 2016 as

See Hanford, Page A2

PNNL terrorism expert appointed to task force

Steve Dische, a terrorism expert for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, has been appointed to the Infrastructure Task of the state's Committee on Terrorism.

Gov. Gary Locke convened the panel in 2000 to identify and address the security needs of the state against potential terrorist acts.

Dische brings more than 20 years experience in the intelligence community to the committee. He recently worked on the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

16-ton magnetic spectrometer installed at lab

■ *Researchers from around the world will use PNNL's spectrometer to study cells, molecules*

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

Bill Wiley's dream for a premier laboratory that would draw scientists from around the world to learn more about molecules was completed Wednesday.

When the William R. Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory was planned in the early 1990s, its design included a 100-ton steel cage to hold the world's most advanced nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer.

In much the same way as a hospital magnetic resonance imaging system allows doctors to see organs within the human body, more powerful nuclear magnetic

resonance spectrometers allow scientists to see cells and molecules.

Even though the \$228 million molecular sciences lab, or EMSL, opened in 1997, the steel cage to shield people and instruments from the powerful magnet of the spectrometer remained empty.

That changed early Wednesday.

Despite a gusty wind, a Lampson crane slowly lowered a 16-ton spectrometer through a hatch in the roof of EMSL at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland.

It's the most powerful and largest spectrometer of its type ever built. In 1993 it was a concept so advanced that engineering and building it took

much longer than anticipated.

It was planned to arrive in 1996, but Oxford Instruments had to overcome several false starts.

"This is the final piece of Bill Wiley's dream," said Lura Powell, director of PNNL. Wiley, a former director of PNNL, died before the lab that bears his name was completed.

But Powell remembers hearing talk of the spectrometer that would be built for the lab in the early 1990s, long before she was recruited to come to Richland.

"(It looks at) much larger molecules and understands how large molecules interact with each other, which you can't do on other spectrometers," she said.

At its core is a huge superconducting magnet with the stored

See **Lab**, Page A2



Workers with Lampson International of Kennewick guide the world's largest superconducting magnet, weighing 16 tons, toward an opening in the roof of the Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory building early Wednesday in Richland. Scientists will use it to study molecules and cells on a microscopic scale.

Herald/Bob Brawdy

Bechtel women raise \$57,000 for charity

The Bechtel Women's Group raised \$57,000 at its annual auction March 8 to benefit the Benton Franklin Developmental Center, Benton Franklin 4-H Council, Volunteer Chore Services and Safe-Kids Coalition.

Employees of Bechtel, its subcontractors and clients attended the auction and bid on items and services supplied by the employees, 4-H members and local businesses. The Bechtel Women's Group has raised more than \$250,000 for Mid-Columbia charities in the past seven years.

FFTF backers seek commercial restart

By Annette Cary

Herald staff writer

While the Department of Energy is working on an accelerated schedule to shut down the Fast Flux Test Facility, the reactor's supporters have been pitching a restart to industry.

So far no irreversible steps have been taken toward dismantling the Hanford reactor. But supporters need to have serious discussions under way with targeted businesses by June to convince DOE to halt the shutdown, said Claude Oliver of Citizens for Medical Isotopes and chairman of the Benton County Commission.

Oliver and Ben Bennett, the Port of Benton executive director, just returned

from Washington, D.C., where they pushed for a commercial restart of the Hanford reactor.

DOE has said it has no use for it, and Tri-City area interests are working to get the reactor and related facilities — with a combined replacement value of \$2 billion — declared surplus. They want to restart the reactor to make isotopes for medicine and other uses, such as irradiation of food.

In Washington, D.C., Bennett and Oliver emphasized that turning the reactor over to industry would save DOE the \$200 million needed to decommission the reactor. "This preserves the assets of the U.S.," Oliver said.

They also talked up related facilities in the Hanford area, such as Pacific North-

west National Laboratory, which has conducted medical isotope research that has led to new medicines, and Washington State University Tri-Cities, which is starting a radiopharmaceutical program. The nation has just two comprehensive nuclear pharmacy programs at universities.

In the past 30 days the use of isotopes in medicine has taken major steps forward, Oliver said. The Food and Drug Administration approved a drug that uses medical isotopes to selectively target radiation to cancer cells in lymphoma patients.

As the FDA approves new nuclear medicines, the demand for isotopes increases dramatically. "DOE is getting

out of the medical isotope business," Oliver said. "This is not bad to us. We're putting together the private sector players."

Oliver and Bennett also visited businesses interested in using the reactor, they said, although they declined to name them.

Organized labor also is pushing for a restart. National lobbyists have been educated about the project so they can help with the effort, said Mark Reavis, president of the Southeast Washington Central Labor Council. Organized labor also has been in talks with the governor and state legislators.

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16 MAR 02

DOE's extra funds for cleanup take shape

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

An extra \$300 million for the Department of Energy's nuclear cleanup program has taken its first baby step through Congress.

The House Budget Committee passed a resolution Wednesday urging the addition of an extra \$300 million to DOE's proposed \$6.7 billion cleanup budget for 2003. The resolution, by U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., recommends DOE fund all its cleanup sites to at least the same levels as 2002.

The resolution, which is scheduled for a full House vote next week, offers guidance to the House energy and water appropriations subcommittee, which will tackle details of DOE's budget request later this spring, said Todd Young, a Hastings press aide.

In January, DOE asked Congress for \$6.7 billion for its nationwide nuclear cleanup in 2003, the same amount as this year. But the \$6.7 billion is to be divided into \$5.9 billion to be distributed in the traditional manner and \$800 million for DOE sites that produce acceptable plans to accelerate cleanup projects.

DOE has tentatively promised part of that \$800 million to only one site — \$433 million to Hanford. That's with the caveat that DOE and Hanford regulators must agree by late summer on how to accelerate the cleanup work. If the \$433 million materializes, it would put the 2003 cleanup budget for Hanford at \$1.893 billion.

A few weeks ago, DOE said it and the Office of Management and Budget would request the extra \$300 million if necessary.

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15 MAR. 07

Hanford budget in flux, HAB warns

■ *DOE plan to speed up cleanup expected by May*

By John Stang

Herald staff writer

Don't count your chickens until they are hatched.

That cliché sums up qualms voiced Thursday about the Department of Energy's plan to speed up Hanford's nuclear waste cleanup and to add extra money to the site's budget.

Hanford Advisory Board budget committee members like the concept and the proposed spending increase. But board members and Hanford regulators also warned Thursday that a lot of political wrangling will be done before DOE's accelerated cleanup plan can happen.

Two big concerns were expressed Thursday.

For one, the state's Ecology Department has not seen details of DOE's plans to speed up cleanup and has not agreed to any specific proposals. And there's no guarantee it will.

Also, Congress has not yet agreed to a DOE proposal to set aside \$800 million to \$1.1 billion to be doled out later to so-far unidentified DOE sites for accelerated cleanup plans.

Congress traditionally does not like to appropriate money without specifically controlling how the cash will be spent. Also, congressional delegations from other states with cleanup sites are not done fighting for more money.

"Congress hasn't bought into this yet and we're already hearing from the other

states: 'Hanford got its cut. What about us?' " said Harold Heacock, the budget committee chairman.

"This thing is very fluid. We don't have a lot of specifics yet," said Dave Einan, of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Hanford office.

DOE, the EPA, the state and the site's public constituencies have worked for almost a year to find ways to speed Hanford's cleanup. Because of that, Hanford is the only DOE site to have a broad proposal prepared for accelerating work.

Last week, the state and DOE signed a letter of intent in which DOE said it plans to allocate \$433 million from the incentive fund to Hanford. The extra cash would boost Hanford's proposed 2003 budget to \$1.893 billion.

In broad strokes, DOE plans to speed

up glassifying Hanford's radioactive tank wastes, to remove radioactive sludge from the K Basins, to clean out and demolish the Plutonium Finishing Plant, to clean up much of the Columbia River corridor and to close some underground waste tanks. DOE also is looking at alternatives to glassifying some tank wastes.

DOE is to produce a detailed draft plan for tackling these proposals by May 1.

The state and EPA will then start negotiating with DOE on how to fit the draft plan into the Tri-Party Agreement, the legal pact that governs Hanford's cleanup.

Congress traditionally works out detailed dollar figures for DOE's appropriation bills in May and June. But Aug. 1 is the deadline for the state, EPA and DOE to reach an agreement on fitting

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