



Herald file

7 SEP 08

## FAST FOCUS | WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THE PIGEON PROBLEM AT THE VIT PLANT?

### Shooting not solution

Please allow me to respond to the recent editorial "Birdshot will do for pigeon problem" (Our Voice, Sept. 2).

The Department of Energy should be applauded for suspending plans to shoot pigeons at Hanford's vitrification plant. Killing pigeons is not only cruel, but it's also wholly ineffective. As long as the area remains attractive to birds, others will simply move in and fill the void left by those who are killed.

Humane methods which work to make the area unattractive to pigeons while minimizing population growth through birth control are more effective in the long term than a bloody cull.

As for comparing PETA's euthanasia of sick, injured, and unwanted animals to picking off birds with an air rifle—that's as off target as Hanford's pigeon shoot. There's no comparison between mercifully providing suffering animals with a quick, painless release and blasting birds to shreds because they are a "nuisance."

To learn more about humane wildlife control solutions, visit [www.HelpingAnimals.com](http://www.HelpingAnimals.com).

— TORI PERRY, Cruelty Caseworker  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

### Next week's fast focus

#### Will the vice presidential picks affect the election outcome?

To join the debate, e-mail [forum@tricityherald.com](mailto:forum@tricityherald.com). Include your street address and daytime phone number. All letters become property of the Herald.

### Find a better way

I am sorely disappointed in the editorial board's flip suggestion of "break out the buckshot," as their suggestion to rid the vit plant of pigeons. Ethical solutions don't involve guns.

If we can turn dangerous waste into solid glass surely we can find a humane way to handle the pigeon problem. Pigeons would not have found their way into the vit plant had it not been left unattended for so long. We must shoulder the responsibility for this problem.

Borrowing from Joy Adamson, author of *Born Free*, "Since we humans have the better brain, isn't it our responsibility to protect fellow creatures from,

deserve to stay.

Or, move the vit plant to Idaho and hope that the pigeons move with it. This option comes with an added bonus of providing political fodder for partisan hacks to shift blame between their political parties for business decisions made by pampered, out-of-touch CEOs who bestow their business upon whichever local, state or federal government agency knows the most.

But seriously, we're not talking about an endangered species here. Mankind has always killed irritating animal infestations. If the pigeon problem is indeed a real problem, then the pigeons must go.

— MIKE WILSON, Richland

### Take a few home

For all those so concerned with the right to life of the pigeons causing health and work concerns at the Hanford's vitrification plant, I have one suggestion: Capture and cage them and take them to your home to roost for a night or two! Anyone who has ever been the recipient of these uninvited guests on the roof of their home will attest to how quickly and thoroughly they can pollute an area they decide to

## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION REPORT

# Review finds DOE program to regulate vit plant OK

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy should look for ways to better separate its dual roles as manager and regulator of Hanford's vitrification plant, according to a new report by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

However, DOE's overall program to safely regulate the \$12.2 billion vit plant is adequate to ensure protection of public health and safety if properly implemented, the review concluded.

The plant, which would convert radioactive waste into a stable glass form for disposal, is not scheduled to open until 2019.

"They didn't identify any significant safety issues, which we are very pleased with," said JoAnn Wardrip, spokeswoman for DOE in Washington, D.C.

DOE is doing a much better job on safety issues and putting together a better oversight infrastructure, "and that's what the NRC saw," said Tom Carpenter, executive director of Han-

ford Challenge. The watchdog group has pushed for the NRC to play an advisory or regulatory role at the vitrification plant.

The NRC review was conducted for Congress as ordered in the conference report for the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2008, which reconciled different views by the House and Senate. The House had called for DOE regulation of the vit plant to be shifted to the NRC, while the Senate said the continued additional oversight of the Defense Nuclear

Facilities Safety Board was adequate.

The review also looked at whether DOE addressed items identified in a report by the NRC in 2001. Many of the 28 issues identified in that report have been addressed by DOE as design and construction of the vitrification plant have progressed over the last seven years, the review found.

However, the review also noted it was relying on DOE reports on progress on those issues and that the scope of the review did not cover a thorough assessment of all topics

raised in the report.

Among issues raised in the 2001 report was whether the plant could withstand a severe earthquake. DOE has since paid for an \$18 million borehole drilling project at the site to characterize the ground beneath the plant and revised any design specification that might be inadequate.

When the 2001 report was written, design of the plant was 14 percent complete and now it is 76 percent complete.

See **REVIEW** | Page B2

## HANFORD

# Crews making progress on burial ground cleanup

Site was used from 1960-73 for waste made in 300 Area

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers are finding huge stainless steel tanks, one with radioactive powder inside, and drums of potentially flammable zircaloy chips as they dig up the final trench at a burial ground just north of Richland.

Online video  
tricityherald.com

Contractor Washington Closure Hanford had delayed starting cleanup of the 618-7 Burial Ground until this year, fearing that its contents would be so hazardous that it needed to have a new safety plan required by the Department of Energy in place before work began.

"It's gone better than we expected," said John Ludowski, project engineer for

Washington Closure. "We prepared for the worst."

The burial ground was used from about 1960-73 for waste from the Hanford nuclear reservation's 300 Area along the Columbia River, where fuel was made for Hanford's reactors and research was conducted.

When the waste was disposed of, it was not expected to be retrieved to meet future environmental standards so records of what it was used for are sketchy. That means there were bound to be some surprises and workers were protected with supplied-air respirators.

Work began shortly after the first of the year to dig up the two largest trenches, each about 650 feet long and 100 feet wide.

Workers found about 800 drums, most with aluminum turnings or vermiculite, a material used for insulation or packing midcentury. About half were open, some with lids that had popped off, and others had to be carefully opened one at a time to make sure their contents were relatively benign.



Kai-Huei Yau | kyau@tricityherald.com

Hanford workers are making progress digging up the contents of two large trenches at the 618-7 Burial Ground just north of Richland. Among the surprises have been the large stainless steel tanks, one still containing some radioactive powder. **See video online at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com).**

"We were surprised how tame the contents were in those," said John Darby, Washington Closure project manager.

Because Washington Closure knew somewhere in the

burial grounds there were likely to be drums of zircaloy shavings, which can ignite if fine particles are exposed to air, drums were opened in an enclosure with remotely operated equipment with the

capability of adding water or mineral oil to stabilize the contents.

Darby also was surprised by the amount of lead

# 19 AUG 08 Hanford workers take peek inside C, F reactors

First look in 5 years reveals 'cocooned' reactors still stable

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers equipped with flashlights saw a couple of bats and some mice droppings when they took the first look in five years inside

C Reactor and F Reactor this summer.

"It's dark. You get the smell of an old building," said Bob Egge, an engineering consultant for Washington Closure Hanford. But, as workers had hoped, there was not much of interest to see inside.

Every five years workers break the welds on the steel doors to "cocooned" reactors to make sure they remain

structurally sound and undisturbed. So far, five of Hanford's nine plutonium production reactors have been put in temporary long-term storage.

Support buildings, including the power plant, pumping stations, water towers, offices, warehouses and shops, have been torn down around those reactors. Then the reactor building is torn down to little more than the reactor's radioactive core and the remaining building is reroofed and sealed up.

**Online video**  
tricityherald.com

Monitors inside the cocooned reactors relay information weekly about the temperature and water infiltration.

But the inside inspections give the Department of Energy, its contractor and regulators a chance to look for any possible problems or degradation.

"Everything looks stable," said Rod Lobos, an environmental engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, who went into F Reactor. "It was pretty warm in there, especially when we started to climb to the top."

Workers found the reactors dry and dusty, but no worse than in a typical Tri-City garage, Egge said.

The only sign of degradation was the rusting of exposed rebar on the outside

of the reactors. If engineers decide the rust is bad enough, the rebar may be enclosed.

"The rest of the enclosure looks pretty darn good," Egge said.

C Reactor was cocooned in 1998 and had its 10-year checkup this year. A water tunnel was left intact as a haven for bats, and a few of them had found their way into the reactor, but had caused no harm. Workers saw a few of them roosting.

See **REACTORS** | Page B2

**HANFORD NEWS ONLINE**

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# Hanford employees fired over alleged fraud

3 accused of using federal credit card to purchase tools, electronic equipment

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fluor Hanford has fired three employees it believes are linked to the

misuse of a federal government credit card issued for work at the Hanford nuclear reservation.

A single card was used to make fraudulent purchases over at least the past four years, according to a memo sent by Fluor Hanford President Con Murphy to employees Wednesday. Just one person was allowed to sign on the card.

The purchases included tools and

electronic equipment, said Fluor spokeswoman Judy Connell.

Fluor became suspicious of purchases several months ago and started its own investigation. It notified the Department of Energy's Office of Inspector General in June as it became apparent fraud likely had occurred. The Office of Inspector General is conducting a criminal investigation.

It's seeking people who may have information about the misuse of the credit card and Murphy instructed employees who may know something to call investigators at 376-8828.

Fluor Hanford was limited in what it could say about the case because the federal investigation was continuing, Connell said. Fluor Hanford did not identify the people who lost their jobs, their positions or disclose the

value of the fraudulent purchases.

About 130 Fluor Hanford employees out of 3,600 have been issued the government cards. The cards reduce transaction fees and lower costs for DOE work, Connell said.

Last year, \$26 million was spent on the cards, which employees call P-cards, and about 30,000 purchases

See **FRAUD** | Page B2

23 AUG 08

# Hanford pigeon shoot subject of PETA attention

About 130 birds killed with air rifles over 2 days

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A complaint to the animal rights group PETA has stopped the practice of shooting pigeons at Hanford's vitrification plant, at least for now.

Earlier this summer, about 130 pigeons were shot and killed with air rifles over two days to try to reduce the problem of bird droppings fouling equipment and work areas of the plant, which is under construction.

But a second shoot planned for August was canceled after a worker notified People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, and the group contacted the Department of Energy.

"We were very happy they were so willing to talk to us," said Tori Perry, a PETA cruelty case worker in the emergency response division. It discussed its concerns with DOE and also its contractor, Bechtel National.

An estimated 70 to 80 birds

26 AUG 08

# B Reactor now a landmark

## Easier access for the public planned starting in March

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford's B Reactor was named a National Historic Landmark on Monday, recognizing the role it played in shaping 50 years of U.S. and world history.

Not only will that designation help efforts to preserve the reactor as a museum, but the growing interest in the reactor has led the Department of Energy to increase public access to it.

Starting in March, the reactor will be open to the public at least three days a week and no advance registration will be required for "drive-up" visits, said Jeffrey Kupfer, the DOE acting deputy secretary,

during a visit to the reactor Monday.

National Historic Landmark status is the highest historical recognition awarded by the United States to historic properties.

Just 3 percent of the sites on the National Historic Registry are elevated to landmark status, said Lynn Scarlett, the Department of Interior deputy secretary, as she stood in front of the towering face of the reactor core Monday.

"I think we can be assured (B Reactor) will be permanently protected and preserved," she said.

When properties are designated as landmarks, it attracts not only money and grants for preservation, but it also anchors

the property in the public's mind as a place that deserves significant recognition, she said.

"Its construction was a phenomenal achievement," she said. "It is emblematic of the greatest generation."

The reactor, built in 13 months, was the world's first full-scale reactor, taking science that had advanced little beyond theory and producing plutonium in quantities large enough for the first atomic explosion in the New Mexico desert.

It then made plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping to end World War II.

When the Eastern Washington desert was picked in 1942 for the Manhattan Project site that would produce plutonium, "World War II was going badly for the Allies," said Michele Gerber, a Richland

**Online video**  
tricityherald.com

### TOURISM

Officials hope to capitalize on new status. | A6

# Hanford safety representatives were meeting with DOE

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Bechtel National has taken disciplinary action against four managers at the Hanford vitrification plant for reportedly eavesdropping on a meeting between safety representatives and the Department of Energy.

An investigation was begun by Bechtel 12 days ago after an anony-

mous call was made to an employee concerns program.

The incident involved safety representatives appointed for a new program established in late 2007 at the vitrification plant with DOE's encouragement after a similar program worked well elsewhere at Hanford.

Construction workers at the vit plant picked five worker representatives who Bechtel management

approved to be an extra set of eyes on safety issues, according to Bechtel. In addition to their construction jobs, they discuss safety issues and concerns from the workers' perspective with Bechtel management.

In July, the five safety representatives were scheduled to meet with Shirley Olinger, the manager of DOE's Hanford Office of River Protection. When she couldn't make the meeting at the plant, she asked workers if they instead could come into Richland.

During the meeting, one of the

safety representatives' managers called a worker's cell phone to find out where he was. The worker's cell phone was inadvertently left on after the call was answered, said Bechtel spokesman Drew Slaton.

That manager and three others then listened to at least a portion of the conversation without the knowledge of the safety representatives or Olinger, according to Bechtel.

"I do not condone this behavior and it is contrary to Bechtel's Standards of Conduct and Business Ethics, our

culture and my expectations of our ... staff," said Bill Elkins, project director for the Waste Treatment Plant, in a message sent to staff Thursday.

Bechtel has an open-door policy that encourages employees to raise safety and other concerns, Slaton said.

See **MANAGERS** | Page B2

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# Lockheed Martin secures \$3 billion Hanford contract

## Company to lead team supplying site services beginning in October

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A team led by Lockheed Martin Integrated Technology has won a \$3 billion contract to provide support services at the Hanford nuclear reservation for up to a decade, the Department of Energy announced Wednesday.

The winning team, a limited liability company called Mission Support Alliance, also includes Jacobs Engineering Group and Wackenhut Services.

The new mission support contract will cover services

needed across the Hanford site such as security, fire protection, computer services and other information technology, utilities, training at HAMMER and road and railroad services.

Those services now are provided by Fluor Hanford under a contract that expires Oct. 1, but likely will be extended a few months.

The transition from Fluor Hanford to Mission Support Alliance will begin on or after Oct. 1, with Mission Support Alliance assuming full responsibility Jan. 1. The initial contract is for five years with options to extend it to 10 years to reach the full value of \$3 billion.

It's the third of three prime contract awards for Hanford

HANFORD

4 SEP 08

# Fluor offers voluntary layoffs to employees

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fluor Hanford employees were offered the chance to apply for voluntary layoffs Wednesday as the company's contract with the Department of Energy expires.

About 1,000 of Fluor Hanford's 3,600 employees are eligible for retirement, said Judy Connell, Fluor Hanford spokeswoman. The company has not set a target number for the reduction in force as it prepares to turn over work to new contractors.

"We're just trying to make a win-win situation for everyone," she said.

The voluntary layoffs give employees another option and allow Fluor to provide a true list of available workers to incoming contractors, she said.

Fluor Hanford's contract with the Department of Energy at the Hanford nuclear reservation expires at the end of the month, although a portion of it may be extended until both incoming contractors can take over.

The Fluor scope of work has been split in two with CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation taking

See **FLUOR** | Page A2

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5 SEP 08

# High court upholds \$4.8M jury award

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Washington State Supreme Court on Thursday upheld a 2005 jury award of \$4.8 million plus \$1.4 million in attorney fees for 11 laid-off Hanford pipefitters.

It decided all issues on appeal in the nine-year-old case in favor of the pipefitters, with the exception of one. It declined to require that the

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defendant in the trial, Fluor Federal Services, reimburse plaintiffs

for miscellaneous costs in bringing the lawsuit. But it did increase the attorney fees owed to pipefitters to include recovery of the additional fees from the appeal.

“(The pipefitters) stood up for safety when everyone else put their heads down for fear of being fired,” said their attorney, Jack Sheridan, in a statement. “It took a while, but this decision proves that the system works.”

In 2005, a Benton County jury found that the pipefitters

See **AWARD** | Page A2

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17 SEP 08  
Tri-Party

# litigation would hurt cleanup

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford cleanup and the economy of the Tri-City area will suffer if negotiations over the Tri-Party Agreement fail, warned the Tri-City Development Council and the Hanford Communities.

"We are extremely concerned about the very real risks and fallout that will result if agreement is not reached and litigation in some form becomes the foremost consideration," wrote the two agencies in a letter this week to Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire and Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman.

The letter urged the state and the federal government, particularly the Department of Justice, to go to extra lengths to resolve differences in negotiations.

If legal steps must be taken as a last resort, a consent decree would be less damaging than a lawsuit, said the letter, which was signed by TRIDEC President Carl Adrian and Ed Revell, chairman of the Hanford Communities board. The Hanford Communities board includes representatives from Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, West Richland, Benton County and the Port of Benton.

Gregoire and Bodman met last week in Washington, D.C., to discuss major changes to the Tri-Party Agreement, which sets legal deadlines for cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation. Renegotiation of the agreement began in spring 2007 after it became clear DOE could not meet major deadlines for emptying leak-prone tanks of radioactive waste and beginning treatment of the waste at the vitrification plant under construction.

TRIDEC and the Hanford Communities have not seen  
See **CLEANUP** | Page B2

The Kennewick meeting will be from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 2 at the Red Lion Hotel in Kennewick, with an open house an hour earlier

The Seattle meeting will be Oct. 7 at North Seattle Community College. Meetings also are planned Oct. 21 at the Best Western in Hood River, Ore., and Oct. 22 at the Lloyd Center Doubletree in Portland. All have a 6 p.m. open house followed by the meeting at 7 p.m.

Organizations that would like to have a display at any of the meetings should reserve space now by calling the Washington State Department of Ecology at 372-7936.

The meetings are an opportunity for the public and Hanford workers to discuss a wide range of issues with leaders from the Department of Energy, the Envi-

7 SEP 08

# New-year contract names Mission Support Alliance in charge of site support

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The newest Hanford contractor plans to emphasize a customer service attitude at the nuclear reservation, said Frank Figueroa, president and general manager of the Mission Support Alliance.

Last week the Department of Energy named the Mission Support Alliance, a partnership led by Lockheed Martin, as the new Hanford contractor providing support services across the site. It will be in charge of services starting Jan. 1.

"There will be more opportunities than

challenges because this is a first of a kind contract," Figueroa said Friday.

DOE split the work of outgoing contractor Fluor Hanford into separate contracts covering cleanup of central Hanford and support services.



**Figueroa**

That allows DOE to bring in a contractor specializing in management of large sites, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office, before the contract was awarded.

Lockheed Martin is the world's leading integrator of complex systems, Figueroa said.

Before coming to the Tri-Cities a year ago in preparation for the contract deci-

sion, Figueroa was the vice president for the integrated enabling services strategic management unit and chief financial officer at Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico under a Lockheed contract.

At Sandia, Lockheed ran mission support as a separate program, and Figueroa believes there are lessons learned at Sandia that can be transferred to Hanford, he said.

That includes not only a customer service attitude, but also a process improvement approach used at Sandia, he said. It depends on mapping out activities step by

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

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9 SEP 08

The \$40.5 million center is intended to serve as a gateway to the Hanford Reach National Monument, as well as highlight the natural history of the region and Hanford's role in helping end World War II.

A building is being designed by Johnpaul Jones of the Seattle architecture firm Jones & Jones. It will include exhibits, gardens, a theater and education programs for adults and children near the Columbia River in Richland.

## **Hanford Patrol captain is state's top marksman**

Hanford Patrol Capt. Steve Voigt has been named Washington state's top police

marksman for the 26th year.

In addition, four other Hanford Patrol officers were named to the Governor's Top 20 List, which is compiled by averaging scores earned in accredited competitions throughout the previous year.

Joining Voigt on the list are Hanford Patrol officers Curtis Bearchum, ranking fifth; Jay Osborn, 14th, and Kurt Bearchum, 18th. Retired officer Dan Russie was sixth.

Voigt also was the overall winner in the Washington State Police Pistol Association State Championship held earlier this summer at Hanford.

**- Herald staff**

28-23-08

## BRIEFS

### **News about B Reactor future expected Monday**

Supporters of historic B Reactor could get big news about its future Monday.

They've been waiting to hear whether the Department of Interior will designate the World War II-era reactor a National Historic Landmark, which would strengthen efforts to preserve it as a museum.

Top officials from DOE and the Department of Interior are scheduled to visit the

reactor Monday and make remarks to invited guests and media. Jeffrey Kupfer, the DOE acting deputy secretary and Lynn Scarlett, the Department of Interior deputy secretary, are scheduled to attend.

In July, the National Park System Advisory board recommended that B Reactor be named a National Historic Landmark. The final decision is up to Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne.

B Reactor was the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor and produced plutonium for the first nuclear explosion in



# Sick Hanford worker amendment dies

17 SEP 0

An amendment that would have allowed more survivors of ill Hanford workers to collect compensation hit a dead end Tuesday in the Senate.

Before the amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009 was considered, the Senate voted to cut off debate on the bill, effectively killing the amendment.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., had proposed the amendment to ensure that compensation for sick former nuclear workers would not be taken away in cases in which an ill worker or a survivor who had filed a claim died before the claim was processed. The Department of Labor estimated it would have helped about 1,200 current and future claimants under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program.



Lynn Scarlett, Department of Interior deputy secretary, and Jeffrey F. Kupfer, Department of Energy acting deputy secretary, left, meet Dee McCullough, a Hanford worker who was at B Reactor when it started in 1944, along with other retired Hanford employees who led them on a tour of the facility. See historic photo galleries, a slideshow and video at [www.tricityherald.com](http://www.tricityherald.com).

Kai-Huei Yau |  
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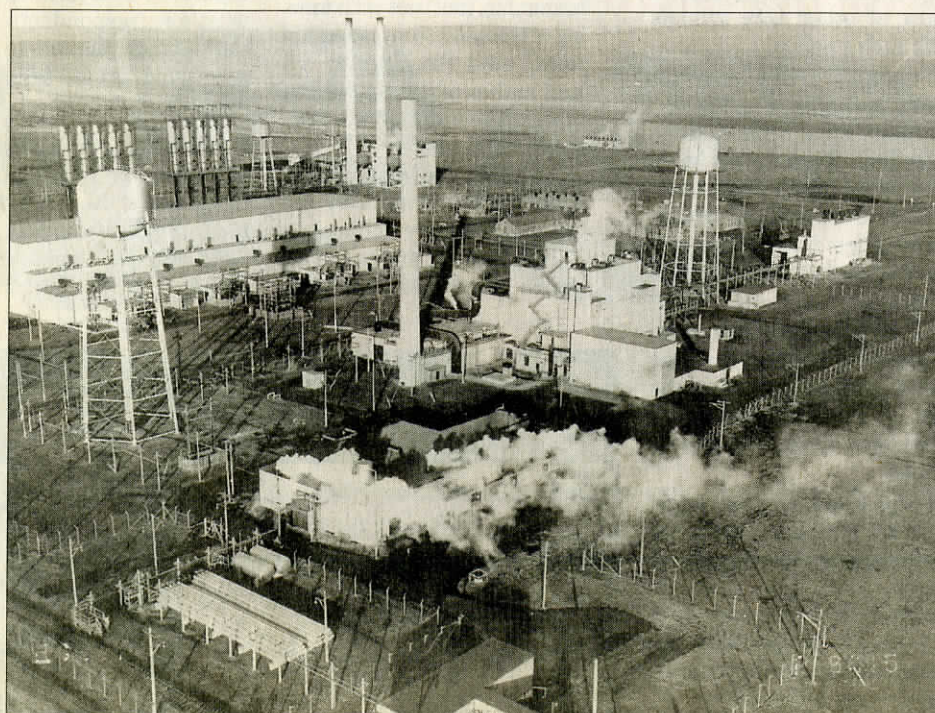
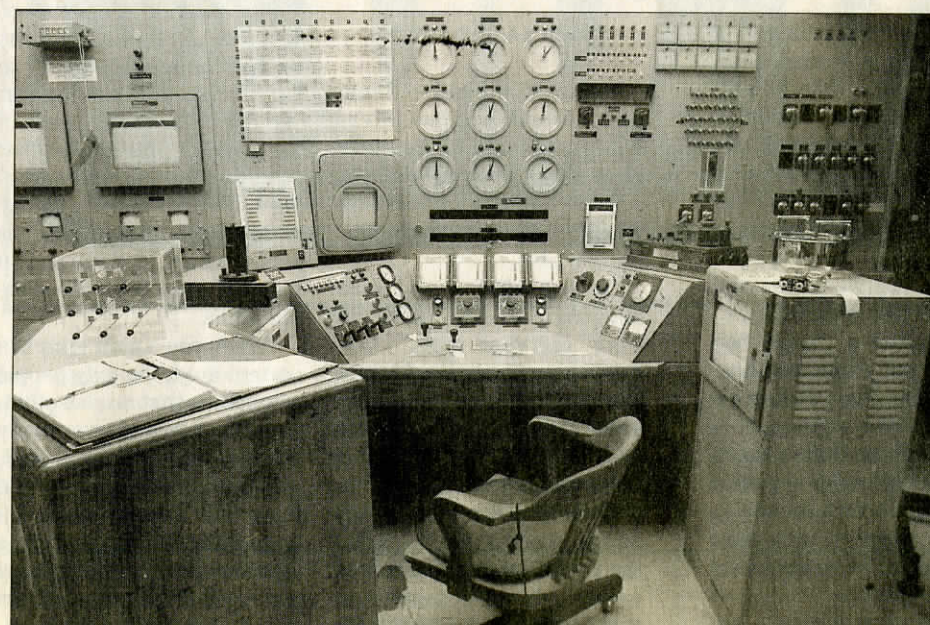


Photo courtesy Department of Energy

B Reactor near Richland is shown in this aerial photo taken around 1945. Plutonium produced at B Reactor...



Herald file

The control room of the B Reactor appears much the same as it did in the 1940s when it was constructed at Hanford in 13 months as the United States raced to produce an atomic bomb during World War II.

# DOE to temporarily close waste processing center

## Hanford facility shutdown scheduled for early 2009

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy plans to shut down Hanford's Waste Receiving and Processing Facility early in 2009 for an undetermined length of time.

The temporary shutdown is part of

a plan announced by DOE in March to start sending some Hanford waste to the Idaho National Laboratory for processing and then shipment for disposal at a national repository in New Mexico.

About 1,000 drums of radioactive Hanford waste that would otherwise be processed at Hanford will be sent to Idaho in an initial campaign. DOE plans call for about 9,000 of the drums eventually to be sent to Idaho.

About 40 people at the Waste

Receiving and Processing Facility, or WRAP, would be affected, according to DOE.

But because the work will be paid for out of the Hanford budget, sending the shipments to Idaho will not mean a decrease in Hanford jobs next year, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office.

Money saved on processing the waste can be used for other Hanford work, such as retrieving drums of

waste temporarily buried in trenches in central Hanford, Brockman said.

"The goal is to focus on retrieval," he said "The big reduction in risk comes when we get it out of the ground."

In the '70s and '80s, waste potentially contaminated with plutonium was temporarily buried at Hanford until the nation opened a national repository for transuranic waste in New Mexico, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP. At Hanford,

transuranic waste is typically laboratory equipment, protective clothing and other debris contaminated with plutonium.

DOE plans to send 55-gallon drums of waste to Idaho that already have been placed inside 85-gallon overpacks because they were severely corroded when they were retrieved from the ground.

See **DOE** | Page B1

16 SEP 08

# Bechtel faces fine over worker's layoff

Engineer raised safety  
questions related  
to vitrification plant

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy plans to fine Bechtel National \$41,250 for laying off an engineer after he raised concerns in 2005 related to the safety of Hanford's vitrification plant.

The DOE Office of Enforcement later concluded one of the employee's safety concerns, which were related to the software that will control the plant, was valid and issued a notice of violation to Bechtel

about the issue in 2007.

The proposed fine announced Monday was because of a violation of the DOE Contractor Employee Protection Program, which prohibits DOE contractors from retaliating against employees who believe they have disclosed information concerning danger to public health or safety.

DOE considers these "violations to be particularly significant, as they contravene the fundamental principles of a

See **BECHTEL** | Page A2

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# 18 SEP 08 Researchers tackle uranium pollution mystery at Hanford

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory believe a research project using 35 newly drilled wells will help explain the baffling behavior of uranium contamination at Hanford.

**Online video**  
tricityherald.com

A decade ago, Hanford officials believed uranium contamination at the nuclear reservation just north of Richland along the Columbia River was a problem that time would solve.

After the most contaminated soil was dug up and hauled to a landfill for low-level radioactive waste in central Hanford, they expected the uranium-contami-

nated ground water below it to naturally dissipate.

Instead, levels of contamination remain at up to three times the drinking water standard in the ground water.



**Zachara**

“The plume here has been far more persistent than expected,” said John

Zachara, PNNL chief scientist who is leading a team of experts in underground geochemistry, hydrology and microbiology on the research project.

See **URANIUM** | Page A2

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# DOE, Battelle officials work to hammer out deal

**JOHN TRUMBO**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Battelle Memorial Institute has been granted a three-month extension of its contract to manage the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland and may soon get another four years.

Pushing back the contract's Sept. 30 expiration to Dec. 31 gives Department of Energy officials and Battelle more time to negotiate a new contract.

The short extension was a rumor until Wednesday, when Jeff Sherwood, DOE spokesman in Washington, D.C., confirmed it to the Herald.

"It is extended until the end of the year," Sherwood said, adding that Battelle and DOE also are negotiating terms for a longer-term contract that has been in discussion for about two years. Battelle has managed PNNL since 1965.

A report published in the trade publication "Weapons Complex Monitor"

HANFORD

20 Aug 08

# Waste initiative dead after no appeal made

State won't fight court's unconstitutional ruling

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The state of Washington will not ask the U.S. Supreme Court to hear arguments on the Hanford waste initiative, ending any chance that it will become law.

Tuesday was the deadline for the state to appeal a May decision of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals that found the initiative unconstitutional.

The initiative was passed by

voters in every county except Benton and Franklin in 2004, but had not been enacted because of legal challenges led by the federal government.

The initiative was intended to stop more waste from being sent to the Hanford nuclear reservation until waste already there is cleaned up, but critics said it would have unintended consequences.

See **WASTE** | Page A2



## HANFORD

# New contract protested

GAO has 100 days to resolve;  
complainant not identified

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The award of Hanford's new \$3 billion Mission Support Contract has been protested, the Department of Energy notified Hanford employees Monday evening.

DOE expects the Government Accountability Office to take up to 100

days to resolve the protest. In the meantime, work to transition to the new support services contract cannot begin.

The contract was awarded Sept. 3 to Mission Support Alliance, a team led by Lockheed Martin. Mission Support Alliance was told then that it would begin the transition from Fluor Hanford on Oct. 1 at the earliest and would assume full responsibility Jan. 1.

Mission Support Alliance had not yet received notice to proceed Monday when the GAO notified DOE of the protest.

Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council, said TRIDEC "is very disappointed."

"The Mission Support Contract was delayed already, so to have it protested ... does absolutely no good for employees or the community," he said. "It just delays something that already has been delayed."

Although DOE did not say who filed the protest, the other contract finalist was a

# Hanford begins waste retrieval

Pumping started on  
11th leak-prone tank

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers began retrieving radioactive and hazardous chemical waste from Tank C-110 this week.

They're hoping it marks the first sustained effort to retrieve solid waste from leak-prone underground tanks since late July 2007 when a spill of waste stopped operations.

It also ends CH2M Hill Hanford Group's efforts at the tank farms on a positive note. New contractor Washington River Protection Solutions takes over

operations of Hanford's tank farms Oct. 1 under a \$7.1 billion contract.

CH2M Hill has completed removing waste from seven Hanford tanks and has done some work to retrieve solid wastes from four more, including Tank C-110. It also removed pumpable liquid from all 149 of Hanford's leak-prone single shell tanks.

Waste left from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons programs is being pumped from single-shell tanks into 28

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

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# Site was first used for waste burial in 300 Area

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers are about to learn what was disposed of in one of the nuclear reservation's earliest burial grounds.

Work has started on digging up the 618-1 Burial Ground, which was used from 1945 — the end of World War II — through 1951 for debris from research and uranium fuel production. It was the first burial ground in the 300 Area, which is just upriver from Richland.

And it's also the only one there that ended up under a building as work at Hanford increased during the Cold War and more facilities were needed in the 300 Area.

"It's nice to see progress, especially inside the fence at

the 300 Area," said Alicia Boyd, environmental engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, a Hanford regulator. The industrial portion of the 300 Area was enclosed inside a fence and later burial grounds were established outside the fence.

Hanford workers have to prepare for the unexpected when they start digging up burial grounds. Few records were kept in an earlier era when the burial grounds were supposed to be the final stop for Hanford waste and were not considered a threat to the nearby Columbia River.

See **EXCAVATED** | Page A2



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23 SEP 07

# Safety Council honors Fluor

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The National Safety Council gave Fluor Hanford its 2008 Robert W. Campbell Award on Monday during the council's annual congress in California.

"This is a very prestigious international award," said Dave Brockman, manager of the Department of Energy Hanford Richland Operations Office, in a statement. "The employees of Fluor Hanford deserve this recognition, and we are very proud of them. This is a tribute to the hard work they accomplish safely day in and day out."

Fluor Hanford now will expand a business case study developed for the award to include teaching notes to allow top business and engineering schools worldwide to study its environmental, health and safety management program and practices.

In addition, Fluor Hanford will act as a mentor for other companies wishing to learn from Fluor's experience.

Fluor Hanford won the award for companies with more than 1,000 employees, and Gulf Petrochemical Industries Co. won the award for smaller companies. The award recognizes organizations that demonstrate how integration of environmental, health and safety management into business operations is a cornerstone of their corporate success.

"It is readily apparent that senior management at both companies values the safety and health of their employees, as much as they value productivity," said Janet Froetscher, president of the National Safety Council, in a statement.

Fluor underwent a rigorous assessment that included a two-day visit by a team of experts to Hanford and a comprehensive evaluation of its commitment to and implementation of environmental, health and safety practices, according to the council. Award winners work with an international partnership of 21 organizations to develop case studies that illustrate their superior programs and practices, it said.

"Our employees and those of the Department of Energy truly deserve the credit in our earning this honor," said Fluor Hanford President Con Murphy in a statement. "The Robert W. Campbell Award validates their commitment to being personally involved in every aspect of the ESH program and collaborating to make their community, and Hanford and other DOE sites, better and safer places to live and work."

► *Annette Cary: 582-1533;*

*acary@tricityherald.com*

# Hanford Reach National Monument plan OK'd

But public shouldn't expect to see immediate changes

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The plan guiding management of the Hanford Reach National Monument for the next 15 years has been approved by the regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ren Lohofener signed a record of decision Thursday on the much-discussed management plan. It calls for leaving the White Bluffs boat launch

open to motorized boats and opening more acreage to the public, although the Rattlesnake Mountain area will remain off-limits.

However, the public should not expect to see immediate changes in recreation opportunities on the horseshoe-shaped monument

surrounding much of the Hanford nuclear reservation.

Fish and Wildlife will be looking at its budget and setting priorities for projects outlined in the plan, said Dan Haas, a natural resource planner for Fish and Wildlife. It will be working on projects over the next 15 years.

This is the first management plan for the monument, which was created in 2000 from the buffer zone around Hanford and where land has remained undeveloped for more than six decades. It includes a remnant of

the shrub-steppe land that once covered the region and the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River outside its tidal area.

After years of discussion and work, a draft management plan was released in late 2006 and a final plan released last month.

Although the draft plan called for closing the White Bluffs boat launch to motorized boats, concerns were raised about how difficult it would be for people with small motorized boats to reach the central stretch of the

Columbia River on the monument where the fishing is good.

The plan approved Thursday keeps the White Bluffs boat launch open and calls for working with government partners to develop better boat launches in the areas of the Vernita Bridge and the Ringold Fish Hatchery.

See **PLAN** | Page B2

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# Vit plant pigeon problem passes

Bird population no longer big enough to cause worker issues

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The pigeon problem at Hanford's vitrification plant is gone after contractor Bechtel National again called in Hanford's pest control service.

The birds were shot and killed with air rifles in early September after Bechtel could not find any other method it

believed would be effective to reduce the problem of bird droppings fouling equipment and work areas of the plant, which is under construction.

Earlier this summer, about 130 pigeons were shot and killed with air rifles over two days. But a second shoot planned for August was canceled after a worker notified PETA and PETA contacted the Department of Energy.

At that time, about 70 to 80 birds still were living in the Pretreatment Facility, the largest building being constructed for the \$12.3 billion

vitrification plant to turn some of Hanford's worst radioactive waste into a solid glass form.

Drew Slaton, spokesman for Bechtel, did not know if any pigeons still are roosting at the plant, but said if there are, they are no longer numerous enough to cause problems for workers.

Bechtel is hoping that because the vitrification plant is an active construction site, more pigeons will not start roosting there and replace the culled population.

27 SEP 08  
Senate may vote on  
DOE spending today

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work at the Hanford nuclear reservation is expected to be paid for until spring at current funding levels because Congress has not passed a Department of Energy budget for the fiscal year starting Wednesday.

The Senate could pass a continuing resolution today to allow DOE to continue spending money.

Friday, a separate Senate supplemental appropriations bill that could have boosted Hanford spending in the waning days of fiscal 2008 by an estimated \$160 million to \$170 million failed to make it to a vote. For the Senate to consider the bill, supporters needed 60 votes on a motion to proceed to consideration of the bill but received only 52.

The bill, which included \$56 billion of spending, had been proposed to stimulate the economy.

Money for cleanup of Hanford and other DOE weapons sites had been included in the proposed bill through the efforts of Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who has been concerned about inadequate funding for cleanup of Hanford. The money would have been used for cleanup of Hanford along the Columbia River, transuranic waste projects, soil and ground water cleanup, upgrades at the tank farms, security and completing studies on bulk vitrification as a technology to treat radioactive waste.

"With the administration's cuts already taking a toll, this funding would have helped get us back on track to meet critical cleanup goals," Murray said in a statement.

The Senate is expected to meet this weekend and could take up a continuing resolution that would provide money

# Many topics likely at annual Hanford meeting

State of the Site session  
Thursday in Kennewick

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The public and Hanford workers will get a chance to question top Hanford managers and regulators and make comments Thursday at the annual Hanford State of the Site meeting for the Mid-Columbia.

The Kennewick meeting is planned for 7 to 9 p.m. at the Red Lion Hotel at 1101 N. Columbia Center Blvd., Ken-

newick. Hanford officials and others also will be available to answer questions and discuss issues one-on-one at an open house an hour before the meeting.

Then the meeting will open with short presentations by leaders from the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

In recent years Hanford workers and former workers have used the meetings to raise concerns about safety and benefits. Their questions have led to an independent review of

worker compensation claims for ill workers and to studies to better understand the potential dangers of vapors vented from Hanford's underground tanks holding radioactive waste.

This year there appears to be no shortage of topics that Hanford workers and the public may want to discuss.

State of the Site falls the same week that two new contractors take over work to manage Hanford's tank farms holding 53 million gallons of radioactive waste and work to clean up central Hanford and contaminated soil and ground water.

The contract changes do not include

the Mission Support Contract, after the award was protested in September. That leaves uncertainty for workers waiting to see how many will be hired by the new contractor.

Some workers also are concerned about changes to the solid waste program, including plans to temporarily close the Waste Receiving and Processing Facility early in 2009 after a

See **MEETING** | Page B4

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## BRIEFS

### **LIGO to have monthly tour on Saturday** 9001 08

The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) will hold its monthly tour from 1:30 to 4 p.m. Saturday.

There is no fee. Visitors will tour the observatory and the control room.

For more information, call 372-8181 or e-mail outreach@ligo-wa.Caltech.edu.

# 3 Tri-City companies win \$12 million Hanford subcontract

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford has selected three local businesses to do \$12 million worth of work to help backfill Hanford waste sites and burial grounds after they are cleaned up.

George A. Grant Inc., North Wind Inc. and Watts Construction Inc., all of the Tri-Cities, will provide backfill services as needed through 2013. Because George A. Grant had the best price proposal, it will be offered work

on individual projects first. If that company is unavailable for the assignment, the work will be offered to North Wind and then Watts Construction.

Subcontracting in advance with several companies will allow Washington Closure to manage backfill work with greater speed and flexibility, the DOE contractor said.

In the first task order under the new subcontract, George A. Grant will backfill the 618-7 Burial Ground in the Hanford 300 Area just north of Rich-

land by Dec. 31. Hanford workers have dug three trenches there used to dispose of debris from research and fuel fabrication at Hanford, including huge stainless steel tanks and drums of zircaloy chips.

The burial ground needs about 105,000 cubic yards of soil and rock backfill.

Over the next several years Washington Closure estimates that Hanford workers will remove more than 2.5 million cubic yards of contaminated material as part of cleanup of

the river corridor. That includes work in or near the 300 Area and work around the nine reactors that once produced plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

After contaminated material is dug up and taken to a lined landfill in central Hanford for disposal, each waste site is required to be backfilled to match the surrounding area.

That will require subcontractors to retrieve about 2.5 million yards of clean fill from a series of dirt pits throughout the Hanford site and truck it back to

areas required to be backfilled.

Since taking over cleanup of the river corridor in 2005, Washington Closure has awarded nearly 90 percent of its subcontracted work to small businesses, significantly more than its goal of 65 percent, it said. Its \$2.2 billion contract over eight years calls for cleaning up 370 waste sites and burial grounds and demolishing 486 contaminated buildings.

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1 DEC 08

# PNNL

## may get \$25M

Money from bill will help build new lab to replace 300 Area loss

**JOHN TRUMBO**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Another \$25 million for building replacement research facilities for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is expected this week when President Bush signs a bill that includes money requested by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray.

The money is coming from the Department of Homeland Security to help build a new lab in north Richland to replace offices and labs being lost in the cleanup of the 300 Area at Hanford near the Columbia River.

"This is new funding," said Matt McAlvanah, press secretary for Murray, D-Wash., who also is a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee.

PNNL spokesman Greg Koller said the money will help meet the goal of having replacement research facilities built by 2011.

"We're grateful to both Senator Murray and DHS for securing the funding. It, along with money from DOE's Office of Science and the National Nuclear Security Administration, allows construction of the Physical Sciences Facility to remain on schedule," Koller said Tuesday.

McAlvanah said Murray promised this summer to get the \$25 million included in legislation to help preserve 800 jobs that are tied to replacing the lab.

Those jobs are at risk

# PNNL can continue work under 'use permit' for another 4 years

**JOHN TRUMBO**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is giving Battelle Memorial Institute a four-year extension on the management and operations contract for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

The announcement Friday means that the Richland lab can continue private work under its "use permit" until September 2012 when DOE will issue a new contract.

The use permit was part of the original contract with Battelle in 1964. It allows use of laboratory resources for Battelle's commercial business. Battelle is a non-profit research corporation based in Columbus, Ohio.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said Battelle and DOE have agreed that the use permit will be ended or incorporated into the new contract in 2012.

It currently represents about 10 percent of PNNL's \$760 million annual budget, and helps support several hundred lab jobs.

The extension comes a year after DOE said it planned to issue a draft request for proposals for a new management and operations contract for PNNL.

DOE officials wanted to eliminate the use permit, which they said gave Battelle an advantage over other potential bidders.

Getting rid of the use permit would level the field for all competitors in the bidding process and would bring the PNNL contract more in line with other DOE lab contracts.

PNNL is one of DOE's 17 national laboratories. Its 4,000 employees work on problems involving energy, national security,

# New firms take reins in cleanup

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford's two newest major contractors officially took over work Wednesday, equipped with plans they believe will make cleanup of the nuclear reservation safer and more efficient.

Washington River Protection Solutions, under a \$7.1 billion contract for up to 10 years, has hired 1,105 employees to manage and operate Hanford's tank farms and prepare for operations of the vitrification plant. Almost all of the tank farm workers for outgoing contractor CH2M Hill Hanford Group who applied for jobs with the new contractor were hired.

And CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., under a \$4.5 billion contract for up to a decade, has hired 1,950 employees to clean up much of central Hanford, to clean up contaminated soil and ground water and to take over work at the K East and K West Reactors.

Any employees the plateau remediation contractor did not hire from Fluor Hanford will remain with Fluor as it continues to provide sitewide services until a new mission support contractor is in place. Fluor Hanford has about 1,700 employees remaining but is accepting applications for the second phase of voluntary layoffs.

The two new contractors will be ramping up work in the coming months, but they and DOE officials were ready to start talking about their plans Wednesday after meetings with Hanford employees.

Washington River Protection Solutions brings a breadth of experience from across the DOE complex in managing and successfully retrieving radioactive liquid waste, said Shirley Olinger, manager of the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection. The team has done similar work at sites in South Carolina, Idaho and West Valley, N.Y.

It also has valuable nuclear experience that will help as it prepares for operation of the vitrification plant being built to treat Hanford radioactive waste now stored in underground tanks, she said. Its duties include not only preparing waste for treatment but also

## HANFORD'S LARGEST PLANT

# DOE to build system to treat ground water

Design work under way on \$174M project

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is preparing to build Hanford's largest water treatment system to clean up one of Hanford's most problematic underground plumes of contaminated water.

It has signed a record of decision with its regulators, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology, committing to the cleanup work, DOE announced Thursday.

"Pulling this contaminated water out of the ground and treating it is critical to preventing contamination in Hanford's central plateau from traveling toward the Columbia River," Dave Brockman, manager of DOE's Hanford Richland Operations Office, said in a statement.

Underneath most of the 200 West Area in central Hanford lies a 5-square-mile plume of ground water contaminated with carbon tetrachloride. Contamination from the chemical used as a solvent in plutonium processing facilities has been measured in concentrations as high as 1,000 times the amount allowed in drinking water.

In addition portions of the ground water beneath the 200 West Area also are contaminated with trichloroethylene, chromium, nitrate and radioactive technetium 99, iodine 129 and tritium.

DOE is planning to build Hanford's largest pump and treat station at a cost of \$174 million to attack the contaminants and clean the water.

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The system will require drilling more than 50 wells to pump contaminated water out of the ground or return cleaned water to the ground. The new system, with multiple treatment units, will have a throughput of more than 1,600 gallons per minute. The cleaned water then can be returned to the ground.

Work on designing the new system has started, and initial estimates call for bringing the system online in two to three years.

It will replace a smaller treatment system installed in the 1990s as a stop-gap measure to prevent carbon tetrachloride from spreading. The

17 OCT 08

# Idaho, New Mexico may handle some Hanford radioactive waste

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers took their worry and frustration over changes in the way some radioactive waste will be handled to the sidewalk Thursday across from the Federal Building in Richland.

About two dozen workers took vacation time Thursday afternoon to protest in front of the Federal Building, home to many Department of Energy offices. By 5 p.m. their number had grown to about 50, most of them gathered along nearby George Washington Way as the after-work Hanford traffic cruised by.

"Tri-City \$\$\$ going to Idaho" and "Don't Outsource Employment" read signs waved by Hanford union workers as cars slowed and honked.

DOE plans to send 1,000 drums of transuranic waste — most of it debris contaminated with plutonium — to Idaho for compaction and then shipment to a repository in New Mexico for disposal.

It's work that the United Steelworkers Local 12-369 believes could be done at less cost at Hanford, Stephanie Green, president of the local, said during the picketing.

Many of the workers picketing Thursday were members of the Steelworkers local, but they were joined by members of other unions.

"I want DOE to rethink sending work away," said Rich Moore, a Hanford nuclear chemical operator.

In addition, DOE is turning over other work to prepare some Hanford transuranic waste for shipment directly to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Central Characterization Project based in Carlsbad, N.M. The work includes characterizing the waste and certifying it meets standards for disposal in New Mexico.

That's "salt in our wounds," Moore said.

Hanford workers have the training and capabilities to do work with transuranic waste, said Johnny S. Howard, chief steward for the operators under the new CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. Although DOE plans to send 1,000 drums to Idaho initially, more campaigns could follow.

"It's a major loss of jobs," Howard said, and several of the protesters held hand-lettered signs warning of layoffs to come.

Also Thursday, Ronald Ault, national president of the Metal Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, sent a letter to Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman saying he was concerned about assigning Hanford work to the New Mexico project. He requested a

face-to-face meeting.

"This may seem to you like an isolated matter when looked at over the overall DOE complex," Ault wrote. "(B)ut when you are sitting at my desk and seeing hundreds of Metal Trades ... jobs outsourced to non union contractors across the DOE nationwide complex it is a very different and disturbing set of circumstances that appears to be by design."

He cited examples in Tennessee and New Mexico. Current employees often are not given preference in hiring when work is outsourced, he wrote.

Changes in work with Hanford transuranic waste are being driven by decisions intended to coordinate work across the national DOE complex, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office.

"We're very concerned about these people's jobs," he said. But because he plans to continue spending at least the same amount of money in fiscal 2009 — which began this month — as in the previous fiscal year, the number of Hanford workers should not change.

However, there may be changes in

See **PROTEST** | Page B2

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12 OCT 08

# Surprises found at Hanford pistol range

Cleanup of old site  
turns up live grenades

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Every Hanford cleanup project seems to have its surprises, and that's the case with even a seemingly straightforward project like cleaning up the old pistol range used by the Hanford Patrol.

Starting in the mid-'40s, the Hanford Patrol used firing

ranges facing the north side of Gable Mountain for target practice in the center of the nuclear reservation. Pistols, rifles, machine guns and other small arms were fired toward the side of the mountain, along with grenades.

The cleanup of the firing ranges "is somewhat different because there is not radiation or something near reactors," said Cameron Hardy, Department of Energy spokesman at

See **RANGE** | Page B2



18 027 08  
Plan to send transuranic waste not entirely off the table

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy dropped plans Friday to send 1,000 drums of Hanford radioactive waste to Idaho for treatment this winter.

"It's a tough time for people" and DOE wants to limit some of the stress on workers as the site shifts to new contractors, said Dave Brockman, manager of DOE's Hanford Richland Operations Office.

Thursday, about 50 union employ-

ees at Hanford protested in front of the Federal Building and along George Washington Way in Richland, fearing that what they saw as "outsourcing" of Hanford work would cost them jobs.

"These employees are important to us," said Brockman, who made the decision to call off the shipments to Idaho. "It's not worth putting people through turmoil."

The plan to send transuranic waste — typically debris contaminated with plutonium — to Idaho is not off the

table permanently, Brockman said. But now is not the right time and he doesn't see another opportunity any time soon to send waste to Idaho for compaction.

Hanford workers have argued they could compact the waste at Hanford and do it less expensively. However, DOE has disagreed with that and said the permit for the New Mexico repository that disposes of the waste only allows compacted transuranic waste to be sent from the Idaho compactor.

Although waste will not be sent to Idaho this winter, DOE is continuing with its plan to reduce Hanford work

with transuranic waste.

It wants to use its Richland Operations Office budget for other work it believes is a higher priority to reduce risk from radioactive and chemical contamination and shrink the footprint of the nuclear reservation.

It plans to concentrate on protecting ground water, shipping weapons-grade plutonium off site and cleaning up Hanford along the Columbia River.

That also means there will be no reason for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Central Characterization Project to work with Hanford transuranic waste in the near future.

Hanford workers had been concerned that the Central Characterization Project of Carlsbad, N.M., has been assigned to characterize and certify transuranic waste for shipment to the national repository in New Mexico.

Although Hanford workers have been doing that work, it was not included in the new CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. contract, which took affect this month.

With budget dollars now being shifted from work with transuranic waste to other projects, no waste may

11 OCT 09  
**Hanford budget  
would drop by more  
than \$34 million**

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy plans to spend less money in coming months at its environmental cleanup sites including Hanford than was approved by Congress in a continuing

budget resolution for spending through early March.

DOE's goal is to be conservative and not overspend in the first five months of the year as the funding amount for the rest of the year still unclear.

DOE will use the administration request for funding in fiscal 2009, which would cut annual spending on DOE cleanup nationwide from a little more than \$5.7 billion in the fiscal year 2008 budget to

\$5.5 billion. The fiscal year started Oct. 1.

At Hanford, the budget for cleanup under the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office would drop from the \$886.5 million approved for fiscal 2008 to \$851.8 million under the administration's request for fiscal 2009. That's a decrease of \$34.7 million.

At the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection, the administration budget would increase from the \$969.5 mil-

lion approved in fiscal 2008 to \$978.4 million under the fiscal 2009 administration proposal. That's an increase of \$8.9 million.

After the budget proposal was released in February, critics, including Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said it could lead to layoffs.

But on Friday afternoon Todd Young, Hastings' chief of staff, said DOE is expected to use discretion in how money is spent in the coming months to

keep programs at Hanford funded. There also may be some carry-over money available from last year.

"Our expectation is this will not lead to job loss or a slow-down in progress," Young said.

In addition, although the continuing resolution setting

See **SPENDING** | Page B2

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# DOE study favors reusing nuclear fuel

Public hearing set Nov. 17 in Pasco

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A new draft environmental study for the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership on the impacts of expanding nuclear energy favors reprocessing fuel that has been used in nuclear power plants rather than using it only once.

A public hearing on the plan is planned at 7 p.m. Nov. 17 at the Pasco Red Lion, 2525 N. 20th Ave. An Oregon hearing will be held the next evening in Hood River.

The draft study, or programmatic environmental impact statement, looked at alternatives to the practice of using nuclear fuel once and then sending it to a deep geological repository, such as Yucca Mountain, Nev.

It did not pick one option as preferred, saying only that the Department of Energy preferred to close the fuel cycle, or reuse fuel. The study also did not narrow sites for researching or reprocessing fuel, but did include information about areas, including Hanford, that might be appropriate for nuclear projects.

"At this time DOE is not proposing project-specific or site-specific actions," the study said. That would be premature without knowing the size and type of facilities needed, it said.

Rather, the study is intended as an initial step in deciding whether and how to recycle used nuclear fuel.

The study projects that electricity use in the U.S. could increase by about 40 percent by 2030. DOE is looking at ways to support the expansion of nuclear energy production, which now supplies 19 percent of the nation's electricity, while reducing the risks of nuclear proliferation and the impacts of disposing of nuclear fuel in geologic repositories.

Yucca Mountain has yet to open but the nation

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10/23

# Phish test lures in PNNL employees

Test initiated by DOE; information, materials were not compromised

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is improving its computer security after a couple dozen employees fell for a trick to download "malware," or malicious software.

Fortunately, the malware had been placed to tempt them by the Department of Energy as a test of cybersecurity systems.

The test did not involve any classified material and no information was compromised or accessed by anyone other than the DOE's audit team, employees were told.

In May about 200 employees were sent an e-mail message that "looked very official," said Geoff Harvey, spokesman for the national lab. They were

directed to go to an Internet site and download information that included directions for supposedly changing printing parameters for a training certificate.

But instead of being directed to a DOE Internet site as the message indicated, employees clicked on a impostor site that ended with the suffix ".net" rather than the ".gov" used by DOE.

Had the trick e-mail been real, software might have been downloaded that would have allowed an outsider unauthorized and undetected access to some of the national lab's computer systems.

Making the fake e-mail tougher to detect, it arrived in computer in-boxes not long after employees had been notified that they would be receiving new training for security badges.

Although exact numbers were not available late

# BRIEFS

28 OCT 08

## **Hanford workers told to watch for deer, elk**

Hanford workers are being warned to watch for deer and elk as the fall days shorten.

Fall is the most dangerous season for collisions with animals because workers are commuting at dawn and dusk, according to Fluor Hanford. Visibility is reduced, and that's the time the animals tend to be on the move.

Crashes are recorded most frequently between Richland and the Wye Barricade.

Last year there were 19 collisions between cars and deer

# Millions may get help against foreclosure

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

WASHINGTON — The government is considering a plan that would help around 3 million homeowners avoid foreclosure, sources said.

A final deal had not been reached Wednesday, but government agencies were contemplating using around

\$50 billion from the recently passed bailout of the financial industry to guarantee about \$500 billion in mortgages.

The plan could include loan modifications that would lower interest rates for a five-year period, according to two people briefed on the plan, who asked not to be identified because details were still being worked out and the

plan was not yet public.

The plan would be the most aggressive effort yet to limit damages from the U.S. housing recession, which has shaken global credit markets.

More than 4 million American homeowners with a mortgage were at least one payment behind on their loans at the end of June, and 500,000 had

started the foreclosure process, according to the most recent data.

The government's program would be run by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. The agency's chairman, Sheila Bair, said last week that she was working "closely and creatively" with the Treasury Department on such a plan, but revealed few details.

## Last of Hanford's K West fuel removed

Hanford workers have completed removing fuel and fuel scraps from the K West Basin, the Department of Energy notified the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board this week.

DOE had committed to the board to have the fuel removed by the end of September and met that deadline, DOE said.

The last of the radioactive fuel found in the K West Basins was loaded into canister overpacks, dried at the Cold Drying and Vacuuming Facility and transferred to the Canister Storage Building where other K Basin fuel is being stored.

If more fuel or fuel scrap are uncovered during the removal of debris in the K West Basin, the same process could be used until late 2010, DOE said.

In addition, it could use the dry storage containers that Washington Closure Hanford has developed for fuel and fuel scraps dug up in old burial grounds near the Columbia River.

K West Basin was used to cool fuel irradiated in the K West Basin and also to store irradiated fuel after the end of the Cold War. It's now being used to store radioactive sludge in underwater containers.

- Herald staff

# DOE to collect river samples

Check is planned as cleanup nears finish along Columbia River

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work has begun to collect about 1,200 samples to check for possible contaminants, a process that will help drive the final decisions on cleaning up Hanford along the Columbia River.

Workers are collecting samples of river water, soil on Hanford islands, sediment from the river and fish to test for evidence of contaminants that might be linked to the past production of plutonium at Hanford for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

"After the sampling we'll know where and what the con-

## HANFORD NEWS ONLINE

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taminants are and who or what might be exposed to them," said Jamie Zeisloft, the Department of Energy project lead.

The data collected from the new sampling along 120 miles of the river will be combined with extensive data from sam-

pling done for decades on the Columbia to produce a more complete estimate of the potential health risks to people, animals and plants.

The results could lead to changes in cleanup plans to control or reduce the risk of exposure. Results will be used to help make the final cleanup decisions for Hanford land along the river, where cleanup is expected to largely be completed by 2015.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** 

Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268



# Hanford mystery cylinders to be tapped

1 of 2 to be opened Saturday may contain poisonous gas

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Two mystery cylinders found in a Hanford burial ground will be opened Saturday in the center of the nuclear reservation when few workers are on duty as a safety precaution.

One of the compressed gas cylinders may hold a poisonous gas that was used as a chemical weapon in

World War I. And both cylinders are suspected of containing highly corrosive chemicals.

Phosgene, which was used in a Cold War Hanford research project, is the same chemical responsible for the large majority of chemical weapon deaths during World War I, causing soldiers to choke. Department of Energy contractor Washington Closure Hanford suspects that's what is

in the larger cylinder.

The second is suspected of containing hydrogen chloride, which also is toxic and may have been used in the same research project to improve plutonium processing at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

Both cylinders were found in the 618-7 Burial Ground, which was used from 1960-73 for waste from the Han-

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
 Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268

ford nuclear reservation's 300 Area along the Columbia River. The 300 Area was used for research and to fabricate fuel for Hanford reactors that produced plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

"This is indicative of the type of things we continue to run into when we get into some of the more hazardous burial grounds," said Todd Nelson, spokesman for Washington Closure.

There was limited regulation for disposal of waste in the years the 618-7

Burial Ground was used and few records were kept. But modern environmental standards require the debris to be dug up and moved to a lined landfill away from the river.

"You have to be ready for the unexpected," said John Darby, Washington Closure project manager.

See **CYLINDERS** | Page B2

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# BUSINESS

Monday, Nov. 11, 2008

CONTACT US: 582-1502; businessnews@tricityherald.com; fax, 582-1510 | **INSIDE:** Stock market roundup, **B5**

## Hanford mystery cylinders contained nitrogen

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Two compressed gas cylinders tapped at Hanford this weekend contained nitrogen, but they apparently once were used to hold highly corrosive and toxic chemicals.

Hanford workers in the '60s or early '70s apparently purged the containers and filled them with nitrogen as a safety precaution before they were buried, said Todd Nelson, Washington Closure Hanford spokesman.

Washington Closure believes that one cylinder had contained phosgene, which was used as a chemical weapon during

World War I. The other likely contained hydrogen chloride, which with the phosgene was used in a research project to improve plutonium processing at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

The cylinders were uncovered in the cleanup of the Hanford 618-7 Burial Ground, which was used for disposal of debris from research projects and nuclear fuel fabrication from 1960-73.

The cylinders were somewhat depressurized either before disposal or before they were discovered in the 618-7 Burial Ground. One had pressure of 8 pounds per square inch and the other had pressure of 1 psi. In comparison, a car tire might be inflated to 32 psi.

If the containers had been labeled, the metal cylinders were too corroded to read any information.

The cylinders were taken from where they were found a mile north of Richland in the 300 Area to near the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility in central Hanford before they were sampled by subcontractor Integrated Environmental Systems. As a precaution, the work was done on the weekend when few workers were on the site.

"Our work is becoming increasingly complex and involves greater risk as we continue our mission of protecting the ground water and the Columbia River from hazardous material," wrote

Washington Closure President Chuck Spencer in a message to employees Monday about the weekend work.

The cylinders were rinsed out repeatedly with water after the nitrogen was bled out. They will be grouted or cut up so they have no empty interior space and then disposed of at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, Nelson said.

► *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com*

### HANFORD NEWS ONLINE

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## **DOE plans workshop Nov. 19 on Hanford**

The Department of Energy plans a workshop Nov. 19 to explain how it develops baselines showing schedules and work to be done to complete cleanup at Hanford.

It will cover assumptions made in planning and how the information is used to manage large projects. The workshop will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Room 120 of the Consolidated Information Center, Washington State University Tri-Cities, 2770 University Drive, Richland.

Hanford were placed on administrative leave based on preliminary findings of an investigation.

The investigation by the Department of Energy Office of Inspector General focuses on conduct related to time cards or time keeping practices, said Jerry Holloway, spokesman for Washington River Protection Solutions.

Holloway declined to say whether the administrative leave was paid or unpaid. The contractor is limited on what it can say because the investigation is ongoing and because of employee privacy concerns, he said. The employees were placed on leave Wednesday.

# Hanford will be sampled for contaminants; 16. 11 sampling tubes installed along Columbia River

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy has installed more ground water sampling tubes along the Columbia River, adding to a 13-year-old program to collect data about possible contaminants entering the river from Hanford.

“(Hanford) remediation is directly geared to monitoring,” said Jim Hanson, the DOE lead for some Hanford ground water cleanup. “It is a good indicator for us to prioritize the work we need to do.”

DOE and its contractors have just completed installing new aquifer monitoring tubes at 51 sites.

It expands a program that started at Hanford in 1995 “almost as a research project,” said Dennis Faulk, an Environ-

mental Protection Agency scientist. “We didn’t think they would have this durability.”

Data also is collected in other ways for DOE and state programs to monitor the affects of Hanford contamination on the river. Data is drawn from wells on the nuclear reservation and water and sediment samples are collected from the river.

But the aquifer sampling tubes give a direct look at what contaminants may be entering the river from the past production of plutonium for the nation’s nuclear weapons program at Hanford. Monitoring from multiple sources indicates that contaminants entering the river are quickly diluted to well within drinking water standards.

DOE now has 531 sampling tubes installed along the river from near B Reactor through the 300 Area just north of Richland. Of those, 85 percent to

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See **WATER** | Page B2

# Local EPA head joins DOE Hanford office

Ceto to help ensure legal requirements met to make final decisions on cleanup

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Hanford program manager for the Environmental Protection Agency is changing teams.

Nick Ceto has resigned from his position leading the Richland office of the EPA, a Hanford regulator, to take a job with the Department of Energy, which owns and is responsible for cleanup of the nuclear reservation.

"I think it is where I can do the most good for cleanup," Ceto said.

Starting Nov. 23, he will be the record of decision program manager for the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office, a position that will give him the lead role in making sure legal requirements are met to make final decisions on cleanup. Those decisions are key to having most of Hanford cleaned up along the Columbia River by 2015.

"I want to see those decisions made and people kayaking down the river" and stopping to camp on the Hanford side of the river, Ceto said. "It's entirely doable by 2015."

Plans for cleanup of the river corridor by 2015 call for having the burial grounds

dug up, having all reactors but B Reactor "cocooned" for long-term storage and having ground water treatment systems operating.

The biggest challenges in reaching the 2015 goal will be to have work at the K reactors finished, where EPA has fined DOE for missing cleanup goals as it has struggled with technical and other issues related to radioactive sludge that now is held in underwater containers at the K West Basin.



**Ceto**

In addition, cleanup of the notorious 618-10 and 618-11 burial grounds by 2015 may be a challenge.

They were used for the disposal of a mix of hazardous chemical and some highly radioactive waste from Hanford Cold War research projects until the federal government decided wastes containing high concentrations of plutonium should not be disposed of near the river.

Ceto has served as program manager for the EPA office overseeing Hanford cleanup, plus Idaho National Laboratory cleanup, for six years and has worked for EPA for 20 years.

That gives him extensive knowledge of Superfund cleanup regulations and procedures, which must be followed to make the final Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) decisions and complete

cleanup along the Columbia River.

"EPA has worked hard to make scientifically sound public policy decisions that have protected human health and the environment," Ceto said in a note sent to colleagues announcing his resignation. "I am proud to have been part of an agency that has always tried to do the right thing, even when it was tough."

During his years heading the Hanford EPA office, EPA improved working relationships with the state of Washington — another Hanford regulator — and with Oregon and Indian tribes, Ceto said.

Hanford has begun to better use its large lined landfill for low-level radioactive waste — the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility — to dispose of waste from more Hanford cleanup sites, he said.

And the office successfully pushed to get DOE to commit to restoring contaminated ground water in central Hanford to drinking water standards where possible.

No decision on interim leadership for the Richland EPA office has been made, but EPA is expected to move quickly to permanently fill Ceto's former position.

Ceto said the Richland EPA office is in good shape now with a team of employees who are "dedicated, motivated, knowledgeable and committed to the mission."

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# 65 Hanford workers to lose jobs

Overall employment at cleanup site is about the same as it was last year

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fluor Hanford gave layoff notices to 65 workers Monday as the number of employees needed by the new central Hanford cleanup contractor becomes clear.

However, which workers will lose their jobs will take some time to

become clear because of the "bump and roll" system used at Hanford.

Workers who are laid off may claim the jobs of less-experienced workers who would then lose their jobs.

Employment at the Hanford nuclear reservation remains constant, said Colleen French, spokeswoman for the Department of Energy Hanford Richland Operations Office.

"This is based on skills mix, not budget," she said. "It's a matter of what kinds of workers are needed to do jobs."

The Hanford reservation had

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8,963 workers a year ago and after the layoffs it will have 9,203, she said.

Those who received layoff notices Monday are nuclear chemical operators and radiological control technicians who had done cleanup work for outgoing Hanford contractor Fluor Hanford. They were not given offers by incoming contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.

The work being done for the Richland Operations Office is requiring more decontamination and demoli-

tion workers and fewer nuclear chemical operators, French said.

The Richland Operations Office is responsible for most Hanford work other than construction of the vitrification plant and operation of the underground tank farms holding radioactive waste.

At the K Basins, for example, work has shifted from vacuuming radioactive sludge into underwater containers to demolishing the K East Basin, French said.

That project had employed 55 nuclear chemical operators and

## Fluor Hanford spends millions with local firms

Fluor Hanford spent \$86 million at businesses in the seven Mid-Columbia counties near the Hanford nuclear reservation in fiscal 2008, the contractor announced Tuesday.

It spent \$204 million on purchases and contracts total during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30. Of that, nearly \$102 million went to small businesses.

"This is the highest number of Fluor Hanford acquisitions from small businesses in a single year during this decade," said Rich Meyer, Fluor Hanford director of supply chain operations and support, in a statement.

During the past eight years, Fluor Hanford has awarded more than \$1.6 billion in contracts, including \$950 million with local businesses and \$610 million with small businesses.

Fluor's small-business partners during the past year have been led by firms such as EnergX, L&H Seeds, Vista Engineering Technologies, Freestone Environmental Services and Babcock Services.

Fiscal 2008 was Fluor Hanford's last year as a prime cleanup contractor at Hanford, but it continues to provide site services until a mission support contractor is in place.



# GAO probes compensation for ill workers

Investigation includes program for Hanford nuclear workers

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Government Accountability Office is investigating a program to compensate ill nuclear workers, includ-

ing those at Hanford, and should have some preliminary findings to share with congressional leaders this spring.

Sixteen senators and representatives, including Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash.,

called for the review to identify the source of problems they say they hear about from constituents.

"For too long, sick Hanford workers have had to struggle to get the compensation they deserve," Murray said in a statement. "Whether they have been forced to wait for years, have

had critical information ignored or have been wrongly denied compensation, Hanford workers have had to fight a system designed to help them."

The program's Part B offers compensation of \$150,000 and medical reimbursement for workers who likely developed cancer because of

workplace exposure to radiation or a lung disease because of exposure to the metal beryllium.

Part E pays up to \$250,000 for wage loss and impairment caused by exposure to toxic substances, which could

See **WORKERS** | Page B2

## HANFORD CLEANUP

# TRIDEC forming plans for Obama term budget

## Hanford spending may increase for fiscal 2009

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Tri-City Development Council will be working to ensure funding to clean up the Hanford nuclear reservation doesn't get lost among the changes promised in the nation's capital, said Tim Peckinpaugh, a longtime lobbyist for TRIDEC.

Peckinpaugh, of K&L Gates, has worked on behalf of TRIDEC for 22 years and met with the Herald editorial board Friday.

"It's very important that we continue to tell the story of the Hanford mission,

or we will get left behind," he said.

Hanford is operating under a continuing resolution covering the DOE budget for fiscal 2009, which began Oct. 1. The continuing resolution sets spending at fiscal 2008 levels until a new appropriations bill for Department of Energy operations is approved.

Congress is expected to resume its fiscal 2009 budget discussions after the new administration takes office, Peckinpaugh said, which may mean an increase in Hanford spending in the neighborhood of the \$220 million for the year, based on previous Sen-

ate proposals.

The continuing resolution that has set spending at Hanford for fiscal 2009 expires in the spring.

In addition, an economic stimulus package that could be passed in January includes \$800 million more to be spread among all of DOE's cleanup sites.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who has been re-elected to the fourth most powerful position among Senate Democrats, will be in a position to ensure that Hanford gets its share of cleanup spending, Peckinpaugh said.

"She advocates very passionately for the region," he said.

TRIDEC also is watching to see who Barack Obama will appoint as

energy secretary to oversee the nation's energy policy, research and nuclear weapon site cleanup.

Peckinpaugh believes it's likely to be someone with a background in clean energy technologies such as solar, wind and biomass, based on Obama's energy agenda.

Obama campaigned in Nevada against Yucca Mountain, which has yet to open as a national repository for waste from commercial nuclear power plants and for glassified high-level radioactive defense wastes from Hanford.

Obama has said nuclear could be part of the nation's energy mix if issues over waste, nonproliferation and health and safety can be

addressed, Peckinpaugh said. It is the same argument used for years by people who oppose nuclear power, he pointed out.

One Hanford-related issue that should see some increased attention is compensation for ill nuclear workers or their survivors under a new administration that supports labor and worker health and safety, he said.

Claimants in the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program have criticized what they see as a slow and unfair process for deciding claims and awarding compensation.

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# 25 NOV 08 Announcement on Hanford Tri-Party agreement expected today

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Negotiations to draft new deadlines for cleaning up the Hanford nuclear reservation appear to be moving slowly, if at all, and top state officials are due in the Tri-Cities today to announce their next step.

Gov. Chris Gregoire has said if it appears the talks are deadlocked and no agreement can be reached by the time the new presidential administra-

tion takes office, the state would be prepared to take legal action.

Among state officials who will meet with Tri-City leaders and media today are Jay Manning, director of the Washington State Department of Ecology, and Mary Sue Wilson, the state senior assistant attorney general assigned to negotiations, according to an Ecology spokesman.

There also is a chance that Gregoire may fly to the Tri-Cities today, according to other officials who

asked not to be named.

In previous updates on the negotiations, the state and Department of Energy have issued joint statements, but on Monday officials at DOE had not been invited to today's update.

Negotiations have been under way for 18 months, with the state and federal government agreeing on concepts as long ago as last spring. Since then, the Tri-Party agencies — the state, DOE and the Environmental Protection Agency — have been

working on details of the agreement.

A month ago, Gregoire said the roadblock to successful negotiations was not DOE but the Justice Department.

"We're down to what, if anything, can we do to make progress," she said then.

The state began renegotiating the Tri-Party Agreement after it became clear that cleanup deadlines could not be met. Among other changes, the start of operations of the vitrification

plant to treat high-level radioactive waste has been delayed from 2011 to 2019.

While the state understands that getting the vitrification plant built and high-level waste out of underground tanks will take more time, Gregoire has said she wants the work to be on a path that is reliable and predictable.

◆ Annette Cary: 582-1533; [acary@tricityherald.com](mailto:acary@tricityherald.com)

23 NOV 08

# Cantwell, Murray hope to help president-elect understand Hanford

**LES BLUMENTHAL**

HERALD WASHINGTON, D.C.,  
BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Six months ago, then Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama told a crowd in Pendleton he wasn't familiar with the Hanford nuclear reservation and didn't have a clue what was going on there.

The comment caused a stir in the Tri-Cities and set off alarm bells with the state's two Democratic senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

It remains unclear whether the former community organizer from the south side of Chicago who spent three years in the Senate and is now the president-elect has learned anything about the \$2 billion-a-year Hanford cleanup or the long-standing commitment from the federal government to clean up one of the most toxic sites on Earth.

Murray said she has had "several" conversations with Obama's transition team about Hanford.

"I look forward to working with the Obama administration to make up for the funding shortfalls of the past eight years, and I am confident they will be responsive to our needs," Murray said.

Cantwell also has been in touch with the transition team

# BRIEFS

3 DEC 08

## **Spokane judge gets Hanford lawsuit**

The lawsuit filed by the state asking the courts to set and enforce Hanford cleanup deadlines has been assigned to Judge Fred Van Sickle in the Spokane office of the Eastern Washington District Federal Court.

The Department of Justice has 60 days to respond to the initial filing last week.

The state of Washington entered negotiations with the Department of Energy 18 months ago as it became clear that DOE could not meet Tri-



# State to file suit against DOE

## Washington sues over Hanford cleanup deadlines

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The state of Washington plans to file a lawsuit today to force the Department of Energy to move faster to empty radioactive waste from underground tanks at the Hanford nuclear reservation and treat it.

"In Washington state, we have been patient and reasonable in

working with the federal agencies at Hanford," Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire said Tuesday in Richland. "Today our patience has run out."

The state has been in talks with the Department of Energy for 18 months to renegotiate legal deadlines for cleanup after it became clear that DOE could not meet cleanup deadlines in the Tri-Party Agreement.

The lawsuit, which is to be filed in federal court in Eastern Washington, will ask a judge to set new deadlines for cleanup and enforce them because the state and federal government failed to reach an agreement out of court.

"The state has now concluded that Energy will only treat and retrieve tank waste in a timely manner if a court intervenes, establishes a schedule and maintains oversight of the work until it is completed," Gregoire and

Attorney General Rob McKenna wrote in a letter to Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, notifying him of the planned lawsuit.

The decision to sue was a last resort, Gregoire said. She and McKenna flew to Richland for the announcement.

DOE and the state reached agreement in principle on new cleanup deadlines, with the final version of the renegotiated agreement changing little from

# First glove boxes removed from Hanford's 300 Area

3 workers exposed to airborne contamination in October

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The first contaminated glove boxes have been removed from Hanford's 300 Area just north of Richland as cleanup progresses there to more hazardous buildings.

"We start with lower risk and move to higher risk," said Bob Smith, Washington Closure Hanford director of decontamination and demolition.



**Online  
slideshow**  
tricityherald.com

Hanford workers so far have brought down 79 of 210 buildings in the area just north of Richland, according to the Department of Energy. They were used during World War II and the Cold War for research and manufacturing fuel to be irradiated to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Now contractor Washington Closure Hanford is working to meet legal cleanup

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

# Downwinder case rejected by high court

Appeal back to District Court

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to hear an appeal brought by early Hanford contractors that are accused of harming the health of about 2,000 people exposed to past radiation releases carried on the wind from Hanford.

That sends the 18-year-old case back to Eastern Washington U.S. District Court in Spokane, where the claims might start being heard individually.

However, attorneys for the Hanford downwinders hope that under the new Obama administration a settlement could be reached rather than bringing each case to a jury.

Although early contractors DuPont and General Electric are named in the lawsuit, the federal government is paying for defense of



6 DEC 08

## Installation of vit plant melters will be tight fit

It may be a close fit, but two glass melters for the Low Activity Waste Facility at Hanford's vitrification plant should be just short enough to be installed, said the Department of Energy.

The persistent rumor that the melters would be too tall to be moved into the building came up at Friday's Hanford Advisory Board meeting in Richland, but DOE and contractor Bechtel National said they should fit.

The melters, which will be used to help turn radioactive waste into glass for perma-

nent disposal, were designed to have a clearance of 1.56 inches beneath two beams they will be wheeled under during installation.

During fabrication the clearance dropped to 0.87 inch. The melters still need to be assembled on site and workers will have to be certain that clearance is maintained as the melters are completed.

DOE plans careful oversight just as it does with other equipment for the plant, said DOE spokesman Erik Olds.

The melters were designed to be as large as possible to maximize the amount of waste they could handle, said Janet

# Panel supports bigger vit plant

## Experts say expansion best way to treat waste facility can't manage

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Expansion of the \$12.3 billion vitrification plant would be the surest bet for treating radioactive waste that the plant as now designed can't treat in a reasonable amount of time, an expert panel commissioned by the Department of Energy has concluded.

Other options include bulk vitrification, improving efficiency of the main vitrification plant and an early start-up of part of the main vitrification plant that would treat low-activity radioactive waste.

However, the panel said a decision on how to treat the excess waste could be delayed until 2017. That would give DOE more time to resolve some technical issues.

When DOE started considering options for treating the rest of the waste, the vit plant was expected to be operating in 2011. But now that's been pushed back to 2019 and technical questions that could affect the plant's capacity remain unanswered.

DOE should focus now on getting the vitrification plant operating by 2019 and making sure systems are in place to reliably retrieve waste from storage tanks and transfer them to the vit plant, the panel said.

Further development of bulk vitrification should not be given a high priority, the panel said.

The vitrification plant, formally called the Waste Treatment Plant, is being built to treat 53 million gallons of radioactive waste now held in underground tanks. That includes waste in 142 leak-prone single-shell tanks that is being transferred into sturdier double-shell tanks, which are running out of space with no method yet available to treat the waste.

The waste, which will be split into high-level and low-activity radioactive waste streams, is left from the past production of plutonium for nuclear weapons.

The vit plant was originally planned as one of two facilities to turn the tank wastes into a

See **VIT** | Page A2

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4 DEC 08  
DOE accuses Bechtel National  
of continued quality problems

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy plans to fine Bechtel National \$385,000 over repeated quality problems at Hanford's vitrification plant.

The contractor designing and constructing the plant has had numerous opportunities to correct problems in the ordering and manufacturing of piping to be used in black cells, Martha Thompson, acting director of the DOE Office of Health, Safety and Security's Office of Enforcement, wrote in a letter to Bechtel on Wednesday.

The largest portion of the fine, \$220,000, will be for failing to improve quality. The remainder of the fine will cover problems related to the piping, such as what DOE found to be inadequate work procedures and design problems.

The plant will be used to turn much of the radioactive waste left from past production of weapons plutonium at Hanford into a stable glass form for disposal. It includes black cells which will be so radioactively hot that workers cannot enter them to do inspections or repairs during the 40 years the plant may operate.

Because the piping will not be accessible, Bechtel is required to adhere to strict standards that include examining pipe welds by methods such as X-ray or ultrasound and documenting the materials used.

Bechtel failed to meet that requirement on about 2,000 sections of pipe from 2002 to 2005 that were planned for black cells and some other physically difficult to reach places. Documents provided to manufacturers then did not adequately identify which pipes would be used in black cells and therefore required the enhanced weld examination.

After the problem was discovered, Bechtel took action to correct the deficiency on specific pipe orders. The piping needed additional

## HANFORD

# EPA, HAB concerned over DOE deadlines

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy chose to suspend work to meet 23 legal cleanup deadlines at Hanford without making adequate attempts to work with its regulators, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA and the Hanford Advisory Board

reacted last week to DOE's announcement that it would miss the deadlines for cleanup in central Hanford because of too little funding in the budget for fiscal 2009.

DOE wants to focus the money it does have in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 on cleaning up the area near the Columbia River and preventing contaminated ground water from leaving central Hanford.

"The board continues to be concerned with potential delays in the cleanup of the Hanford Site caused by a lack of funds," the board said in advice it issued to DOE Friday.

Earlier in the week EPA sent a letter to DOE reminding it that the deadlines legally required by the Tri-Party Agreement are still in place,

**WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK?**

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## BRIEFS

### **Man killed, woman hurt in Pasco shooting**

A man was shot to death and a woman was critically injured Wednesday in east Pasco.

Officers responded to a hang-up 911 call about 8:30 p.m. in the 500 block of Manzanita, said Pasco police Capt. Jim Raymond.

Police wouldn't say if they have a suspect. "This is a homicide investigation," Raymond said.

### **Hanford vit plant melter pieces are completed**

The pieces for the first of

four melters planned for the Hanford vitrification plant have been completed.

"We are excited to reach this milestone because the melters are the heart and soul of the vitrification process," Janet Roth, equipment manager for the vit plant, said in a statement.

The melters will heat mixtures of glass-forming agents and waste to turn millions of gallons of Hanford radioactive waste into a sturdy glass form for disposal.

The melter base and walls were completed by Petersen Inc., a custom-steel fabricator in Ogden, Utah. They'll be shipped to Hanford to have

## WASHINGTON CLOSURE HANFORD

# 90% of subcontracted work went to small businesses in 2008

HERALD STAFF

Washington Closure Hanford awarded more than 90 percent of its subcontracted work to small businesses in fiscal 2008, easily exceeding the Department of Energy goal of 65 percent.

"Our 65 percent goal is very aggressive and to exceed it by such a wide margin is good for us and for those small businesses we subcontract with," said Dennis Houston, Washington Closure procurement manager, in a statement. Washington Closure holds the DOE contract for the \$2.2 billion cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation along the Columbia River.

Of the \$117 million subcontracted in fiscal 2008, which ended Sept. 30, more than

\$107 million went to small businesses. Of that, 47 percent went to small businesses in Benton County.

In addition, one of Washington Closure's subcontractors, Terranear PMC of Exton, Pa., was named DOE Protege of the Year. DOE's mentor-protege program is designed to promote economic and technological growth, foster long-term business relationships and increase the number of small, disadvantaged businesses that receive contracts.

Washington Closure expects to subcontract an equivalent amount of work in 2009. Businesses that want to prequalify for subcontracts or see a list of planned procurements can go to [www.washingtonclosure.com/procure](http://www.washingtonclosure.com/procure).

# Walls of vit plant facility get higher

## Pretreatment building's third elevation finished

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers have finished the third elevation of concrete walls at the vitrification plant's Pretreatment Facility.

It's the first elevation completed at the building since work was stopped for nearly two years to ensure the building could withstand a severe earthquake.

"Completing the third elevation of concrete and moving onto the fourth elevation really shows the progress we are making on this complex facility," said Leon Lamm, Bechtel National area project manager for the building, in a statement.

Work is done on one elevation or "lift" at a time, with six approximately 20-foot-high elevations required to complete the building for the Department of Energy. It will be the largest and tallest at the Waste Treatment Plant, or vitrification plant, campus.

The Pretreatment Facility now stands 56 feet tall, about half its final height.

The Waste Treatment Plant will be used to turn Hanford's radioactive tank waste left from weapons-grade plutonium production into a stable glass form for disposal. The Pretreatment Facility's role is to separate waste into high-level radioactive waste and

low-activity radioactive waste streams for separate treatment.

The third elevation of the east wall of the building included the challenge of building a 51-foot-wide opening to allow a crane to be moved in and out of a crane maintenance area.

Construction crews used temporary supports to allow wall construction to continue above and around the opening. The supports will remain in place until the concrete reaches 80 percent of design strength.

When completed, the Pretreatment Facility will stand 120 feet high. It will be wider than a football field and about as long as 1½ football fields. It will contain more than 113,000 cubic yards of concrete, nearly 17,000 tons of structural steel and 102 miles of piping.

Construction on it is about 25 percent complete. The vitrification plant campus also will include the High Level Waste Facility, the Low Activity Waste Facility, the Analytical Laboratory and about 20 support buildings for offices, maintenance, utilities and other uses.

► *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com*

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# F Reactor cleanup nearly wrapped up

Site's burial grounds include animal carcasses

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford and the Department of Energy have met a legal deadline to have most of the waste sites near Hanford's F Reactor cleaned up, including digging up carcasses of animals used for radiation exposure research.

"The 100 F Area is almost finished," said Rod Lobos, an environmental engineer with the Environmental Protection Agency, the regulator for the work. "We're very happy with the progress."

F Reactor operated from 1945 to 1965 as one of nine Hanford reactors to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. Also near F Reactor was a laboratory and an animal farm used through the early years of the Cold War for research on radiation exposure on plants and animals.

DOE had a Tri-Party Agreement deadline to finish cleaning up 53 waste sites, including nine large burial grounds, at F Reactor by the end of 2008. That included digging up contaminated soil and debris, filling holes with clean soil and planting vegetation.

Since the deadline was set, a few more contaminated areas have been found that have yet to be addressed.

But by far the worst of the work has been completed, including digging up 40,000

tons of carcasses, manure and other waste from burial trenches at the former experimental animal farms.

From all the waste site workers dug up more than 408,000 tons of waste. They also uncovered 300 bottles of laboratory waste, with some containing a petroleum byproduct used in radiological analyses to determine the radionuclide contained in samples.

The waste sites also yielded seven pieces of highly radioactive fuel that came from F Reactor.

Workers use long-handled tools to try to identify and remove items with unusual radiation readings. If they were suspected to be irradiated fuel, they were placed in temporary bunkers made of concrete blocks. The corroded pieces were cleaned, measured and weighed to determine their identity.

The burial grounds near the Columbia River also yielded a wide range of debris. That included hand carts, reactor hardware, a drill press and gas cylinders, most of them unpressurized.

The largest item found was a railcar in the area used for waste disposal from the experimental animal farms. Cleanup there was completed a year ago.

Animal experiments started at Hanford during World War



# State leaders want HAMMER named National Guard center

Request made by  
state's congressional  
delegation, Gregoire

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The entire Washington congressional delegation and Gov. Chris Gregoire have requested that the HAMMER training center be named the western regional training center for National Guard Civil Support Teams and related training.

"Members of the National Guard require the very best training opportunities, and HAMMER provides that," Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said in a statement.

Washington's two senators, its governor and its nine representatives sent a letter just before Christmas to Gen. Craig R. McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, making the request.

If the National Guard agrees, the designation could help bring more stable funding and more national recognition to the training center near Richland, said Lee Legowik, a senior program manager at HAMMER and a retired brigadier general.

The HAMMER center has been providing training for National Guard Civil Support Teams since 2001. Each state has one to two teams that are trained to respond to an event involving weapons of mass destruction — such as a

chemical release or dirty nuclear bomb — or disasters such as severe hurricanes.

In the case of events with weapons of mass destruction, they identify the type of agent used to help support police, firefighters and other emergency workers who would be the first to respond to the problem.

In addition, since the National Guard Bureau in 2007 started a new program to keep the teams' skills fresh, HAMMER has also been training the National Guard teams in that program, called the Civil Support Teams Sustainment Training and Evaluation Program, or STEP.

HAMMER had 39 Civil Support Teams conduct training on its campus in 2007 and 2008 and already has 12 STEP training programs scheduled for fiscal 2009, which started in October.

National Guard teams and emergency response units they support can get hands-on experience in exercises that can range from entering a mock, booby-trapped terrorist cell to searching for a radiological source hidden among the debris from an explosion.

"HAMMER has established a reputation as a premier training site because of its excellent chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive ... facilities and skilled on-site Depart-

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# Hanford firefighter honored for service

## Recognized for exceptional work for DOE

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Longtime Hanford firefighter Lonnie Click is used to being away from home.

If a large wildfire is burning in the West, he may be gone for two to four weeks. But this week he's in Washington, D.C.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman on Wednesday honored his work with the Excellence Honor Award, the nation's highest nonmonetary award to recognize exceptional service to the Department of Energy and the public by a DOE employee or contractor employee.

Click, the assistant chief of operations at the Hanford Fire Department, brings to the job an "intelligent approach, ability to function as part of a large team and cool calm demeanor under the stress of leading hundreds of firefighters fighting massive fires," wrote Dave Brockman, DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office manager, in his nomination of Click for the award.

Click joined the Hanford Fire Department, now operated by Fluor Hanford, in 1986. He worked his way up to manage all operational activities for the 144-member force that protects the Hanford nuclear

reservation.

"He's a can-do kind of guy," said Hanford Fire Chief Bob Kirk. "If you tell him to stop the tide, he'd find a way to do it."

At Hanford, Click is credited with two new systems that have helped stop fires, if not tides.

He developed a process using all-terrain vehicles equipped with a drip torch to efficiently burn strips of vegetation to leave burnout areas with no fuel for advancing fires. During the 2007 Overlook Fire on the Hanford Reach National Monument, two firefighters on ATVs at night quickly made a 55-mile burnout line. Covering the same ground on foot would have taken days, Brockman said in the nomination.

Click also instituted the concept of dividing Hanford into small areas and establishing fire break grids that allow fires to be fought in small sections and contained.

"This concept was also put to the test during the Overlook Fire and it allowed fire crews to concentrate their efforts on smaller areas rather than the entire site," Brockman wrote. "It also kept the fire from racing uncontrolled across the site."

Click has helped lead efforts for major fires at Hanford, including the 24 Command Fire in 2000 that burned 163,884 acres at Hanford and



**Click**

# End of plutonium shipments in sight

Shipments off Hanford site may be completed by June

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work to get weapons-grade plutonium off the Hanford site is running ahead of schedule, and all the weapons plutonium may be gone by early June, according to the Department of Energy. More than half the plutonium

already has been shipped off site.

With good weather, the work could finish even sooner than June, said Doug Shoop, deputy manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office. DOE had planned to have all the plutonium shipped to the Savannah River, S.C., nuclear site by the end of September 2009 when shipments started in fall 2007.

During the Cold War plutonium was produced at Hanford and made into metal buttons the size of hockey pucks

at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant to be shipped off site for conversion for weapons use.

But at the end of the Cold War, 2,300 canisters of plutonium were left. Each canister, the size of a large coffee can, can hold almost 10 pounds of plutonium, but their weights vary.

The plutonium has been stored in a vault at the Plutonium Finishing Plant under armed guard. But having weapons-grade material on site increases security costs.

The Governmental Accountability Office told Congress last year that if the canisters of plutonium remain at Hanford, security improvements through 2018 that were required after 9/11 terrorism attacks would cost \$831 million.

The heavy security also has complicated plans to tear down buildings to slab on grade at the Plutonium Finishing Plant as part of cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation. Work slowed there in the two years before DOE made the decision in 2007 to

consolidate the plutonium stored at Hanford and also at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California and the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico at DOE's Savannah River, S.C., site.

The Hanford shipments required

See **PLUTONIUM** | Page B2

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11 JAN 09

# Report: Tear down Hanford buildings

Destruction suggested  
for cleaning up old  
fuel storage facility

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A new report is recommending three of Hanford's oldest buildings that once were used to hold irradiated nuclear fuel be torn down and the soil beneath them be dug up.

That's the most protective and costly cleanup plan studied in a engineering evaluation of cleanup of the 212-N, 212-P and 212-R buildings that was prepared for the Department of Energy.

DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology have been taking comments on the proposal before a decision is made on

# Chu supports efforts to speed waste cleanup

LES BLUMENTHAL

HERALD WASHINGTON, D.C., BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Though he didn't know all the details, Secretary of Energy-Designate Steven Chu told a Senate committee Tuesday that the federal government has a "legal and moral" obligation to clean up Hanford and other sites contaminated during 50 years of nuclear weapons production.

"Cleanup of these materials is a complicated, expensive long-term project, but I pledge to you to do my best to accelerate these efforts in order to protect human health and the environment, and to return contaminated lands to beneficial use," Chu said.

## CLEANUP

Sen. Murray proposes billions in federal funds. | B1

# Senator wants \$7 billion for DOE nuclear sites included in economic recovery package

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., is proposing that \$6 billion to \$7 billion be included in a national economic recovery package for cleanup work at Hanford and other Department of Energy nuclear sites.

That's in line with a proposal that's outlined in a DOE report that covers one option for the Obama administration to consider.

The DOE proposal calls for \$6 billion to be spent to significantly reduce the size of large contaminated sites such as Hanford and finish cleanup

at smaller sites. The proposal also calls for DOE cleanup sites to be developed into energy parks.

"To make progress ... we need to put in enough funds to reduce the size of the sites," Murray said Tuesday during a Senate Budget Committee confirmation hearing for Peter Orszag, nominated for director of the Office of Management and Budget.

DOE is paying significant amounts of overhead costs

See **MURRAY** | Page B2

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15 JAN 09

# \$2.9M Hanford contract awarded

Small Colorado business recipient of cleanup work

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford has given a cleanup subcontract worth \$2.9 million to Foothills Environmental Inc., a small, Hispanic-owned business in Golden, Colo.

Washington Closure recently selected Foothills Environmental to be part of its mentor-protege program, a Department of Energy initiative to increase the federal work done by small and disadvantaged businesses by teaming them with DOE contractors.

Foothills Environmental will be responsible for cleaning up seven waste sites near Hanford's B and C reactors. Work will start later this winter and should be completed by mid-September. Foothills Environmental has subcontracted a lot of the field work to Federal Engineers and Constructors of Richland, according to Washington Closure.

The waste sites have contaminated soil, piping and some debris left on the ground. The sites have some radioactive contamination, but most of the contamination is from hazardous chemicals.

One site includes a half-mile of piping that may have leaked chromium into the soil. The chemical was used

during reactor operations to prevent pipe corrosion.

It can cause cancer in humans and is harmful to fish in the nearby Columbia River in much smaller doses.

Another of the waste sites includes soil that may be contaminated with chromium as far down as 48 feet. That will require excavation far deeper than is usual for Hanford waste sites, according to Washington Closure.

Debris and contaminated soil will be hauled to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, a landfill for low-level radioactive waste in central Hanford.

A year ago, Hanford workers finished digging up and hauling off more than 600,000 tons of radioactively and chemically contaminated debris and

soil from 39 burial grounds and waste sites near the B and C reactors. They were used during World War II and the Cold War when the reactors were producing plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The seven sites assigned to Foothills Environmental are relatively small in comparison.

In addition to them, six other sites at the B and C reactors still must be cleaned up. Because of the depth of chromium contamination at one of the remaining sites, digging up the soil will not be practical. Instead, the contamination will have to be treated in place in the soil.

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# BRIEFS

## **DOE manager assigned to D.C. through March**

Michael Weis, manager of the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest Site Office, has been assigned to Washington, D.C., through March.

He's acting as deputy chief operating officer for the Office of Science and performing a variety of management-related tasks. In his absence from the office in Richland that oversees work at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, deputy manager Julie Erickson is the acting manager.



13 JAN 09

# High-risk Hanford burial ground cleaned up

Workers hauled out nearly 170,000 tons of dirt, debris

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers have finished cleaning up a high risk burial ground a mile north of Richland and even closer to the Columbia River.

Over the last year they've dug up

and hauled away almost 179,000 tons of dirt and debris, some of it contaminated with chemicals or radionuclides, from the 618-7 Burial Ground.

Washington Closure Hanford, the Department of Energy contractor assigned the work, researched historical records to try to figure out what might have been disposed of in the burial ground from 1960 to 1973.

But with records sketchy, Washington Closure had to be ready for the unexpected.

It did that well, said DOE and the Environmental Protection Agency, a Hanford regulator.

"It was the epitome of a well-planned job," said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office. "The nonroutine became routine."

"They didn't know what they were going to find, but they had action plans ready to go to deal with the things they found," said Dave Einan, EPA environmental engineer. "They

did a really good job of planning the work and working the plan."

The burial ground, which is near the banks of the Columbia River, was used to dispose of waste from making fuel for Hanford's reactors and for researching projects at the nuclear reservation, which produced plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

One thing workers prepared for that they didn't find was much plutonium. They also didn't find the

depleted uranium rods that historical records had indicated might have been there. But they did find some surprises in the 10-acre burial ground.

That included two compressed gas cylinders. Because the burial site was so near Richland and Pacific

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

**HANFORD NEWS ONLINE**

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# DOE extends Fluor Hanford contract 6 months

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy has extended Fluor Hanford's contract to provide support services at Hanford until July 15.

The contract extension will serve as a bridge until a new mission support contractor is picked and the transition is completed, according to DOE.

Fluor Hanford will continue to be responsible for such essential services as utilities, security, fire protection and information technology until then.

"We hope this extension will settle some of the uncertainty we have experienced," Fluor Hanford President Bruce Hanni wrote in a message to the company's 1,700 employees Friday. Fluor Hanford's latest contract extension expired Thursday.

Fluor Hanford will be discussing with DOE the details and work scope that will be covered in the contract extension next week, according to Hanni's message.

DOE awarded a \$3 billion contract in early September to provide sup-

port services sitewide to Mission Support Alliance, a limited liability corporation led by Lockheed Martin Integrated Technology and including Jacobs Engineering Group and Wackenhut Services.

The Mission Support Alliance was to have finished the transition between contractors and be in charge of support services Jan. 1. However, the contract award was challenged by Computer Sciences Corp., which had teamed with Battelle to submit a bid for the contract.

The Government Accountability Office dismissed the protest in late December after DOE agreed to address concerns raised by the GAO after reviewing issues raised in the protest. GAO indicated concerns with DOE's cost evaluation.

DOE will re-evaluate the bidders' final proposals and supporting documentation, then revise the solicitation or request revisions to the proposals if necessary, the GAO said.

"In any event, following the corrective action, a new source selection

decision will be made," the GAO decision said.

Fluor Hanford's contract was to have expired Sept. 30, 2008, the start of the fiscal year, before the previous two extensions.

Also this week, the Computer Sciences Corp. team filed a request for reimbursement for certain costs related to the protest. Details of the request have not been made public. A GAO decision is due April 22.

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# Hanford Cleanup bills differ by \$5.5B

16 JAN 09

House amount of \$500M could be moved to change by House Appropriations Committee

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The House version of an economic stimulus bill would include \$500 million in additional funding for cleanup of Hanford and other Cold War nuclear weapon sites, far less than the \$6 billion being pushed in the Senate.

However, the House amount has yet to be considered by the House Appropriations Committee, which could move to change it.

"It ought to be an interesting conference committee," said Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council. After the House and Senate each approve their versions of an economic stimulus package, the two bills will be reconciled in a conference committee.

An additional \$6 billion for cleanup work at Hanford and other nuclear sites would create 10,000 jobs and save overhead costs, a group of eight senators, including Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said Thursday.

The senators wrote a letter to the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee, urging them to support the appropriation.

"The primary obstacles to accomplishing the cleanup of DOE's weapons sites is insuf-

ficient funding and reprogramming of allocated funds to other department programs," the letter said.

Hanford receives about \$2 billion in federal money each year, and the appropriation for all cleanup work nationwide has ranged from a high of \$7.3 billion in fiscal 2005 to a low of the \$5.5 billion proposed in the Bush administration's fiscal 2009 budget.

The letter echoes the points in one proposal developed by DOE that considers speeding cleanup at large sites such as Hanford and completing cleanup at smaller sites across the nation. It said \$6 million could put thousands of people to work in blue collar jobs within 90 to 180 days and create 10,000 jobs for four years.

It proposed that cleaned-up sites and areas of sites be considered for energy parks, which would use federal land, state-of-the-art facilities and technology, and experienced workers to produce energy and demonstrate advanced technologies.

"Energy parks would create long-term jobs and help reduce America's reliance on foreign sources of oil," said the letter to the committee leadership. Because cleanup contracts are already in

28 JAN 09

# Unused Hanford weapons audited

Weapons found stored instead of being given to federal programs

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford is among the Department of Energy sites found to have unused weapons that weren't given to other federal programs that could have used them, said a new audit by the DOE Office of Inspector General.

The audit looked at Hanford and five other sites or programs, finding they had spent almost \$2.9 million on weapons that had been stored for one to 15 years.

"Sites had not made these unneeded weapons available by officially declaring them as excess and entering them into the Energy Asset Disposal System at the time of our review," the audit said.

The audit was conducted from December 2007 to September 2008, and results were released Tuesday.

At Hanford \$866,000 worth of unspecified weapons had been stored for up to two and a half years as of June, the audit

# Federal government responds in Hanford lawsuit

Department of Justice says DOE isn't liable for cleanup deadlines it has yet to miss

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Justice's initial response to the state of Washington's lawsuit against the Department of Energy over Hanford cleanup says the federal government cannot be

held liable for deadlines that have not been missed.

The state filed a lawsuit against DOE in late November after DOE missed some cleanup deadlines and acknowledged it was unlikely to meet other deadlines in the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement.

The Department of Justice response also questions whether the state had authority over some of the issues it raised, pointing out for example that radioactive materials are governed by the federal Atomic Energy Act.

Gov. Chris Gregoire's hope and goal is to get an enforceable new schedule

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from the Obama administration for retrieval of radioactive waste from Hanford's underground tanks and treatment of the waste, said Mary Sue Wilson, senior assistant attorney general for the state of Washington.

But if the Obama administration is

not willing to take a different approach than the Bush administration, the state believes the lawsuit offers a good opportunity to obtain a cleanup schedule that is enforceable by the courts, Wilson said.

Nothing in the Department of Justice filing "makes us think we don't

See **LAWSUIT** | Page B2

# Hanford vit plant gets massive steel doors

Installation of 12 doors will shield workers from various radiation through facility

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Workers have begun installing massive shield doors at the Hanford vitrification plant's Pretreatment Facility.

Four of 12 steel doors have been installed, with the last two weighing 22 tons each. They are 10 feet high, 11 feet wide and eight inches thick to shield workers from radiation.

"The installation of mechanical equipment, such as these shield doors, augments progress being made with concrete and steel in the facility," said Leon Lamm, a Bechtel National project manager, in a statement.

The Waste Treatment Plant, or vit-

rification plant, is 47 percent complete, with design 76 percent complete and construction 40 percent complete.

The Pretreatment Facility, where radioactive waste from underground tanks will be split into high-level and low-activity waste streams for treatment, is the largest building planned at the vit plant. Its design is 68 percent complete and its construction is 26 percent complete. Its footprint is

wider than a football field and about as long as a field and a half.

Over the last two weeks, workers installed shield doors to the drum lidding and cask lidding rooms to allow access for filter maintenance.

At the drum lidding room, waste will be received and packaged in 55-gallon drums using remotely operated equipment. The shield door, installed on the second floor, will protect workers while radioactive material is in the room.

Drums filled with waste will be lowered through a hatch into the cask lidding room to be placed into casks and sealed. The door to the room was installed on the first floor.

Installation of larger shield doors is yet to come. The two largest doors each will weigh about 104 tons. They will be 51 feet wide, 12 feet high and about a foot thick.

See **DOORS** | Page B2

24 JAN 2009

# Found plutonium reveals clues to T Plant's first run

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**N**uclear archaeology has solved the mystery of a jug of plutonium that was found sealed inside a safe dug up as workers cleaned up an early Hanford burial ground.

Science showed the plutonium was historic: Researchers at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland traced its origins to the first batch of weapons-grade materials ever processed at Hanford.

It's also the second oldest known man-made plutonium 239, said Jon Schwantes, a PNNL senior research scientist who led the investigation. The

oldest is held in the Smithsonian.

The results of the investigation are not just historically significant. Schwantes believes the research also may have applications in the field of nuclear forensics and efforts to keep nations safe from terrorists.

When researchers received the plutonium, they suspected it came from the beginnings of the Atomic Age, after the 586-square-mile Hanford nuclear reservation was created during World War II as the United States raced to make enough plutonium to make an atomic bomb.

Hanford's B Reactor was built as the nation's first production-scale reactor. It irradiated nuclear fuel that was sent to Hanford's T Plant, the world's

first industrial-scale reprocessing facility, which chemically extracted the plutonium.

During WWII and particularly in the early years of the Cold War, debris from research and operations were disposed of in burial grounds that government officials believed would remain permanently off limits.

But to meet modern environmental standards, old burial grounds the size of football fields are being dug up to clean up Hanford.

Among rusty, radioactively contaminated debris in three burial grounds excavated from late 2004 to early 2007 near Hanford's 300 Area, workers

# B Reactor to open to public in spring

Plans call for Saturday tours to start as early as March 28

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is working toward opening Hanford's historic B Reactor to the public on Saturdays starting this spring.

Plans still are tentative and more information will be available next month, but the reactor could open to the public as soon as March 28.

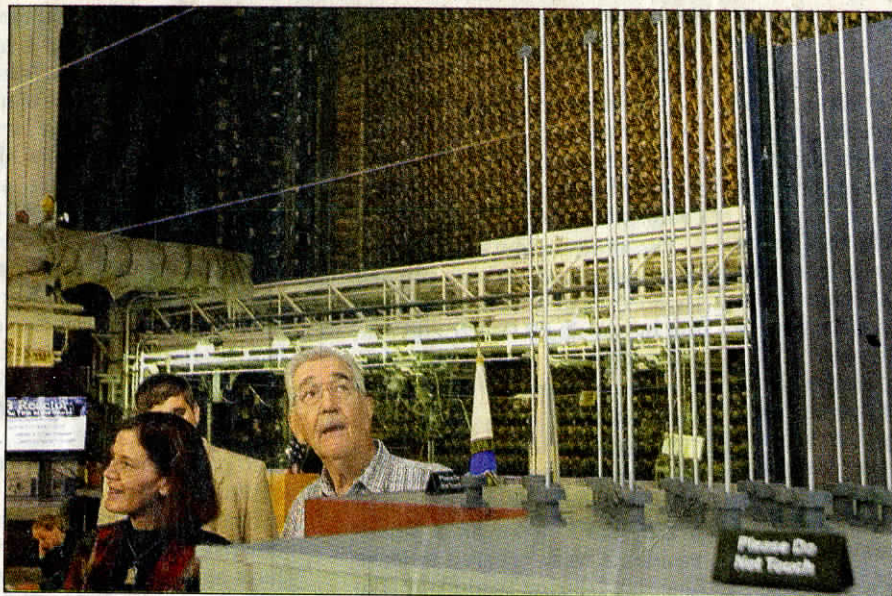
In addition, DOE is working to transfer the contract covering the reactor from Washington Closure Hanford to Fluor Hanford.

"This really does signal that DOE is thinking about it differently," said DOE spokeswoman Colleen French.

Washington Closure is a cleanup contractor and is working to tear down Hanford's other plutonium production reactors to little more than their radioactive core and then seal them up. Fluor Hanford provides ongoing services across the nuclear reservation.

Staffing tours of the reactor now will become part of its duties.

Under DOE's tentative plans, people would drive out to the Vernita Rest Stop near the Columbia River northwest of Richland. There they could catch a Fluor Hanford van to ride a few miles to reach B Reactor on the secure portion of the



Herald File

Retired area physicist Paul Vinther watches the model of the B Reactor core. The Department of Energy is making plans to open the historic reactor to the public this spring.

Hanford nuclear reservation.

People will be asked to register for the tour to make sure anyone who drives out to the Vernita area can be accommodated and to help with processing security badges for people who are entering the secure portion of Hanford, which includes B Reactor.

B Reactor, the most recently named a National Historic Landmark, was the nation's first full-scale production reactor. It was built in 13 months during World War II as the nation raced to develop the

technology for an atomic bomb.

B Reactor produced plutonium for the first atomic explosion in the New Mexico desert, the Trinity Test, and produced plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping end World War II and ushering in the atomic age.

Today it looks much as it did during World War II with the addition of displays, including videos that allow visitors to hear about the reactor from those who



## Richland firm part of team with DOE contract

10 FEB 09

Dade Moeller & Associates of Richland is part of a team selected by the Department of Energy to provide National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, support services across the DOE weapons complex.

JAD Environmental Team was selected as one of four small businesses and three large businesses that will bid on projects as they become available as winners in the DOE indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract award.

JAD Environmental is a new joint venture formed to provide the experience and resources needed for the contract. It is comprised of Dade Moeller & Associates, Jason Associates Corp. of San Diego and AGEISS of Evergreen, Colo.

## HANFORD

# New deadlines for cleanup proposed

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Proposed new deadlines for Hanford cleanup would speed up work to protect the Columbia River from chemical and radioactive contaminants, but give the Department of Energy more time for other cleanup work.

The new deadlines are among a major series of changes proposed to the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement after DOE and its regulators, the Environ-

mental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology recently reached agreement.

"They reflect a shared vision and priorities," said Matt McCormick, DOE assistant manager for central Hanford.

The changed deadlines

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See **CLEANUP** | Page A2

# Hanford has plans for stimulus funds

Senate expected to vote this week on bill  
that includes \$6.4B for DOE cleanup work

... **ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford officials are ready to go with a list of cleanup projects for any economic stimulus money.

There may be questions about exactly where stimulus money given to the banking industry is going, but that won't be the case at Hanford, officials told the Hanford Advisory Board on Friday.

The Senate is expected to pass a stimulus bill this week that contains \$6.4 billion for DOE cleanup projects, thanks to work by Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. That includes \$5.5 billion for cleanup of Hanford and other DOE weapons sites, said Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford

programs for the Tri-City Development Council.

He estimates that \$1.9 billion of that could be spent on Hanford cleanup.

The House stimulus bill includes only \$500 million for all DOE cleanup, but Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., is working to increase that, Petersen said. The final House and Senate versions of the bill will be reconciled in a conference committee.

If the stimulus money ends up being on the lower end of the range being considered in Congress, Hanford's DOE

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15 Feb 09

# DOE memo questions spending on Hanford meals, other giveaways

## Games, hats, other items given to public at expo questioned

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A 54-year-long policy of using federal money to provide meals to Hanford workers on overtime must stop, according to a memo from the Department of Energy Office of Inspector General.

The memo also questioned using federal money to purchase hats, games and other items given away to the public at the popular annual Hanford Health and Safety Expo.

Since 1955, Hanford labor agreements have required that workers on overtime be fed, with the most recent agreement specifying that after 10 hours of work employees must be provided a meal and fed another meal every six hours they continue to work.

The 586-square-mile nuclear reservation has no cafeteria and the few food wagons on site usually close by 4 p.m.

"We're so isolated out there," said Dave Molnaa, president of the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council.

For many workers, the drive back to Richland to buy some-

thing to eat on a 30-minute meal break would be 30 miles.

The review looked at 2007 and found that Fluor Hanford and former tank farm contractor CH2M Hill Hanford Group used federal money to pay for meals for employees working scheduled and unscheduled overtime as labor agreements required, said the inspector general memo.

Fluor purchased frozen meals in bulk and stored them at Hanford warehouses. Fluor and CH2M Hill then requisitioned overtime meals from the warehouses as needed, providing workers with \$103,000 worth of meals in fiscal 2007.

The Government Accountability Office has issued decisions saying that federal money can-

not be used to buy food or meals unless specifically authorized by law or under unexpected, extreme emergency conditions involving immediate danger to life or destruction of federal property.

The meals for Hanford workers met neither of those criteria, the inspector general review found.

The meals will continue to

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# Omnibus bill would increase Hanford spending

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Hanford budget for the current year would be just shy of \$2 billion under the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Bill made public Monday.

The bill also includes \$71.2 million to complete the Physical Sciences Facility at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland ahead of schedule.

The Hanford nuclear reservation money would be an increase of \$146.5

million above the amount proposed by the Bush administration last year. Hanford has been operating under a continuing resolution passed by Congress since Oct. 1, the start of fiscal 2009, because no budget has been approved for the Department of Energy.

"The Bush administration left a hole in Hanford funding," said Sen. Patty Murray, in a statement. "We are now beginning to climb out of it."

Murray worked for Hanford, the national lab and other Tri-City fund-

ing as a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The additional money for Hanford would help with emptying leak-prone underground tanks of radioactive waste, demolishing the Plutonium Finishing Plant, protecting and cleaning ground water and cleaning up Hanford along the Columbia River.

With the stimulus bill signed by President Obama last week, that will

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

## Bill includes millions for Tri-Cities

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Millions of dollars for Tri-City area projects are included in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, a federal spending package unveiled Monday.

The money would go to build a plant to turn ag waste into electricity, extend Steptoe Street, help Ben Franklin Transit, provide public

access to Hanford's historic B Reactor and expand Kadlec Medical Center in Richland.

"We are investing in Main Street again," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., in a statement. "In the face of a deepening recession, this bill puts federal funding back into our communities where it can create jobs and

See **TRI-CITIES** | Page A2

# Bechtel National to lay off 80 vit plant workers

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Bechtel National plans to lay off about 80 employees as more of the design and purchasing of materials for building the Hanford vitrification plant is completed and the focus shifts to more construction work.

The first layoff notices are expected to go out the end of this week and more notices will be given out over the next few weeks, said Suzanne Heaston, Bechtel spokeswoman. Those laid off will be primarily in the engineering and acquisitions departments, including both professionals and support staff.

Employees will be given four weeks notice. They will not receive severance pay as part of a policy based on the lim-

ited duration of the construction project.

"This staff reduction is part of the project's natural progression through the design and procurement to construction and commissioning phases and is not a direct result of funding," said Bill Elkins, Bechtel project director for the Waste Treatment Plant, in a written message to employees Tuesday.

The \$12.2 billion construction project was planned based on steady funding of \$690 million a year. That's the amount that's included in a funding package for this year being considered in Congress, and Elkins said the project anticipates continued stable funding in future years.

The plant is not expected to receive any of the estimated \$2 billion in fed-

eral stimulus funding that will go to Hanford nuclear reservation cleanup work. That money will be spent primarily on projects intended to shrink the contaminated portion of the site and protect the Columbia River from contaminants.

But the stimulus bill will mean thousands of new jobs at Hanford on projects other than the vit plant starting this spring.

Bechtel and its primary subcontractor, URS, also will help workers who may be laid off find potential positions at other company projects. The companies also are encouraging workers to contact their employee assistant programs if they need help coping with the stress of the layoffs.

"As we have done since the begin-

ning of the project, we continue to match employee skills to the needs of the project," Elkins told employees. "As the project has progressed, the required staffing skills mix has changed and will continue to change."

The plant's design is more than 70 percent complete and procurement is close to 60 percent done, Heaston said. Construction is about 40 percent finished.

The plant is being built to treat radioactive waste left from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear waste program. The waste, now stored in underground tanks, will be turned into a stable glass form for disposal.

◆ Annette Cary: 582-1533;  
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6 MAR 09

# Hanford tour registration opens March 30

Tours offer more chances to see B Reactor this year

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy will offer more tours of the closed Hanford

nuclear reservation this year, increasing the number from 48 to 60.

Registration for all tours opens March 30, with seats reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Last year, all 2,000 seats for tours were reserved the day registration opened.

“Last year we had visitors from all over the nation — 34 states in all,” said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE

Hanford Richland Operations Office. “In 2009 we expect to see 2,500 come to Hanford to learn more about our history and see firsthand our cleanup progress.”

That’s in addition to the second option available to the public this year for seeing the highlight of the tour for many — a look inside historic B Reactor. DOE is working to open B Reactor

to public tours on Saturdays as soon as late this month.

The Hanford bus tours include a walking tour of B Reactor, but they also include a drive through much of

See **TOUR** | Page B2

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# State joins Washington in lawsuit to force DOE to finish cleanup work

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Oregon plans to join the state of Washington's lawsuit against the Department of Energy to force it to complete the cleanup of Hanford, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Attorney General John Kroger announced Wednesday.

"Further delay is unacceptable," Kulongoski said in a statement. "The federal government must make this cleanup a priority and meet its obligations to address the environmental and public health risks that the Hanford site continues to pose."

The state of Washington filed a lawsuit in late November in an attempt to force DOE to move faster to empty radioactive waste from underground tanks at the Hanford nuclear reservation and treat the waste. The suit was filed after DOE fell years behind schedules in the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement.

A motion to allow Oregon to enter the lawsuit as an intervenor was expected to be filed late Wednesday or today. The federal government has not indicated whether it will oppose the move, but Washington state officials were pleased.

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# Committee forwards bill clarifying taxes for Hanford contractors

## Bill addresses types of businesses directly involved in cleanup

**MICHELLE DUPLER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

OLYMPIA — A bill intended to clarify how much Hanford contractors must pay for the state's business and occupation tax passed out of the House Finance Committee on Monday, more than a week after some lawmakers declared it dead.

The bill is intended to clarify what kinds of businesses are directly involved in cleanup of radioactive waste, thereby qualifying for a preferential tax rate enacted in 1996.

The law covered businesses involved in "activities integral and necessary to the direct performance of cleanup," which had been interpreted to include businesses such as Lockheed Martin, which provides information technology services to the Hanford site.

But the state Department of Revenue in a 2005 audit of Lockheed Martin decided the Hanford subcontractor was not doing cleanup and should pay a tax rate more than triple the preferential rate.

Tri-City leaders have fought

to clarify the law for three years, arguing the environmental cleanup couldn't happen without computers or other support services such as security and health services.

Proposals to amend the law to define cleanup activities to include information technology, infrastructure, security, safety and health services have failed in two previous legislative sessions.

Tri-City leaders also have argued money to pay the tax would come out of the cleanup budget and cost jobs at Hanford.

House Speaker Frank Chopp, D-Seattle, told a delegation of about 100 Tri-Citians in Olympia on Feb. 19 that while he thought they'd made a good case in support of the bill, it was unlikely to pass in the current session because of the state's projected \$8.3 billion deficit.

But the Finance Committee agreed unanimously Monday to send the bill on for further consideration. It next will go to the House Rules Committee, which will decide whether to give it to the full House of

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# Public comment opens on Hanford deadlines

Input sought on proposal to speed river corridor cleanup

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Public comment will open today on a proposal to delay some cleanup work in central Hanford but speed up cleanup of chemical and radioactive contaminants near the Columbia River.

The Department of Energy and its regulators, the Environmental Protec-

tion Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology, agreed in principle a month ago to a major series of proposed changes to the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement's deadlines.

The changes were proposed largely because of lack of money and technical problems, combined with a focus on getting Hanford cleaned up along

the Columbia River. DOE wants to clean up the approximately 210 square miles of the river corridor to shrink the contaminated portion of the nuclear reservation to 75 square miles at its center by 2015.

However, much has changed in the last month.

President Obama has approved a stimulus package that could result in an additional \$2 billion spent at Hanford in the next couple of years. The

House has approved an omnibus spending bill with a Hanford budget for the current fiscal year, which began in October, that would increase spending at Hanford by \$146.5 million above the amount proposed by the last administration. The Senate debated the bill last week and will take it up again this week.

When the state and two federal agencies worked out the proposed changes to the Tri-Party Agreement

earlier this year, the state was thinking seriously about the uncertainties not only in the stimulus package and the 2009 budget, but also the 2010 budget, said Jane Hedges, nuclear waste program manager for the state.

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11 MAR 09

# Murray to invite Chu to Hanford

## Senator to ask energy chief about Hanford, national lab budgets

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

New Energy Secretary Steven Chu is expected to be invited to visit Hanford and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory when he appears before the Senate Budget Committee today.

The staff of Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said she'd issue the invitation as she questions him about Hanford and the national lab in Richland during the hearing on the Department of Energy's budget for fiscal 2010.



**Murray**

That follows a busy day for Murray on Tuesday, when she questioned Peter Orszag, the White House budget director, about money for Hanford and the Veterans Administration in another hearing before the Senate Budget Committee. The Senate also voted on an omnibus spending bill Tuesday that covered the Hanford budget for fiscal 2009.

Murray told Orszag she wants at least \$6.5 billion for DOE cleanup projects, including Hanford, in the fiscal 2010 budget. However, Orszag said he could not commit to any budget specifics until next month.

She's concerned that the Bush administration failed to meet its cleanup agreements with the state of Washington for Hanford and for four years requested declining amounts of cleanup money, she said.

Congress had to work every year to back fill the cleanup budget, she said.

"This is not a fight we should have every year," she said. "This is an obligation."

She has discussed DOE money for environmental cleanup several times with Orszag, she said.

# Energy secretary will visit Hanford

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Energy Secretary Steven Chu is planning a visit to Hanford, he told Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., at a Senate Budget Committee hearing Wednesday.

"You'll be hearing from us very shortly," he said when Murray invited him to visit. The trip also might include a look at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland.



Chu

Murray, the second-ranking Democrat on the committee, used the hearing to question Chu about Hanford, PNNL and hydropower. Chu also discussed the future of nuclear power under questioning from other committee members about the fiscal 2010 budget.

Chu said he's anticipating future stable cleanup budgets for DOE cleanup sites. He also will be turning his attention to spending environmental cleanup money as wisely as possible, in response to past cost overruns, he said.

That means taking steps to make sure projects are better managed by DOE and by project managers at cleanup sites, he said.

"The Department of Energy has a legal and moral obligation to clean up the Cold War legacy," Chu said.

He argued within the administration for substantial funding for DOE cleanup money in the Economic Recovery Act. That's expected to result in a one-time boost in Hanford money of about \$2 billion over the next few years.

"We're working at trying to deploy those funds as quickly as possible," he said.

Murray told Chu he also would benefit from seeing the work being done at PNNL, and she listed the lab's diverse capabilities in chemistry, energy and homeland security and its national user facility, the Environmental Molecular

Sciences Laboratory.

In his opening remarks, Chu said President Obama has set a goal of doubling federal investing in the basic sciences.

To support that, the 2010 budget proposal includes substantially increased support for the DOE Office of Science, including money for climate science and energy research. It also would increase spending to develop technology to detect and deter nuclear smuggling.

"I do have a soft spot for the national laboratory system," Chu said.

Murray said she was heartened to also see \$40 million in the 2009 budget for hydropower research.

"Hydropower is one of the cleanest sources of renewable energy we have," Chu said, adding he's interested in using hydropower for energy storage that will be needed as renewable energy grows.

Wind or solar power, which may not be steadily produced because of weather conditions, can be used to pump water back above dams so it can be used later to generate hydropower.

The Obama administration's stand on nuclear energy came up repeatedly during the hearing.

"Nuclear is going to be part of our energy future," Chu said.

He favors closing the nuclear fuel cycle, or reusing nuclear power plant fuel which now is used just once in the United States.

"We do not know how to do it in its present form," Chu said. "I'm worried about its proliferation potential."

But in the long term, reusing nuclear fuel could greatly reduce nuclear waste by burning long-lived actinides, he said.

"That's why we have to take a fresh look at the nuclear waste repository as well," Chu said. "It's all part of research into making nuclear recycling a reality."

The Obama administration has opposed using Yucca Mountain, Nev., as a national repository for used fuel.

► Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com

# Things are shaking at Hanford

Intensity of small quakes increases over past week

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

About 300 small earthquakes have been detected at southern Hanford since Jan. 4 and the intensity has increased over the last week, said Alan Rohay, a seismologist at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

The largest was a magnitude 2.9 earthquake measured on Feb. 22, he said. The swarm of quakes continued Wednesday, with the latest one at 2:19 p.m. a magnitude 0.4 earthquake.

There have been no reports of people feeling the earthquakes. But if someone had been within a mile of

the fault during the quakes that approached magnitude 3.0, the person might have been able to feel them, Rohay said.

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The quakes are occurring about eight miles north of Richland just west of the Columbia River about halfway between Hanford's 300 Area

and Energy Northwest. The closest landmark is Wooded Island in the Columbia River, which is just north and east of the fault.

It's an area that has produced small quakes before, with similar swarms recorded in 1970, 1975 and



Herald file

Scientists at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland have detected about 300 small earthquakes near this southern area of Hanford along the Columbia River since the start of the year. There have been no reports of anyone feeling the quakes. The largest was a magnitude 2.9 measured on Feb. 22.

# DOE to seek bidders for Hanford lab work

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy plans to request bids to award a new contract for Hanford's 222-S Laboratory, which performs chemical and radiochemical analyses needed for Hanford cleanup.

A five-year contract was awarded to Advanced Technologies and Laboratories, or ATL, in 2005 to operate the lab. The contract was valued then at \$58 million.

DOE will be seeking a small-business contractor for the lab, just as it did in the last solicitation. Businesses must have fewer than 500 employees to qualify.

The 222-S Laboratory complex, the primary laboratory for highly radioactive samples at Hanford, includes a 70,000-square-foot laboratory and several support buildings. It has 11 hot cells.

Annually the lab performs about 15,000 analyses on inorganic, organic and radiochemical samples. The work requires about 70 employees.

Most of the samples it receives are from Hanford's underground tanks holding 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemical waste. The waste is left from the separation of plutonium from irradiated fuel at Hanford for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Analyses are needed to determine what's in the waste, maintain control of the chemistry of the wastes in the tanks and prepare for turning the waste into a stable glass form at the vitrification plant under construction.

ATL was the first business to operate the laboratory after DOE decided to split the work out of the Hanford tank farm contract to create a small-business opportunity. In 2008, ATL was awarded the DOE Voluntary Protection Program Star, DOE's highest safety recognition.

Washington River Protection Solutions will continue to act as landlord of the lab. The lab was built in 1951 as the

process control laboratory for the REDOX plutonium separations plant but has undergone a series of upgrades and expansions. DOE has proposed further needed upgrades of the lab as a possible use of money from the federal stimulus package signed by President Obama.

DOE is releasing limited information about the competition to award a new contract until it releases the formal request for bids.

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19 MAR 09

# Word expected soon on stimulus money

Officials detail projects on which funds could be used

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford officials should know soon exactly how much money from the economic stimulus act will be available for Hanford cleanup, they said

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list of projects on which the money might be used, with work that contractors can begin quickly. Early estimates have put the money that Han-

during a conference call Wednesday for the Hanford Advisory Board.

In the meantime, they've prepared a detailed

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ford could receive at about \$2 billion.

The money is expected to be distributed to Hanford allocated to specific projects rather than in a lump sum.

It will come with many reporting requirements to make sure it is used as intended, said Dave Brockman,

manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office. DOE will be required to make weekly reports and public websites will keep the public informed on how the money is being spent, he said.

"With this great opportunity comes great responsibility," said Doug Shoop, deputy manager of the Richland Operations Office.

The office tried to be deliberate in the projects it has proposed for money

from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to use it for the type of work it has shown it can do well, Brockman said. The goal is to "execute flawlessly," he said.

Most of the work the office is proposing covers tearing down contaminated buildings, cleaning up waste sites in the ground and protecting or cleaning up ground water.

# Perma-Fix proposes treating Hanford PCB waste

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford may have found an efficient way to treat several hundred drums of low-level radioactive waste contaminated with hazardous chemicals and PCBs.

Perma-Fix Northwest Richland has applied for a modification of its permit that would allow it to treat waste contaminated with PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, at its facility that now treats low-level waste mixed with other chemicals.

A public hearing is planned at 6:30 p.m. April 7 at the Washington State Department of Ecology office at 3100

Port of Benton Blvd., Richland.

CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., the new central Hanford contractor, has 110 cubic yards of waste containing PCBs with no previous plan for its disposal. There is no technology available on the Hanford site to treat the waste, said Dee Millikin, spokeswoman for CH2M Hill.

The contractor approached Perma-Fix among other companies to see if it could handle the waste, which is left over from electrical systems at facilities across the Hanford site that contained PCBs before the 1980s, Millikin said.

If the permit change is approved, Perma-Fix would be allowed to treat

the waste just as it does other low-level mixed waste, which it primarily receives from Hanford.

It would examine the waste to see what's in it, place it in a container, compact it and then place it in a box and pour concrete over it in a process called macroencapsulation. The waste then would be returned to Hanford for disposal at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility or the mixed waste trenches, said Richard Grondin, Perma-Fix general manager.

The permit change would cover only grouting of the waste, not thermal treatment. The facility now does thermal treatment of low-level waste

that is not mixed with hazardous chemicals.

The permit change would not only allow Perma-Fix to receive more waste for its macroencapsulation process, but also could eliminate the risk of the facility being out of compliance with its permit should it unexpectedly find PCBs in other low-level mixed radioactive waste it processes, Grondin said.

As part of the proposed permit change, Perma-Fix would do additional air sampling and testing.

Written comments on the proposed permit change may be sent to Linda Meyer, US EPA Region 10, 1200 Sixth Ave., Suite 900, AWT-121, Seattle, WA

98101-3140. The deadline is May 6.

In other Perma-Fix news, the Richland plant has been allowed to resume waste shipments to the Nevada Test Site. Shipments were stopped this summer after contamination was found on the exterior of a box. The box met Department of Transportation standards but did not meet standards for acceptance at the Nevada site, Grondin said.

After an audit by the Nevada Waste Site, Perma-Fix has changed its survey procedure for outgoing boxes to detect radioactivity at lower levels.

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## HANFORD

# 20 MAR 09 Group asks for review of tax rate on cleanup

**MICHELLE DUPLER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

OLYMPIA — Heart of America Northwest is trying to stir up opposition to a bill that's intended to clarify who gets a preferential tax rate from the state for Hanford cleanup.

The organization distributed fliers to attendees at a town hall meeting in north Seattle last week urging voters in Democratic Rep. Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney's district to pressure her to amend the bill so Hanford contractors providing security for guarding weapons-grade plutonium wouldn't get the lower tax rate.

House Bill 1321, which passed the House 95-1 on March 9, defines what kinds of businesses are directly involved in cleanup of radioactive waste, thereby qualifying for a preferential business and occupations tax rate enacted in 1996.

The law covered businesses involved in "activities integral and necessary to the direct performance of cleanup." That had been interpreted to include businesses such as Lockheed Martin, which provides information technology services to the Hanford site.

But the state Department of Revenue in a 2005 audit of Lockheed Martin decided the Hanford subcontractor was not doing cleanup and should pay a tax rate more than triple the preferential rate.

Tri-City leaders have fought for three years to clarify the law, arguing the environmental cleanup work couldn't happen without computers or other support services. They also have argued money to pay the

24 MAR 09

# PNNL to receive \$124M from DOE in stimulus funds

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy Office of Science plans to send \$124 million in stimulus money to Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced Monday.

Much of the money will be used to buy scientific equipment for complex research projects. In addition some will be spent on contracts to prepare buildings for the equipment and to make three PNNL buildings more energy efficient.

“Leadership in science remains vital to America’s economic prosperity, energy security and global security,” Chu said Monday during a visit to Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York.

While there he announced that \$1.2 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act would be disbursed to science projects, including \$830 million for projects at national labs.

The money allocated to PNNL and eight other national labs “should help aggressively move forward projects that will be critical to the country’s energy security

and global competitiveness,” said PNNL director Mike Kluse in a message to employees.

The new equipment will help cement PNNL’s reputation in certain fields and bring research work to the Tri-Cities that otherwise would go elsewhere, said Greg Koller, PNNL spokesman.

PNNL plans to spend \$60 million at its Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory, or EMSL. It’s a national scientific user facility that has allowed scientists from all 50 states and 30 countries to use its equipment and resources to work on complex environmental and other scientific challenges.

The money will be used to buy high-end scientific equipment such as nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometers, mass spectrometers and high-power microscopes. The equipment was planned to be purchased through 2013, but now can be bought sooner.

It will be used to further fundamental research in the fields of biology, subsurface science and interfacial science, which is the study of fibers, thin films and other

# Fluor Hanford gets new president

Hanni takes new Fluor assignment where he'll be outside the Mid-Columbia

**INGRID STEGEMOELLER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Fluor Hanford's president and CEO has taken a new assignment, and a new executive will take over April 1.

Bruce Hanni announced his move to a new Fluor assignment outside the Mid-Columbia to employees late Thursday afternoon.

Dave Ruscitto will take over as president and CEO.

Ruscitto was Fluor Hanford's vice president for the sludge treatment

project until it transitioned to the plateau remediation contract, for which he was a vice president and chief engineer, according to a letter Hanni sent to employees.



**Ruscitto**

"It's going to be a smooth transition for us," said spokeswoman Judy Connell. "(Ruscitto) has a great background. He's worked at the site, he's very familiar with it."

Ruscitto joined Fluor at the end of 2006 and had previous experience at Hanford while working for the Department of Energy, Connell said.

He has more than 34 years of experience with engineering and project

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management in the public and private sectors, according to Fluor.

After starting his career with the Navy's nuclear power program, he worked for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a resident inspector and was the DOE assistant manager for operations at Rocky Flats in Colorado.

Ruscitto also has held executive positions in the private sector, with E2 Consulting Engineers Inc. and MWH Americas Inc.

Pete Knollmeyer, Fluor Hanford's executive vice president and chief operating officer, will continue with the company.

"Pete has been involved in every aspect of our operations and interactions with our client and other site contractors," Hanni said in the letter. "His knowledge and experience are tremendous assets that will help Dave get up to speed in his new role."

The nature and location of Hanni's new assignment were not released.

He said in the letter the decision to leave was difficult.

"You are a phenomenal group of people working on a mission that is critical to the safety and security of our great nation," Hanni wrote. "Now, I have the opportunity to take what I've learned from you to a new assignment."

► *Ingrid Stegemoeller: 582-1537; [istegemoeller@tricityherald.com](mailto:istegemoeller@tricityherald.com); Business Beat blog at [www.tricityherald.com](http://www.tricityherald.com)*

# B Reactor tours start Saturday

DOE distributing tickets for  
80-seat tour through radio

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Tickets will be given away starting this morning for the first Saturday tour of B Reactor under a new program to open the historic weapons reactor to the public.

The Department of Energy is working with KONA and MIX radio to give the tickets away today and Thursday for a morning and an afternoon tour this Saturday. Listeners can tune in to 610 AM or 105.3 FM for a chance to get a ticket, said DOE.

Eighty seats will be available for the Saturday tours. Participants must be at least 18.

The first tour this week will be used to test what goes well and allow DOE and its contractor Fluor Hanford to make any

changes before the next tours are scheduled.

"We want to make sure to give people a very good experience," said Judy Connell, Fluor Hanford spokeswoman.

Online registration is expected to start in mid-April for the Saturday B Reactor tours, said Colleen French, DOE spokeswoman.

They will be April 25; May 9 and 30; June 6, 13 and 20; July 11, 18 and 25; and then four Saturdays in August and four Saturdays in September.

Participants on the tours will meet at the Tri-Cities Enterprise Center at 2000 Logston Blvd. in Richland off Highway 240. Although security badging will not be required, participants will need to show identification.

Visitors will take a 45-minute bus ride to the reactor near the Columbia River. They'll see a 20-minute video by the Hanford Communities on the history of

B Reactor and a tour guide will answer questions during the ride.

At B Reactor, guided tours plus time to wander and look at exhibits are planned. For the first tour, Dave Brockman, the manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office, plus early workers and representatives of the B Reactor Museum Association, will be on hand.

Visitors will spend two hours there, which is twice as long as visitors usually spend in the reactor on the Hanford sitewide bus tours, French said. In recent years signing up for the weekday sitewide bus tours has been the only option for most people to visit the historic reactor.

B Reactor, which was named a National Historic Landmark last month, was the nation's first full-scale production reactor. It was built in 13 months during World War II as the nation raced to develop the

24 MAR 09

# CREHST museum displays early photos of Hanford site

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

As Hanford prepares to enter another period of change with an infusion of federal stimulus money, the CREHST museum is looking back on the nuclear reservation's first hiring boom.

It has pulled a collection of World War II photos out of its archives that show the site when workers raced to produce plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, which helped end the war.

Visitors to the CREHST in Richland can get a feel for the hardships Hanford workers and the few family members who accompanied

them endured as they moved to the Tri-City area. During the war, a construction camp sprang up, housing 51,000 people.

Black and white photos show one of the 850 hutments, which each had a row of 10 beds and 10 lockers. Another shows what was believed to be the world's largest trailer park in 1944, where workers with families lived. In front of one camp trailer, a family sits on a tiny wooden deck placed in the dirt and in front of another a man tends a flower bed.

During the war, many workers ate in eight huge mess halls. A \$12.60 meal ticket bought 21 meals, according to the CREHST exhibit.

There was rationing elsewhere during the war, but Hanford workers received ample food,



## HANFORD NUCLEAR RESERVATION

# DOE may shrink active area to 10 square miles

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is proposing shrinking the portion of the Hanford nuclear reservation that will need long-term active management to as little as 10 square miles at its center.

That's less than 2 percent of the original 586 square miles, said Matt McCormick, DOE assistant manager

for central Hanford.

"It's hard to believe that Hanford could be known only as the Central Plateau in a few years," said Dennis Faulk, an environmental scientist with the Environmental Protection Agency. "This is really what we've been working toward and it's really starting to crystallize."

Cleanup of the 210 square miles along the Columbia River is progressing well because the Department of

Energy and its regulators have a shared vision on what cleanup is required, McCormick said. Plans call for having its cleanup completed in 2015.

In addition, DOE proposes plans for the limited cleanup of remaining non-radioactive debris and some buildings in the 300 square miles of the Hanford Reach National Monument, which once formed the security perimeter around Hanford.

"We are at the junction that we need the same type of vision for the Central Plateau," the central 75 square miles of Hanford, to focus resources on the next critical steps, McCormick said.

As part of proposed changes to the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement, DOE, EPA and the Washington Department of Ecology signed an agreement in principle this winter to discuss a strategy for cleanup of the

Central Plateau, similar to the way they agreed on a strategy for the river corridor cleanup.

DOE is proposing that it divide the 75-square miles in central Hanford, which includes the 200 Areas and

See **DOE** | Page B2

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# Hanford hiring could begin this week

Nearly \$2 billion headed to site will cover 4,000 jobs

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford will receive \$1.96 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, possibly by the end of the week.

That will be enough money to create or save 4,000 jobs, said Dave Brockman, manager of the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office. About 250 workers who were close to being laid off now can retain their jobs, he said.

"The recovery money is like getting an additional year of federal funding for Hanford cleanup," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who's credited with key work to get the money included in

the funding bill. Hanford receives about \$2 billion for cleanup work annually, and the \$1.96 billion to be spent through fiscal 2011 is in addition to the annual budgets.

Officials had been expecting Hanford to receive close to \$2 billion under the recovery act, and Energy Secretary Steven Chu confirmed that Tuesday. He announced \$6 billion would be spent on Department of Energy environmental cleanup work in 12 states

by Sept. 30, 2011, the end of fiscal 2011.

"These investments will put Americans to work while cleaning up contamination from the Cold War era," Chu said in a statement. "It reflects our commitment to future generations as well as to help local economies get moving again."

DOE believes it is "in good shape" to find the workers who will need to be hired, Brockman said. Hiring could start as soon as Friday at a job fair

planned by contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.

DOE will start work immediately on modifications to its existing contracts for the additional cleanup work, he said. Until it gets formal requests from contractors for the costs of the additional work, DOE will not know exactly how much work the stimulus money will cover.

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

# Hanford contractors announce hiring plans

'There's an urgency to get work started,' manager says

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford contractors say they are making quick work of identifying candidates for at least 600 positions they expect to fill in about the next six

weeks with federal money to stimulate the economy.

The two Hanford Department of Energy offices will receive \$1.96 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as soon as this week to accelerate cleanup of the Han-

ford nuclear reservation and create or retain about 4,000 jobs over three years.

DOE must obligate the money to projects by the end of September with plans to spend all of it by two years later. In the meantime, DOE is encouraging the three Hanford contractors that will receive the money to start

hiring and putting people to work on cleanup as soon as possible.

"There's an urgency to get work started and people employed," said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office.

CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. will receive much of the money, \$1.3 billion of the \$1.96 billion, that will go

to Hanford cleanup work, Brockman said Wednesday.

CH2M Hill now has an annual budget of about \$522 million and employs about 2,200.

CH2M Hill plans to hire about 350 people in the next six weeks, said Vic

See **HIRING** | Page A2



# Hanford tour tix sell out faster than hot Gorge concert

All seats for 2009 tours snatched up in 12 hours

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A spot on one of the bus tours of the Hanford nuclear reservation remains one of the hottest tickets in town.

Registration for the 2,544 seats on tours throughout this year started at midnight Sunday. Within five minutes, night owls had claimed the first 350 seats. By 7:20 a.m. almost half the seats were gone.

The last seats were taken by 11:30 a.m., less than 12 hours after registration opened.

However, there's still hope for people who missed out. As cancellations are received between now and the

start of each tour, registration for newly available seats will be posted without notice at [www.hanford.gov](http://www.hanford.gov). Look under "site tours" on the left hand side of the page.

The Department of Energy increased the number of tours from the 2,000 offered last year to allow more people to attend. In addition, it has opened B Reactor for occasional Saturday tours this year in addition to the sitewide tours, which are held

on weekdays to allow participants to see the nuclear reservation while work is under way.

The first Saturday tour of B Reactor was last week, giving 75 people a look at the historic reactor.

Unlike the sitewide tours, the 75 visitors on the B Reactor tour were allowed to carry cameras and cell phones. They also included a citizen of the United Kingdom. The sitewide tours are restricted to U.S. citizens.

Participants on Saturday's tour of B Reactor ranged in age from their 20s to their 80s. Dee McCullough, who was working at B Reactor on the day it was started up in 1944, also attended on behalf of the B Reactor Museum Association, according to DOE contractor Fluor Hanford.

Information on registration for more Saturday B Reactor tours will

See **TOUR** | Page B2

5 APR 0

# Another 800 turn up for Hanford job fair

## CH2M Hill and its subcontractors hoped to fill half of 300 available positions at event

**JOE CHAPMAN**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

About 800 people attended the second day of a Hanford cleanup job fair at the Shilo Inn in Richland on Saturday.

The turnout was about half the previous day's, but brought the two-day total to about 2,500 candidates. They met with managers of CH2M Hill and its subcontractors, which expect to fill about 300 jobs in the next six weeks.

"It was a lot smaller than yesterday, but it was still a good turnout," said Dee Millikin, CH2M Hill spokeswoman. "And they were still having some qualified folks coming through."

The fair lasted from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and by 1:15 p.m. the lines subsided substantially compared to Friday, when a queue of applicants snaked into the parking lot and around cars. The lines for the most part stayed inside the building Saturday, Millikin said.

Applicants sought a variety of job types, including health physics technicians, health physicists, engineers, scientists, accountants, office support staff, computer systems analysts, managers, schedulers, insu-

lators and pipefitters.

Employers hoped to fill about half of the available positions during the week-end, and some candidates received conditional offers. People who didn't immediately receive offers still could be in the running.

The employers compiled a database from which to draw over the next two weeks as CH2M Hill gets the notice to proceed, Millikin said. Hiring is contingent on the availability of funding.

The two Hanford Department of Energy offices will receive \$1.96 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act over the next three years, with some money expected as soon as this week. The money will be used to accelerate environmental cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation and to create or retain about 4,000 jobs.

People who didn't attend the job fair still can look for available positions by going to [www.plateauremediation.com](http://www.plateauremediation.com).

► Joe Chapman: 582-1512; [jchapman@tricityherald.com](mailto:jchapman@tricityherald.com)

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6 APR 09

# Board wants more workers tested for beryllium exposure

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

PORTLAND — Not enough Hanford workers are being tested to prevent health problems caused by exposure to beryllium, according to the Hanford Advisory Board.

“From a worker safety perspective based on the number of affected workers, beryllium currently rates as a greater hazard than radiation,” the board said.

It offered advice to the Department of Energy on better protection of Hanford workers who might be exposed to the metal and on more support for affected workers at its Portland meeting Thursday and Friday.

Workers with an allergy-like sensitivity to beryllium are at risk of developing an incurable lung disease called chronic beryllium disease and also have an increased risk of lung cancer if exposed

to fine particles of the metal, the board said. Beryllium was used at Hanford in the production of fuel for reactors, among other uses, and particles remain in the dust in some buildings.

At Hanford, 27 workers have been diagnosed with chronic beryllium disease, including six workers since 2007. The cases include a worker who later died of lung cancer and an employee who requires an oxygen tank 24 hours a day.

An additional 88 workers have been confirmed sensitive to beryllium, which indicates they have been exposed to beryllium and could develop chronic beryllium disease.

See **EXPOSURE** | Page B2

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# BRIEFS

## **Blowing dust closes Hanford highway** / APR 08

Blowing dust Tuesday led to the closure of Highway 240 across the Hanford nuclear reservation from midafternoon to 6 p.m.

At Hanford a gust of 60 mph was recorded near the Vernita Bridge and a gust of 58 mph was recorded in the 300 Area just north of Richland, according to the National Weather Service. At Rattlesnake Mountain, a gust of 79 mph was recorded.

The Tri-Cities also was windy, with a gust of nearly 57 mph at the Richland Airport and one at



# Hanford receives first of its stimulus money

\$1.57 billion in hand;  
hiring to start soon

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy Hanford offices received \$1.57 billion Tuesday from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to start additional cleanup work.

Having the money in hand will allow work planned with stimulus money to begin.

"This will allow us to initiate a number of projects and allow contractors to begin hiring in the coming days," said Geoff Tyree, DOE spokesman. They'll also be allowed to begin working with subcontractors on the new projects.

DOE expects to give con-

tractors notices to proceed with the work this week, Tyree said.

DOE Hanford work is expected to eventually receive a total of \$1.96 billion in federal stimulus money, which is estimated to retain or create about 4,000 Hanford jobs as the money is spent through Sept. 30, 2011.

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

# State's suit against DOE could go to trial in 3 years

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The state of Washington's lawsuit against the Department of Energy to enforce Hanford cleanup deadlines could go to trial in March 2012, Judge Fred Van Sickle of Eastern Washington District federal court said Friday.

Washington had requested that a trial date be set a year earlier and DOE had proposed a later date.

Van Sickle also allowed the state of Oregon to join the lawsuit as an intervenor on the side of Washington state.

The federal government had asked that Oregon be limited to joining motions and briefs filed by the state of Washington. However, the judge set no limitations other than asking Oregon to coordinate with the state of Washington.

Washington filed the lawsuit against DOE in late November after DOE missed legal deadlines for cleanup of Hanford and acknowledged it was unlikely to meet other deadlines in the Tri-Party Agreement. At issue are deadlines for emptying radioactive waste from leak-prone single-shell tanks and treating the waste at the vitrification plant under construction.

The state said it believes the case raises "a limited

“  
Time is of the  
essence in this case  
because further delay  
increases the hazards  
presented by defen-  
dants' failure to  
timely remove mil-  
lions of gallons of ...  
radioactive waste

State of Washington

”  
number of issues that can be decided without undue delay.”

The primary issue is whether DOE has missed critical deadlines it agreed to and what new schedule it should be required to meet, the state argued in court papers.

“Time is of the essence in this case because further delay increases the environmental hazards presented by defendants' failure to timely remove millions of gallons of mixed hazardous and radioactive waste currently stored in tanks that DOE itself has declared unfit for use, and to treat that waste into a safer form,” the state said.

However, DOE's Department of Justice attorneys said

in court documents that the “case is complex.”

“This case concerns the largest and most expensive environmental cleanup project in the U.S.,” they said. “It implicates a wide range of complex legal and factual issues, which will require extensive fact and expert discovery.”

“The case is not, as Washington asserts, a simple case that can be resolved based on a limited, easily identifiable amount of information,” the Department of Justice said.

DOE is not liable and intends to vigorously pursue a number of defenses, many of which may be highly fact-intensive, it said.

Because Washington wants a court order. “of unprecedented scope and duration” to place Hanford under judicial control, the federal government expects significant legal, factual and expert disputes, the Department of Justice said.

The state of Washington and the federal government continue to discuss a settlement in the case.

The state's goal is to get an enforceable schedule that meets the state's interests, whether through a settlement or in court, said Andy Fitz, Washington state assistant attorney general.

▶ Annette Cary: 582-1533;  
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7 APR 09

# DOE dedicates new HAMMER building

## Facility will be used to train border guards

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A stinger missile and part of a Scud missile are among the teaching tools on display at the Tri-Cities' newest classroom building.

Nearby is another clue that this is no ordinary classroom — a 55-pound block of tungsten, the size of a couple of coffee cups. It's a visual example equivalent in size and density to the amount of enriched uranium needed for an atomic bomb.

On Monday the Department of Energy dedicated a new 6,500-square-foot building to provide training in international border protection and help ease the classroom space squeeze at the HAMMER training center just north of Richland.

But HAMMER officials wasted no time in already putting the classrooms to use. Representatives of Nigeria, Austria, Scotland and the United States spent Monday learning about preventing smuggling of nuclear materials as part of a class for the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

The building was built with \$2.5 million allocated by the U.S. State Department in 2005, but it took more work by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., to free up the money and get construction started last year.

The training that's conducted at the new building will help ensure the world is safer from terrorists, Hastings said.

HAMMER has been bursting at the seams in its classrooms, and space is expected to become much tighter as training starts for as many as 4,000 new workers who will be hired with stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to do cleanup work at the Hanford nuclear reservation.

Before work started on the new classroom building last year, some classes were held in a noisy industrial high bay area at HAMMER because of lack of space. That was despite the addition of an annex similar to the one dedicated Monday that had been added a year earlier.

With the newest classroom building open, classroom space still is at nearly 90 percent capacity, although the life-size props that HAMMER is known for, such as a mock border security station, can meet demand, said Jim Spracklen, DOE program manager.

With training needed for an influx of new Hanford workers, DOE is making plans to use classrooms at Washington State University Tri-Cities, hotels and possibly schools, he said.

"HAMMER's top priority remains training Hanford employees to safely clean up the site," Spracklen said.

But the vision for the center also includes use to train other workers, such as international



Herald file

The U.S. Department of the Interior designated Hanford's B Reactor as a National Historic Landmark in 2008. A Fluor Hanford subcontractor is preparing to hire guides for tours of the reactor, which are planned through 2009.

# B Reactor guides being hired for Saturday tours

About 100 tours scheduled for site through September

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A Fluor Hanford subcontractor is preparing to hire guides for new Saturday tours of historic B Reactor, which are planned through 2009.

Fluor Hanford awarded an approximately \$50,000 contract to Indian Eyes of Pasco to support tours of the Hanford reactor. The contract runs through September with two options for one-year extensions.

About 100 tours of B Reactor are scheduled through September. Unlike the Hanford site-wide bus tours that provide a look at both the history and also the cleanup of the nuclear reservation, the B Reactor tours go straight to the reactor and allow visitors to spend a couple of hours inside.

Indian Eyes' ideal tour guide would be anyone who has a passion for the history around B Reactor and is excited to be making history as the reactor is opened for more public tours, said Roxie Schescke, Indian Eyes' president.

"This is an exciting assignment for us," she said. "In a way we're

making our own 'history' at the site."

Tour guides will be paid \$125 for each tour and will be trained when they are accepted for the program. The number to be hired has not been announced. Applicants should send a résumé, if they have one, and information on why they want to be a tour guide to Gilbert Mendoza at [gilbert@indianeyesllc.com](mailto:gilbert@indianeyesllc.com) or call 378-8188.

Until now members of the B Reactor Museum Association have provided many of the tours of B Reactor. But with about 100 tours now scheduled, additional help will be needed, according to Fluor.

However, the museum association will remain an important part of the tour program, Schescke said.

"They've been instrumental in helping the B Reactor achieve its National Landmark status and we want to build on their knowledge and enthusiasm," she said.

The museum association is committed to "helping get the B Reactor a prominent place on the landscape of historic facilities," said association president Maynard Plahuta, in a statement.

B Reactor, which was named a National Historic Landmark last summer, was the nation's first full-scale production reactor. It was built in 13 months during World War II as the

nation raced to develop the technology for an atomic bomb. It produced plutonium for the first atomic explosion in the New Mexico desert, the Trinity Test, and produced plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping end World War II and ushering in the atomic age.

Today it looks much as it did during World War II with the addition of displays, including videos that allow visitors to hear about the reactor from those who worked there during World War II and the Cold War.

Details on registering for the new Saturday tours will be announced soon by the Department of Energy.

An initial tour was held in March and the next tour will be April 25. More tours tentatively are planned for May 9 and 30; June 6, 13 and 20; July 11, 18 and 25; and four Saturdays in August and four Saturdays in September.

Participants on the tours must be at least 18 years old, but are not required to be U.S. citizens.

Indian Eyes specializes in staffing and resource support services. It qualifies as a woman-owned, small disadvantaged and historically underutilized business zone company.

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# DOE: Tests show key vit plant processes will work

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

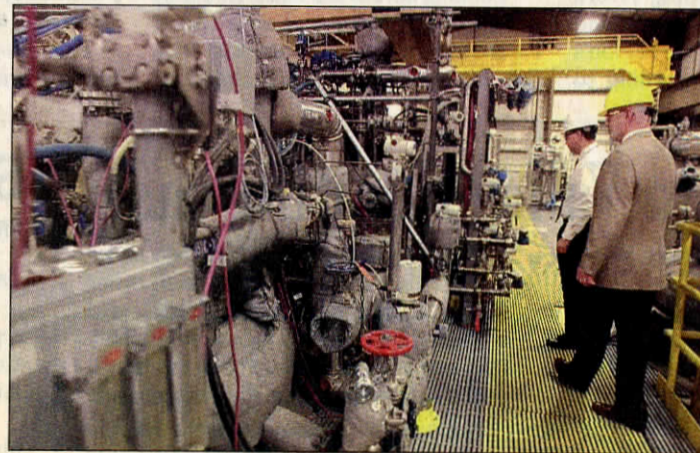
A \$90 million project has provided more confidence that Hanford's one-of-a-kind, \$12.2 billion vitrification plant should operate

as expected, according to the Department of Energy.

DOE and its contractors just completed the first phase of testing at the Pretreatment Engineering Platform, a quarter-scale model of the process that will be

used at the vit plant to separate Hanford tank waste into high-level waste and low-activity waste for separate treatment. DOE's goal is to minimize the amount of

See **TESTS** | Page B2



Wes Lawrence, left, PNNL deputy project manager, and John Truax, pretreatment engineering project manager, walk on the upper deck of the PEP platform Friday during a tour. It is a quarter-scale demonstration facility being used to test select processes of the pretreatment plant for Hanford's Waste Treatment Plant.

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# Hanford landfill for radioactive waste grows



Richard Dickin | rdickin@tricityherald.com

Workers at the Department of Energy's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility spray water Wednesday on a load of debris to keep down dust. Two new waste cells have been completed and should be ready to receive waste sometime in May.

Added space necessary to do work with stimulus money

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford has finished an expansion of the landfill in central Hanford for low-level radioactive waste just in time to do it again.

"Almost all cleanup waste generated at Hanford comes to our landfill, making ERDF progress an excellent gauge of Hanford progress," said Bruce Covert, director of waste operations for Washington Closure, the Department of Energy contractor for the project.

The latest expansion of the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, or ERDF,

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will hold an additional 2.8 million tons of contaminated soil, building rubble and other debris left from the production of plutonium at Hanford for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

But with DOE preparing to spend \$1.96 billion from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act on Hanford cleanup, the amount of waste sent to the lined landfill for disposal could double, said Dave Einan, an environmental engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates the landfill.

Plans are being made to add double the space of the expansion just completed.

"The disposal facility continues to be a major key to completing work on the river

corridor and is the linchpin to getting additional waste disposed through the recovery act," said Cameron Hardy, DOE spokesman. Much of the 8 million tons of waste already disposed of at the landfill came from near the Columbia River.

Work has recently been completed by DelHur Industries of Hermiston under a Washington Closure subcontract to add the seventh and eighth disposal cells to the landfill. The work cost about \$25 million and DelHur, a small business, assigned parts of the project to other small, local companies. The work was completed on time and on schedule.

Now the base of ERDF, including cells already filled with debris, covers the space of about 35 football fields. Debris is being added to cells 5 and 6, which are about

## BRIEFS

### **Hanford contractors to talk about needs** 4-16-09

Hanford contractors will give presentations on their upcoming needs and how small-business owners in the Tri-Cities can provide services to them at the Small Business Vendor Forum in Pasco.

The event is sponsored by the Tri-City Development Council and runs from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 29 at TRAC.

Cost is \$35, which includes breakfast and lunch. For more information, call Kristi Kesler at 735-1000 or go to [www.tridec.org](http://www.tridec.org) and click on calendar and event forms.

NASDAQ  -27.59  
1,625.72

S&P 500  -17.23  
841.50

GOLD  -3.80  
890.90

EURO  -.0065  
\$1.3293

CRUDE OIL  -.64  
49.41

UNL. GASOLINE  -.01  
1.46

# BUSINESS

Monday, April 15, 2009

CONTACT US: 582-1502; businessnews@tricityherald.com; fax, 582-1510 | **INSIDE:** Stock market roundup, BE

## EPA scientist named Hanford project manager

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Environmental Protection Agency has named Dennis Faulk, an environmental scientist for EPA in Richland, as the program manager for the Hanford Project Office.

He replaces Nick Ceto, who took a job with the Department of Energy in late 2008. EPA is a regulator of the Hanford nuclear reservation.

The biggest challenge for the Hanford Project Office in the next four months is to begin dealing with and

supporting the increased cleanup work paid for with federal stimulus money, Faulk said. Hanford is expected to receive and spend \$1.96 billion from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

Faulk now serves as the Hanford Project Office's community involvement coordinator and a remedial project manager. The office oversees cleanup both at Hanford and also at the Idaho National Laboratory.

He has hands-on experience at Hanford, after starting work in 1985 at Hanford as an operator at N Reactor

and then working as an environmental compliance engineer at the Plutonium Finishing Plant. He joined EPA in late 1991 in the early years of cleanup under the Tri-Party Agreement.

"Dennis has demonstrated the ability to work through challenging issues, to think and plan strategically and to communicate clearly and effectively across the broad spectrum of interested parties," said Dan Opalski, director of the Office of Environmental Cleanup for EPA Region 10, in an announcement.

He also praised Faulk's leadership in providing guidance and acting as a mentor to new staff members in recent years.

Faulk will take over leadership of the Hanford Project Office on April 27. Richard Campbell temporarily left his position as an EPA program section chief in the Atlanta, Ga., area to serve as acting program manager as two panels evaluated the pool of candidates for the open position.

▶ *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com*

# Frustrated judge wants changes in Hanford downwinder lawsuit

Just 10 of about 2,000 claims settled in 18 years

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A federal judge has indicated he's not willing to continue trying 2,000 claims in individual trials and admonished attorneys as an 18-year-old lawsuit over radioactive emissions from Hanford prepares to resume.

About 2,000 downwinders have pending claims that their health was damaged, primarily as radioactive isotopes were released into the air and blown downwind at Hanford during World War II and the early years of the Cold War.

In the six years that Judge William Fremming Nielsen has had the case in Eastern Washington Federal District Court, he had hoped that by taking a few claims to trial attorneys could better evaluate claims and reach settlement agreements.

Just 10 claims have been settled in that bellwether process, with some jury decisions since reversed by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"The resolution of 10 claims in 18 years through the litigation process requires the court to conclude that the process is proceeding at a pace that is not expeditious and is far too slow

to bring the litigation to resolution," Nielsen wrote in a court order.

The cost of nearly two decades of litigation has been too high, he wrote.

The downwinder attorneys say that the U.S. government has spent \$57 million to defend claims. Although the amount spent by downwinder attorneys is not public, Nielsen said it also must amount to many millions of dollars.

"The ratio of financial cost to number of claims resolved would be in the range of millions to one," he wrote. "The court concludes that continuing to resolve claims in this manner is not economical and is unacceptable."

Of the claims that have gone to trial so far, juries have awarded a combined \$545,000 to two cancer patients and no money to a third cancer patient and three people with non-cancerous thyroid disease. Another six claims would have been tried by now, but were dropped either by the court, the downwinders or their attorneys.

Based on the results of the bellwether process, "a just resolution will result in compensation to some of the Hanford

See **LAWSUIT** | Page B2

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# Seats being snapped up for B Reactor tours

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Seats were going fast Thursday night for new tours of Hanford's historic B Reactor, but if you act fast this morning you should still get one.

The Department of Energy quietly opened registration Thursday morning without notice for the tours. It was concerned that too many people might log on to the internet registra-

tion site at once and crash the computer server if the start of registration was announced in advance.

By 6 p.m., 429 seats had been snapped up and 831 remained.

Registration is being accepted only online at [manhattanprojectbreactor.hanford.gov](http://manhattanprojectbreactor.hanford.gov). Four seats may be reserved per registration.

The tours are scheduled on these Saturdays: April 25; May 9 and 30; June 6, 13 and 20; July 11, 18 and 25;

Aug. 8, 15, 22 and 29; and Sept. 5, 12, 19 and 26. Thursday night seats remained for the later dates.

Two tours will be offered each day starting at 8 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. at the Tri-Cities Enterprise Center at 2000 Logston Blvd., Richland, off Highway 240.

Participants will take a 45-minute bus ride to the reactor with a tour guide who will show a video and answer questions. They will spend

about two hours at the reactor.

To be allowed on the tour you must be at least 18 years old. However, in a break with usual DOE policy, the tours are not restricted to U.S. citizens.

All participants must wear flat, closed-toed shoes appropriate for an industrial environment since the reactor remains much like it was

16 APR 09

# Work on cocooning N Reactor begins

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work has begun to cocoon Hanford's N Reactor, the only reactor that was used to produce both electricity and plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Five of Hanford's reactors already have been cocooned, a term used for tearing them down to little more than their radioactive cores and sealing them up. They'll be left for up to 75 years while their radioactivity decays to more manageable levels.

But while those five reactors were largely cookie cutter copies of each other, N Reactor will be cocooned along with the adjacent 109-N Heat Exchange Building, which housed the turbines and steam generators needed to produce electricity.

Because of that, the cocooned structure will be about three times the size of

the other cocooned reactors that line the Columbia River, said Ruben Trevino, Washington Closure Hanford subcontracts manager for the project.

That requires far more work than at the other reactors, said Cameron Hardy, Department of Energy spokesman.

On Wednesday, nine excavators were working at the site. One used a hammer to chip away at part of the Heat Exchange Building that is not contaminated enough to require cocooning. Others worked on portions of the reactor building used for administrative offices and maintenance.

But most of the excavators were equipped with "buckets and thumbs" to scoop up items from piles of rubble that until recently had been equipment inside the Heat Exchange Building. The building is surrounded by boilers and pipes and piles of other metal debris,

some of which were being cut into smaller pieces by a welder.

The debris is being sent to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, a massive landfill for low-level radioactive waste in central Hanford.

What's now trash, however, once was important enough to draw a visit from President John F. Kennedy.

"A nation dedicated to living in peace is forging, not a sword but a plowshare, the Hanford Generating Plant," Kennedy said during the ground breaking for the power production plant associated with N Reactor on Sept. 26, 1963, two months before his assassination.

Construction began in 1958 to build N Reactor to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. The ninth production reactor at Hanford, it was designed to

23 APR 09

# New vit plant test system parts arriving

12-foot-tall platform to test adequacy of vit plant mixing must be assembled in parts

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A test system to see whether the Hanford vitrification plant can keep high-level radioactive waste adequately mixed has started arriving in pieces in north Richland.

The \$15.3 million project includes assembling an 864-square-foot test plat-

form that is more than 12 feet tall at Mid-Columbia Engineering in Richland. Additional research will be done at Washington State University.

The test platform will be used to test the mixing system planned for 12 tanks at the vitrification plant, which is planned to open in 2019 to turn Hanford's radioactive waste now stored in underground tanks into a stable glass form for disposal.

The Department of Energy already has confirmed that the mixing system will work for about 26 other tanks.

The vit plant will include stainless steel tanks that will hold high level radioactive

waste as it is separated from low-activity waste and as it is turned into glass. Those vessels will be in "black cells" that will be too radioactive for humans to ever enter again after the plant begins processing.

Air-driven pumps called pulse-jet mixers are planned for those tanks to keep the waste mixed without using moving parts and without requiring maintenance.

The new test system will be used to determine if the pumps are correctly configured in the remaining tanks to keep



## Vit plant recognized for safety efforts

21 APR 09

The Hanford vitrification plant has been awarded merit status in the Department of Energy's safety program, the Voluntary Protection Program.

The Waste Treatment Plant, or vit plant, will continue to work toward star status in the Voluntary Protection Program, which is the highest level of achievement.

Contractors with highly effective safety programs that commit to attain star status within five years may be awarded merit status, according to DOE. Bechtel National is the contractor for the vit plant.

The project has "demonstrated considerable commitment and leadership to changing the safety culture over the last several years," and as a result has been awarded merit status, Shirley Olinger, manager of the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection, said in a statement.

Bechtel used worker knowledge and a strong partnership between management and staff to strengthen the safety culture at the plant, Bill Elkins, Bechtel project director, said in a statement.

22 APR 09

# Bats to keep Hanford home

## Largest colony in Eastern Washington living underground

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The largest known colony of bats in Eastern Washington will keep its underground home at Hanford, the Department of Energy has determined.

A colony of about 2,000 bats roosts from mid-March to mid-October in an underground concrete structure in north Hanford once used to hold water from the Columbia River before it was used at F Reactor.

The clearwell was scheduled to be demolished by the end of September as part of cleanup and restoration of the Hanford nuclear reservation.



Courtesy of the Department of Energy  
**Yuma myotis bats fly through an underground water flume at Hanford after Washington Closure Hanford researchers entered the tunnel last summer. Researchers believe the colony has about 2,000 bats that roost in the flume or the clearwell adjacent to the flume.**

But that was before DOE contractor Washington Closure Hanford discovered the colony of bats using the clear-

well in 2006.

As Washington Closure launched a study to find out more about the bats, DOE began to receive letters from other public agencies and wildlife groups urging it to find a way to let the bats remain.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the regulator on the project, also agreed that the structure should be saved as a home for the bats.

“We didn’t want to disturb such great bat habitat,” said Craig Cameron, an EPA scientist. EPA concluded the structure had no chemical or radioactive contamination that would require it to be cleaned up, and DOE agreed the clearwell remained structurally sound.

The bats have developed a seemingly thriving colony and

STIMULUS MONEY

# DOE defends Hanford, other cleanup spending

Some senators claim expenses result in no real value to the nation

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A top Department of Energy official defended spending stimulus funds at Hanford and other cleanup sites Wednesday as an Alabama senator questioned whether environmental cleanup was worth the high cost.

Ines Triay, acting DOE assis-

tant secretary for environmental management, addressed a Senate Armed Services panel about DOE plans to spend \$5.1 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on nuclear cleanup projects, with nearly a third of that money going to Hanford.

It's about as much as DOE spends annually on cleanup.

"Receiving the equivalent of a full year's appropriation is a



Triay

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very large amount for a single program to absorb and manage," said Sen. Bill Nelson, D-

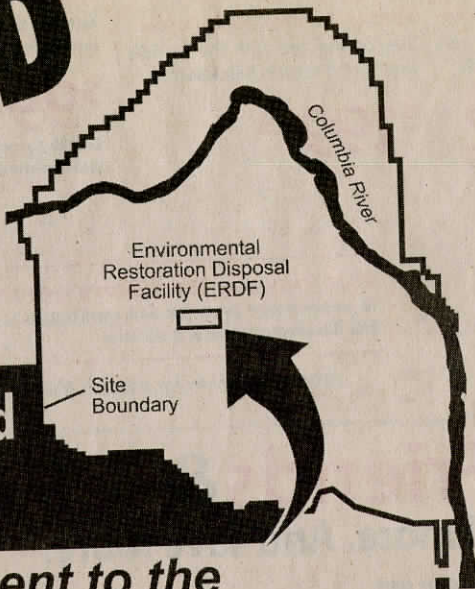
Fla., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

To date, taxpayers don't seem to have received good value for their money, said Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala.

Environmental  
Restoration Disposal Facility

# HANFORD SITE

Public comment period  
May 4 - June 3



## Proposed Amendment to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility Record of Decision

The U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Tri-Party agencies) request input on the *Proposed Plan for an Amendment to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility Record of Decision*, DOE/RL-2009-23. The amendment proposes three changes: one remedial action change and two Explanations of Significant Difference (ESD). The remedial action is to authorize construction of two new waste disposal cells. The first ESD is to authorize changes in design based on new technologies. The second ESD is to allow the TPA agencies to authorize construction of future cells without going through the ROD amendment process.



Tri-Party Agreement  
U.S. Department of Energy  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Washington State Department of Ecology

The Proposed Plan may be viewed by visiting [www.hanford.gov](http://www.hanford.gov) and by clicking on Hanford Events Calendar under Public Involvement. If you would like to request a copy of the plan or provide comments, contact the Hanford Cleanup Line at (800) 321-2008. Submit comments by June 3 to:

**Paula Call**  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Richland Operations Office  
P.O. Box 550, MSIN A7-75  
Richland, Washington 99352  
Phone: 509-376-2048, Fax: 509-376-1563  
E-mail: [TPA.ERDF@rl.gov](mailto:TPA.ERDF@rl.gov)

No public meetings are scheduled. To request a meeting, please contact Paula Call, above, by May 14.

28 APR 09

# Hanford tax bill sent to Gregoire

Measure attempts to clarify how businesses are involved in cleanup

**MICHELLE DUPLER**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

OLYMPIA — After years of failed attempts, a law is on its way to Gov. Chris Gregoire that would clarify how much Hanford contractors must pay for the state's business and occupation tax.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**



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Senate Bill 6170 passed the House 85-11 late Sunday, leaving Gregoire's signature ....

the only hurdle to be cleared before it becomes law.

The bill contains a provision intended to clarify what kinds of businesses are directly involved in cleanup of radioactive waste, thereby qualifying for a preferential tax rate enacted in 1996.

The law covered businesses involved in "activities integral and necessary to the direct performance of cleanup," which had been interpreted to include businesses such as Lockheed Martin, which provides information technology services to the Hanford site.

But the state Department of Revenue in a 2005 audit of Lockheed Martin decided the Hanford subcontractor was not doing cleanup and should pay a tax rate more than triple the preferential rate.

# Hanford expo

Health, safety event  
next week at TRAC

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

One of the Tri-Cities' most popular events, the Hanford Health and Safety Expo, is scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday at TRAC in Pasco.

Last year the two-day event drew 62,622 people as measured by clicks through the turnstile in the entryway.

Attendance is boosted by Hanford workers, with thousands getting a half-day off work to attend. But the free event also is popular with Tri-City families and kids' groups looking for entertainment and health education. Parking is free.

"With 180 booths, there is something for everyone," said Owen Berglund of Washington River Protection Solutions.

Some of the booths are specific to Hanford, such as information about the site's history, how ill workers can apply for \$150,000 compensation and how workers keep safe as they clean up radioactive waste.

But the booths also cover a wide range of health and safety topics such as martial arts, healthy eating, motorcycle safety, stranger danger, railroad safety, safe lifting and gang prevention.

"Most of the booths try to have something for kids," said Jenni Morris of CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.

A food drive is planned for the first time this year, with donations going to Second Harvest. Those who donate can enter drawings for prizes that promote healthy living such as a Wii system.

This year, handwashing will have an increased prominence, given the spreading H1N1 flu virus. Organizers are asking anyone with flu symptoms to stay home.

## FAST FACTS

**What:** Hanford Health and Safety Expo

**When:** 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday

**Where:** TRAC in Pasco

**Cost:** Free

The Benton Franklin District Health Department will have its hand-washing station available where kids can check their just-washed hands with a blue light. Kids also can practice escaping a simulated fire in a smoke-filled house.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory plans to bring its Intellifit, a system developed for airport security scanning that also can be used to tell individuals their exact body dimensions, including weight and clothes sizes.

The Washington State Patrol plans to bring "beer goggles," which show people how drinking impairs their senses.

A bike rodeo is planned from 3:30 to 5 p.m. both days, and children may bring their own bikes and helmets or borrow them.

Kennewick and Richland police have donated about 35 unclaimed bikes for children and adults that will be given away in random drawings. Kennewick Bike and Fitness has checked them for safety. The Safe Kids Coalition also will be giving away 150 children's bicycle helmets and fitting helmets.

A blood drive is planned from noon to 3 p.m. Tuesday by the American Red Cross.

Both days law enforcement officials plan a car crash demonstration with a scenario of a drunken driver. Ambulances, police cars and wrecked vehicles provided by Casaday Towing will be on the floor of the TRAC arena for the demonstration at 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. each day.

► Annette Cary: 582-1533;  
acary@tricityherald.com

# Proposed Hanford budget up slightly

Congressional delegation asking for more money

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Obama administration on Thursday proposed a modest increase for Hanford's fiscal 2010 budget above the current budget.

The proposed budget that Congress now will consider includes \$2.09 billion for Hanford cleanup, an increase of \$24 million over the current budget.

However, some Hanford environmental cleanup projects would receive less money under the proposed budget. All are programs that are receiving some of the \$1.96 billion set aside for Hanford under

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** 

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reaction to the proposed budget.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., pledged to use her senior leadership position to increase Hanford fund-

the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act over the next 2½ years.

That contributed to a mixed

ing above the administration's request.

"The president's Hanford budget simply doesn't cut it," she said in a statement. "We have legal and moral

See **BUDGET** | Page A2

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10 MAY 09



Kai-Huei Yau | kyau@tricityherald.com

Siblings Paula Holm and Ludwig Bruggemann examine rocks on the property where they lived briefly as children in Hanford before their family was removed for the Hanford project. They recently revisited the site, where their former home has been torn down. They believe the pile of rocks next to a warehouse, right, is what remains of the home. **See photo gallery at tricityherald.com.**

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

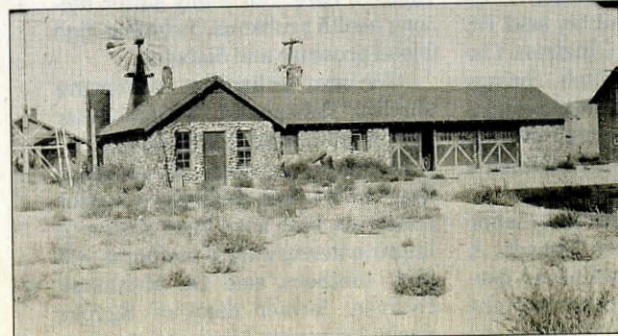
# NOW & THEN

A look at the Bruggemanns' ranch as it is now and as it was when they resided there in the 1930s.



Kai-Huei Yau | kyau@tricityherald.com

The warehouse is the most prominent remnant of the old ranch.



Courtesy of Paula Bruggemann Holm

This photo of the warehouse from the 1930s clearly shows several surrounding structures that now also are demolished.

Ludwig Bruggemann was about 5 on the late winter day in 1943 when two jeeps drove up the road to his family's ranch on the banks of the Columbia River.

Army officers with papers stepped out to say the words that would change his family's life: "You have two weeks to leave." Ludwig recently recalled the incident, not sure how much of the recollection came from his childhood memories of the day and how much from the story his family would tell for decades.

Their 400-acre ranch had been condemned as part of the effort to win World War II. About 1,500 people, many of them members of farm families, would be displaced from the 586 square miles that now are part of the Hanford nuclear reservation.



Not until after the war ended did they know that the U.S. government had picked the area because of its remote location and abundant water and power to produce plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping end WWII.

Ludwig and his little sister, Paula, would listen to their father talk about the ranch until he died.

"He never got over it," said Debbie Holm, the daughter of Paula Bruggemann Holm. "It was a really, really sad thing for him."

For decades Ludwig would occasionally drive his parents, Paul and Mary Bruggemann, to the Vernita bridge area to peer down the Columbia River to try to get a glimpse of the ranch. They thought they could make out the stone house that had kept them cool on the blistering hot Mid-Columbia summer days.

But none of the family set foot on the ranch again until this spring.



# Robotic arm being tested to clean out underground tanks

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Testing has begun on a robotic arm system in an attempt to find a more efficient way to empty radioactive waste from Hanford's underground tanks.

The approach in recent years has been to develop a suite of tools suited to different types of waste. But DOE now is interested in development of a single tool, a robotic arm that may be able to use multiple technologies.

However, because the robotic arm would be too large to fit down the 12-inch-diameter risers in Hanford's oldest tanks, the openings to the tanks would need to be enlarged.

"It's easy to get waste into the tanks, but they are not designed to get waste out," said Steve Pfaff, the Department of Energy's project director for tank waste retrieval.

DOE and contractor Washington River Protection Solutions are working to empty salt cake and sludge that remain in 142 of Hanford's 149 leak-prone single-shell tanks. Hanford has 53 million gallons of radioactive and hazardous chemical waste from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The new contractor began emptying Tank C-110, a

530,000 gallon tank, in January using the modified sluicing method. It uses a nozzle to spray liquid on the waste inside the enclosed tank to break it up and move it toward a pump for removal from the tank.

But it does not appear that modified sluicing will be able to empty the tank to standards set by regulations, Pfaff said. The tank has heavy sands at its bottom that are difficult to suspend in liquid so it can be pumped out.

Modified sluicing has worked to retrieve significant amounts of waste from Hanford tanks, he said. On one tank it removed all but approximately 1 percent of the waste. But on most tanks it's been used on, it was unable to reach that standard.

In tanks C-108 and C-109 a hard heel of 7,000 to 8,000 gallons remain after modified sluicing.

Some tanks have required the use of two or three technologies in addition to modified sluicing to remove waste.

Hanford workers also have used vacuum retrieval technology to empty four of the nuclear reservation's smallest underground tanks. But the

See **TANKS** | Page B2

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15 MAY 09

# Research completion may boost pace of cleanup

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford officials are looking forward to completing research and technology projects that could clear the way for construction and cleanup work to move along at a faster clip, they said at a briefing Thursday of the U.S. House Nuclear Caucus.

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., organizes the series of briefings each spring to educate congressional leaders and their staff about environmental cleanup issues at Department of Energy weapons sites, including Hanford.

DOE would like to have all the technologies needed to retrieve radioactive waste from Hanford's underground tanks in place by the end of 2010, said Shirley Olinger, manager of the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection.

Eleven technologies have been used so far in an attempt to empty high-level radioactive waste from Hanford's 49 leak-prone single-shell tanks into sturdier double-shell tanks until the waste can be treated, she said at the briefing held in Washington, D.C.

But despite the focus on developing technologies to get waste out of the enclosed, underground tanks in recent years, workers continue to have trouble retrieving waste from tanks that have a hard heel of waste at their bottom and tanks suspected of having leaked in the past. Tanks believed to have leaked in the

# Plan set in motion Hanford cleanup in 30 years

19 MAY 09

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Twenty years ago this month the Tri-Party Agreement was signed, laying out a plan to clean up the massive radioactive and hazardous waste contamination at Hanford within 30 years.

The Department of Energy and its two new regulators signed the document, though they did not really know how contaminated the 586 square miles of the nuclear reservation were and the technology did not exist to do the work.

Nuclear cleanup on such a

massive scale never had been attempted.

Randy Smith, now retired, led negotiations for the Environmental Protection Agency. After working 13 months on the document, regulators were proud of the plan, but a round of public meetings drew criticism.

He remembers one man

pointing a finger at him and demanding, "Can you guarantee me this site will be completely clean in 30 years?"

"I said, 'No. But I can tell you it will be a lot cleaner than it is today,'" he remembered.

And it is, he said. "It's a lot cleaner and a lot further along. But is it far enough? No."

That seems to be the story of

the Tri-Party Agreement.

There's no hope Hanford will be cleaned up in 30 years. DOE estimates radioactive waste treatment at the vitrification plant will be done in 2047.

Washington state has sued DOE over missed Tri-Party Agreement deadlines, but the state still sees the agreement as an essential tool, said Jay

Manning, director of the Washington State Department of Ecology. "We are demonstrating to the whole world we can clean up a site like Hanford," he said.

And large parts of the site will be clean in 30 years.

DOE is working to shrink the

See **TRI-PARTY** | Page A2

# Lockheed Martin <sup>13 MAY 09</sup> gets DOE go-ahead on Hanford contract

## No protests planned over contractor transition

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy has given a team led by Lockheed Martin notice to proceed as the Hanford mission support contractor.

The notice to proceed indicates that no protest will be filed on the contract award made late in April to the Lockheed team, Mission Support Alliance.

The losing bidder for the

contract, Computer Sciences Corp., or CSC, has reached an agreement with the Mission Support Alliance to become a major subcontractor on the team and will not protest the award.

"We're still working the details out," said Joe Wagovich,

See **CONTRACT** | Page B2

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12 MAR 7 09  
DOE says plan may  
save a ton of money  
instead of cocooning

### ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is considering tearing down Hanford's K Reactors that stand on the banks of the Columbia River rather than sealing them up for 75 years.

If the plan goes forward, it could lead to tearing down eight of the nine plutonium production reactors along the river instead of leaving them "cocooned." Only B Reactor,

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which is  
expected to  
be preserved  
as a museum,  
would remain  
standing.

Demolishing the reactors now instead of waiting 75 years to dispose of them could "save a ton of money" in long-term costs, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office.

"We have got to get rid of them sometime," he said. In

See **REACTORS** | Page A2

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# 2007 fire causes decline in Hanford elk

KEVIN MCCULLEN

HERALD STAFF WRITER.

The wildfire that scorched the Hanford Reach National Monument in August 2007 caused a small decline in the size of its elk herd.

Fewer cows bore calves last year, and hunters in the Rattlesnake Hills game unit bordering the Reach harvested a higher number of elk in the fall 2007 season because more animals ventured farther afield onto private lands in search of forage, said Mike Livingston, district wildlife manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

But the herd, estimated at 630 during its annual count earlier this year, appears in good shape, he said.

The fire, which burned 60,000 acres on the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, prompted the herd to look farther for food. And the numbers were reflected in an increased harvest by hunters in the Rattlesnake Hills, with 136 bulls killed in the fall 2007 season, Livingston said.

Wildlife videographer Gaylord Mink, who produced a video on the Hanford elk herd in 2006 for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — which manages the Reach — returned in 2007 to document the effects

of the fire on wildlife.

He found the herd changed its prefire pattern of leaving the safety of the Reach — where hunting is not allowed — at night and returning before daybreak. Following the fire, Mink found many animals opted to remain on private land, a pattern that was broken only by the onset of hunting season.

“Fortunately the fire occurred after the wheat harvest, so the crop damage was minimal,” Livingston said.

But some cows couldn’t carry enough nutritional reserves into the winter and didn’t produce calves, Livingston said. The number of elk counted in winter 2007-08 was esti-

mated at between 510 and 550.

And hunters harvested just 43 elk in the Rattlesnake Hills in the 2008 season, he said.

“Our typical harvest on average is from 45 to 90,” Livingston said.

Heidi Newsome, wildlife biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said the herd in summer numbers less than 350, with some elk migrating to higher elevations in search of greener grasses.

“The number of elk fluctuates, depending on the time of year,” she said.

◆ Kevin McCullen: 582-1535; kmccullen@tricityherald.com

17 MAY 09  
When Fish and Wildlife Service needs video of local wildlife, Prosser man is the go-to guy

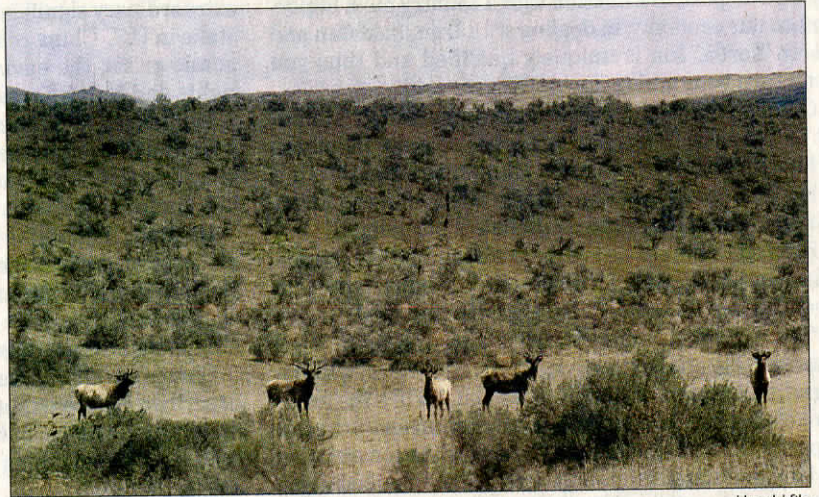
**KEVIN MCCULLEN**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**P**ROSSER — Gaylord Mink is the videographer of record for Mid-Columbia wildlife. In a roughly 8-by-10 basement room in his Prosser home flanked by rows of carefully catalogued videotapes and a shelf with video editing equipment, the retired Washington State University plant pathologist and virologist produces videos on the area's wildlife.

Mink has trained his cameras on everything from bald eagles, bats and burrowing owls to coho salmon, elk and wild horses.

He's crawled or slid for closeups of elk on the Hanford Reach National Monument — and had two cameras destroyed by curious elk — braved snowstorms and got stuck in muck, and crept through sagebrush to photograph wary wild horses.



Herald file

A group of elk with velvet-covered antlers recently graze near the highway on the Hanford site. Wildlife videographer Gaylord Mink of Prosser has captured many video images of the variety of species on the Hanford Reach National Monument.

See **HERD** | Page A5

14 MAY 09

## **DOE employees to spend half the day volunteering**

About 90 employees of the U.S. Department of Energy will volunteer a half-day today at 13 not-for-profit organizations in the area for a Day of Caring.

DOE partnered with United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties and the Benton-Franklin Volunteer Center to coordinate the day.

Volunteers will build a shed for Elijah Family Homes, do chores for the elderly and needy families through Catholic Family & Child Service, work on Yakima River



# Contract could earn Bechtel up to \$620 million

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Bechtel has received its first check for work on the Hanford vitrification plant since mid-2006 under a renegotiated contract.

The company earned about \$3.9 million for completing design details of the plant's Analytical Laboratory. Under the new contract, it will be able to earn up to \$620 million profit on the \$10.5 billion value of the contract, or about 6 percent. That includes money paid earlier.

"It's a fair deal for all involved," said John Eschenberg, DOE assistant manager for the vitrification plant.

Bechtel and the Department of Energy spent about 18 months renegotiating the contract to build and commission the plant to turn radioactive waste into a stable glass form for disposal, reaching an agreement early this year. The contract had to be renegotiated after the scope of work was changed significantly after earthquake design standards were increased.

But the previous contract also was not going well for Bechtel.

When it was negotiated, Bechtel had the potential to earn \$425 million on a project expected to cost about \$5 billion. But to earn

\$200 million of that, the contractor needed to complete the contract at a cost of \$5 billion. If the cost climbed to \$5.4 billion, it could not earn even a portion of the \$200 million.

By 2005 it became clear the cost of the vitrification plant had increased enough that Bechtel had no hope of finishing its work for \$5.4 billion. DOE had been making a "provisional" payment every three months on the assumption that Bechtel would earn the incentive fee, but it stopped making those payments in 2005.

In 2006, DOE asked for the \$48 million back it had already paid Bechtel in provisional fees, although with the contract in limbo the money remained with Bechtel. Other than a \$14.5 million payment in 2007 for meeting a contract requirement related to the project's simulator facility, Bechtel worked without receiving any additional fee until this year.

While DOE continued to pay Bechtel's costs of doing work during those years, the contractor made no profit and paid out of pocket for programs the government does not reimburse for, such as bonuses and employee recognition awards.

In January DOE agreed Bechtel could keep the \$48 million for significantly advancing work at

the vitrification plant in the years its contract was in limbo and it was not earning pay.

"We believed it was reasonable it be paid some fee on its work to date," Eschenberg said. Bechtel also had been paid \$55 million to date for completing specific portions of work in addition to the \$48 million.

The new contract has a different structure. It's called a "cost plus award" contract, while the previous was called a "cost plus incentive" contract. Congress told DOE it wanted the new contract to better balance cost and schedule with ensuring the plant will operate safely and effectively.

"We, the owner, need to keep the contracting community incentivized with very well thought out performance objectives," Eschenberg said.

The previous contract included all goals in the original document before construction began. The new contract

includes a provision that allows DOE to decide every six months what's important to the project and to pay for changing performance goals.

About \$139 million of the total \$620 million contract is award fee to be paid in those six-month intervals. "It allows us to incentivize what is important to DOE today," Eschenberg said.

The remainder of the fee available to Bechtel includes \$173 million paid out when 60 activities are completed from now through 2016. It also includes \$54 million for getting work done on time.

Another \$91 million is linked to how efficiently the plant operates after construction is finished.

The contract also includes what Eschenberg calls "stretch goals" that may be tough for Bechtel to earn. For instance, enhancing the plant capacity is worth \$15 million and reducing the sodium that has to be

added to the glass — thus shortening the years the plant will have to operate — is worth another \$15 million.

In addition to the \$3.9 million paid to Bechtel under the new contract this month, DOE also is reviewing whether two more activities have been completed. And its first six-month payment from the \$139 million possible in award fee is due at the end of June.

The renegotiated contract provides fee payments over the duration of the project, rather than tying most of them to completion of work that would occur in the final years of the contract, Eschenberg said. The vitrification plant is expected to be ready to operate in 2019.

"There's still a lot of fee at risk, predicated on good contract performance," he said.

Bechtel is anticipating better performance on the contract, said Ted Feigenbaum, the new Bechtel project director. Much

of the design work has been completed and most of the technical issues have been resolved, leaving several years ahead of concentrating on the construction work that is Bechtel's specialty.

"Good things happen if you perform well," Feigenbaum said.

Problems on the project have been caused by a combination of factors, a good share of them beyond Bechtel's control. The cost of steel rose rapidly, new earthquake design standards were set, Congress withheld funding, technical problems were more complex than Bechtel anticipated, and manufacturers who could supply materials and equipment that met nuclear standards were difficult to find because of no commercial nuclear construction in the United States for decades.

◆ *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com; more Hanford news at hanfordnews.com.*

that weapons-grade materials would be consolidated in South Carolina and shipments of canisters of plutonium began that fall.

During the Cold War plutonium was produced at Hanford and made into metal buttons the size of hockey pucks at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant to be shipped off site for conversion to weapons use. But at the end of the Cold War, enough plutonium to fill 2,300 canisters was left. Each canister, the size of a large coffee can, can hold almost 10 pounds of plutonium, but the weights vary.

The canisters were stored in a vault at the Plutonium Finishing Plant under armed guard. The Government Accountability Office told Congress in 2007 that if certain weapons-grade material remained at Hanford, security improvements through 2018 that were required after 9/11 terrorism attacks would cost \$831 million.

— Herald staff

## Hanford done shipping plutonium to S. Carolina

Hanford workers have finished shipping about 2,300 canisters of plutonium from the site to Savannah River, S.C.

Other weapons-grade material still is stored at Hanford. But DOE plans to have the last of it, nuclear fuel that contains plutonium, shipped to Savannah River by October.

The Department of Energy announced in September 2007

# Increase in vit plant accidents worries DOE

Bechtel boosts efforts to cut incidents from loss of focus

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is concerned about an increase in accidents requiring medical attention and other safety-related incidents at the Hanford vitrification plant this year.

"The (vitrification plant) project has recently experienced several reportable and nonreportable events that indicate the construction site safety performance may be in jeopardy," wrote John Eschenberg, DOE manager of the vitrification plant project, in a letter to Bechtel National.

The problems "may have resulted from a fundamental breakdown in work planning, hazards identification and control, and/or a generally poor level of diligence and awareness," Eschenberg wrote.

Bechtel is redoubling its safety efforts to reverse the trend, said Ted Feigenbaum, the new Bechtel project director for the Waste Treatment

Plant, or vitrification plant.

The construction project had a series of safety problems in 2004 and again in 2005, but launched efforts then that improved its safety performance. Seeing the plant's rate of safety-related incidents start to rise again has been disappointing, Feigenbaum said.

Most of the recent incidents have

been caused by complacency or losing focus on safety, rather than a lack of good safety procedures or correct safety equipment for the plant's 800 construction workers, he said.

In one incident since DOE sent the letter earlier this month, parts of a tower crane and a tall mobile crane

See **SAFETY** | Page B2

## HANFORD

21 MAY 09

# Evaporator condensing tank waste

Process will create  
900,000 gallons of  
extra waste storage

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers have begun operating the nuclear reservation's evaporator to create about 900,000 gallons of additional space to hold radioactive waste in the site's sturdiest underground tanks.

Department of Energy contractor Washington River Protection Solutions is working to empty the waste from leak-prone single shell tanks to newer double shell tanks. Space in the double-shell tanks is at a premium, but removing excess water from the waste frees up space.

The double-shell tanks can hold about 28 million gallons of waste, but Hanford has 53 million gallons of waste in underground tanks waiting to be processed at the vitrification plant under construction.

"Without the evaporator, we would have no storage space and without storage space, we can't retrieve waste from old single-shell

For breaking news throughout the day, go to [www.tricityherald.com](http://www.tricityherald.com)

# MID-COLUMBIA

SECTION B | [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) | Monday, June 1, 2009

CONTACT THE NEWSROOM: 582-1502; [news@tricityherald.com](mailto:news@tricityherald.com); fax 582-1510

## Hanford offering good pay, benefits, training

DOE expected hire, retrain about 4,000 employees with federal stimulus funds

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Brad Brannan had to stop answering his cell phone after Washington River Protection Solutions announced

this spring it would train and hire health physics technicians to work at the Hanford nuclear reservation.

A combination of the promise of pay starting about \$20 a hour, good benefits and 26 weeks of paid training for

the jobs had Hanford workers with access to his cell number jockeying to recommend people for the jobs.

Brannan, a radiological control manager for Washington River Protection Solutions, and other man-

agers, received more than 500 applications. They interviewed nearly 100 people and picked 30 to train.

They are just a fraction of the 400 new Hanford workers selected in the first round of hiring with \$1.96 billion in federal economic stimulus money expected to be spent by the Department of Energy to retain or hire about

4,000 employees at Hanford.

The majority of the new hires will be doing decontamination and demolition work for CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. As "D&D workers," they'll be paid a starting wage of about \$17 an hour and receive five weeks of

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

5 JUN 09

## Stimulus leads to 800 new Hanford hirings

About 800 new workers have been hired at Hanford this spring with money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Hanford officials said Thursday at the Hanford Advisory Board.

That's in addition to 300 jobs saved with the federal economic stimulus money. DOE officials have projected the

\$1.96 billion Hanford is in line to receive could save or create about 4,000 jobs by fall 2011.

The job tally this spring includes about 700 workers hired by Department of Energy contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. In addition, 206 full-time jobs have been created at the tank farms, with about 100 of those jobs filled to date.

Subcontracts for work or materials worth about \$7 million have been awarded in 84 procurements at the tank farms. About 73 percent of the procurements went to small businesses, according to DOE.

- Herald staff

## BRIEFS

### Hanford site pioneer DeGooyer dies at age 87

Marge DeGooyer, who was among the limited number of women to work at Hanford during World War II, died Wednesday at Hospice at the Chaplaincy in Kennewick. She was 87.

When she arrived at the site in 1945, she was asked whether she preferred sewing or cooking. DeGooyer, who didn't care much for either, picked cooking and was assigned to a chemical laboratory to analyze plutonium.

It led to a 42-year career ana-

lyzing radioactive materials.

To read more about DeGooyer, go to [www.hanfordnews.com](http://www.hanfordnews.com) and search for "Marge Nordman DeGooyer" without quotation marks.

**HANFORD CLEANUP**

# GAO finds 31 work stoppages

Report calls for improved tracking by DOE officials

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work was stopped 31 times at Hanford's tank farms or vitrification plant over nine years to address safety or construction quality issues, according to a Government Accountability Office report released Monday.

"Depending on what causes a work stoppage and how long it lasts, some stoppages could increase already substantial cleanup costs," the report said.

More work needs to be done to track the costs of the stoppages, the GAO concluded. It advised DOE to establish criteria for when its contractors should track the causes and costs of stoppages, but that the criteria should "fully recognize the importance of worker and nuclear safety."

"Stopping work can be an important first step to dealing with hazardous situations that arise in the course of a cleanup," said Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash., one of the representatives who requested the study, in a statement.

Work stoppages can protect the safety of workers dealing with toxic waste, prevent further environmental contamination and save taxpayers' money, he said.

However, DOE has failed to collect sufficient information to explain stoppages, he said.

"That information would have been instructive in further protecting worker safety and avoid similar stoppages in the future," he said.

DOE has agreed to follow the GAO's recommendations to have its contractors at weapons cleanup sites, including Hanford, better track information related to stoppages.

18 June 09

## **Hanford wildfire burns nearly 60 acres of grass**

A wildland fire burned about 50 or 60 acres of the southern portion of Hanford on Wednesday afternoon, according to the Department of Energy.

The fire did not threaten any structures, but it did cause Route 4 South to be closed between Horn Rapids Road and the Hanford 300 Area for about 30 minutes at 3:30 p.m. Stevens Drive becomes Route 4 north of Richland.



15 JUN 09

# Longtime CREHST director retires

Museum in Richland has had same leader since its inception

**DORI O'NEAL**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Some people see retirement as a celebration, but for Gwen Leth there's a bittersweet taste to it all.

She has spent the past 12 years as the director of the CREHST Museum in Richland, which houses an extensive history on the Manhattan Project and the birth of Richland.

Leth never saw her directorship as just a job. It was a passion that evolved from her love of history.

"Retirement definitely hasn't come easy for me," Leth said Friday. "I have been here since (the museum's) inception and I feel like I'm leaving a child behind."

Leth, 65, has been the only director for CREHST since it was formed a dozen years ago. She also is a founding member of the museum.



**Leth**

After the Hanford Science Center was shut down by the Department of Energy in 1995, there were many artifacts that nearly got tossed out in the trash, Leth said.

She credits the community for an outpouring of aid that preserved that history and supported the birth of what eventually became known as the CREHST Museum.

"There are certainly some things about this job that I won't miss, like begging for money to keep the museum afloat," she joked. "But I'm very tenacious when I get passionate about something, so in a

way perhaps I'll even miss doing that too."

It may be difficult, however, for Leth to slow down, as she's been extremely active in the community.

Leth has received many awards for her humanitarian efforts, including the Westinghouse Electric Corp.'s corporate award for community affairs in 1993, and she was recognized as Woman of the Year in 1994 by the Pasco, Kennewick Business Professional Women. She also serves on the REACH Board, and spent 12

19 JUN 09

# Senator seeks \$12M for PNNL relocation

**PRATIK JOSHI**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Sen. Patty Murray announced Thursday that she has included \$12 million for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in the 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

The money will go toward PNNL's relocation out of facilities that are being decommissioned and demolished as part of the Hanford 300 Area cleanup. Funding for replacement facilities will preserve 800 to 900 jobs in the Tri-Cities, said Murray, D-Wash.

The money will allow PNNL "to keep jobs in the community and keep capabilities in place for Department of Energy and Department of Homeland Security missions," Murray said in a statement. "Maintaining the research and development infrastructure will also allow PNNL to continue to support national security, homeland security, and scientific projects for our country."

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., secured the same level of funding for PNNL in the House version of the Homeland Security Appropriations bill. That is good news because the money appears to be in both the House and Senate versions of the bill, said Hastings' spokesman Charlie Keller

# Tri-City woman's new company wins \$4M contract

Awarding subcontract also helps Washington Closure meet minority hiring goals

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Jonetta Everano's gamble to start her own company has paid off with a subcontract worth up to \$4.2 million

with Washington Closure Hanford.

Now she's busy leasing rigs and hiring union drivers to start hauling Hanford nuclear reservation waste in July.

Everano, who grew up in White Swan on the Yakama Nation, has been taking well-calculated risks for years.

The most recent was to start Phoenix Enterprises NW, based in Richland, to see if she could win subcontracts for construction work. The timing seemed right as the federal government pre-

pared to spend \$1.96 billion in economic stimulus money at Hanford.

It's the first subcontract she's bid on, but she's working to get other Hanford work and will look at opportunities for commercial work when that industry improves.

The Washington Closure subcontract was reserved for small businesses, and Phoenix submitted the lowest bid among qualified bidders on the project, according to Washington

Closure. Her company qualifies not only as a small business, but as woman- and minority-owned.

Although that was not given weight in the bidding award, it will help Washington Closure meet its goals in those subcontracting categories. Last year Washington Closure awarded more than 90 percent of its subcontracts to small businesses for work to clean up the Hanford nuclear reservation along the Columbia River.

The Phoenix subcontract, which falls under Hanford's annual budget, covers waste transportation using heavy dump truck and dump trailer combinations — or truck and pups — to transport nonradioactive soils, debris, concrete and steel from cleanup sites near the Columbia River. Phoenix will take them to a landfill in central Hanford.

Initially, the truck and pump

See **CONTRACT** | Page D2

## Hanford drill planned near old K Reactors

Emergency sirens near the old K Reactors at the Hanford nuclear reservation will sound between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. today as part of a drill.

The public may hear the sirens if they are boating on the Columbia River or possibly in some nearby areas of the Hanford Reach National Monument. A public address announcement will be made when the sirens sound to make clear that a drill is being conducted and that there is no emergency.

## **Hanford worker who fell still in stable condition**

A Hanford worker who fell from a 50-foot-high catwalk

Wednesday remained hospitalized in stable condition at Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland.

The worker, whose identity has not been released, fell through an access door to a catwalk in the 336 Building just north of Richland. His fall was broken by a ladder railing, preventing him from hitting the floor with full force.

The Department of Energy described his injuries as serious but not life-threatening.

# Evaporation campaign cut Hanford waste 30 JUN 09

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers have evaporated enough excess water from radioactive waste in underground tanks to free up space nearly equivalent to a new tank.

Washington River Protection Solutions removed 940,000 gallons of condensate from two double-shell tanks with the nuclear reservation's 242-A Evaporator in work completed last week.

The Department of Energy contractor is emptying waste from leak-prone single-shell tanks into newer and sturdier double-shell tanks to be stored until the waste can be processed for disposal at the vitrification plant.

Space is at a premium in the double-shell tanks. Hanford has about 53 million gallons of radioactive waste stored in

underground tanks, and the double-shell tanks can hold just 28 million gallons of waste.

"It's our job to make storage space in the double-shell tanks," Rebecca Raven, the 242-A Facility Operations manager for WRPS, said in a statement. "Without the evaporator, we have no storage space and without storage space we can't retrieve waste from the old single-shell tanks."

The evaporator usually is operated twice a year, but this was the first evaporator run since 2007.

Campaigns were temporarily suspended to allow a series of upgrades to the 32-year-old evaporator that included modernizing the ventilation system, updating the monitoring and control system, rebuilding one of the two main pumps and decontaminating the condenser room.

In the evaporator, liquid tank waste is heated under vacuum so it will evaporate

at a temperature of about 125 degrees. Water vapor from the heated waste is captured, condensed, filtered and sent to the nearby Liquid Effluent Retention Facility for further treatment and then disposal. The concentrated waste is returned to the double-shell tanks.

Since the 242-A Evaporator began operating in 1977, it has reduced the total volume of waste by about 67 million gallons. That helps avoid the high cost of building new double-shell waste storage tanks, according to WRPS.

Liquid has to be added to the waste for some of the techniques used to empty single-shell tanks and liquid also is needed to thin some of the waste enough to allow it to be pumped from tank to tank.

◆ *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com; more Hanford news at hanfordnews.com.*

# Chemicals removed from underground pipeline near river

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford has emptied 200 gallons of the hazardous chemical hexavalent chromium from an underground pipeline near the Columbia River, proving it has learned from its mistakes.

In 2003 the Department of Energy was fined \$120,000 by the Environmental Protection Agency after a Washington Closure subcontractor spilled the chemical as a pipe was removed elsewhere at Hanford and then did not immediately report the spill.

But this time the EPA has praise for Washington Closure.

"This was a very successful campaign in getting the chrome out in a very safe manner," said Laura Buelow, EPA environmental scientist. "They did it quickly, but carefully."

Emptying the pipeline also removes a major risk for contamination of ground water and the Columbia River from the hexavalent chromium. The chemical can cause cancer in humans and is harmful to fish, including salmon, in much smaller concentrations.

The pipeline, which

stretched across nearly a third of a mile, was used starting in 1963 to connect the water treatment facilities at B Reactor and nearby C Reactor. Hexavalent chromium was added to water taken from the Columbia River to prevent corrosion when it was used to cool the reactors.

When work began to dig up the pipeline, Washington Closure didn't know whether it would be empty or could contain as much as 600 gallons of hexavalent chromium. It also didn't know what shape it would find the pipe in.

Washington Closure mapped out where it believed the pipeline ran based on historic drawings and then used ground-penetrating radar to determine exactly where it was, said Dean Strom, Washington Closure project manager.

As the dirt was moved away from the pipeline with an excavator, a spotter watched for any discolored soil that might indicate chromium had leaked from the pipe.

Once the pipeline was exposed, it was surveyed to identify its low spots and high spots. The pipeline was

# CREHST | New director started Friday

FROM PAGE B1

years on the Pasco School Board, two as board president.

She also serves as a board member for the Arts Council, United Way, Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, the steering Committee for the Tri-City Cancer Center and is a past board president for the Volunteer Center.

Leth said she plans to do some traveling with her husband Carl and to visit her two grandchildren on the west side of the state. She'll also keep her organizational skills sharp by helping her daughter plan her wedding next year.

"I just want to unplug for about six weeks," Leth said. "Then I'll dive right back into doing something fun, even volunteering at the museum."

But there is a bright side to leaving her baby behind, Leth said. "I know I'm leaving the museum in



Low

“  
I have felt like a weight  
has been lifted from  
shoulders.

Outgoing CREHST director Gwen Leth  
on new director Ellen Lov

”  
for this museum as much as I do  
museum board of directors' gift  
gift to me was in hiring Ellen.”

Ken Ruetter, the board's president,  
said replacing Leth was not a

“Gwen is unique in that she  
only has passion for preservation,  
tory, and you can't replace her  
because she has great leadership,”  
Ruetter said. “We are very excited  
have Ellen join our team because  
has the same leadership qualities  
Gwen, plus her master's work is  
great asset for the museum.”

Low grew up in the Northwest.  
She married an English actor,  
Marland-Jones, in 1979 and now



# Panel concerned about Hanford landfill limits

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford's main landfill for low-level radioactive waste has plenty of space left to expand, but already contains 60 percent to 70 percent of the allowable amount of some key radionuclides, according to the Hanford Advisory Board.

It's recommending that the Department of Energy take a new look at those limits, which are based on a performance assessment that's about 15 years old.

The limits were based on a very conservative assessment that didn't take into account protective measures at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, such as a liner at its bottom and a protective cap that will be placed over its top when it is filled and closed, according to DOE.

The landfill is the linchpin for much of Hanford cleanup, accepting most of the contaminated soil that's being dug up near the Columbia River and the debris from contaminated buildings that are being demolished. More than 8 million tons of waste have been disposed of at the landfill and it's currently undergoing an expansion to add its ninth disposal cell.

"It appears likely that ERDF's ultimate capacity may be limited by the inventories of certain key radionuclides ... rather than the volume of wastes disposed, with a consequence that acceptance of wastes containing these radionuclides may be limited," the board wrote in

advice at its June meeting.

The board supports the expansion of the landfill as long as it is done in a way that protects human health and the environment long term, the board said.

In the years since the landfill was planned, more has been learned about how water moves through the soil at Hanford and transports radioactive contaminants. That could change estimates of the risk of contaminants in the landfill eventually reaching ground water, the board said.

DOE should consider the new understanding of the way contaminants may be moved through the soil and how fast that happens in a revised performance assessment for the landfill, the board said.

Based on its evaluations, DOE may need to consider additional treatment of wastes disposed of at the landfill to minimize the chance that they contaminate ground water long term, the board said. In some cases, including for technetium, additional treatment technologies may need to be developed, the board said. More ground water monitoring wells and increased leak detection also may be required at the landfill.

The board recommended that DOE create a tracking system for radioactive contaminants that could end up in the landfill and keep a running summary of remaining capacity.

◆ Annette Cary: 582-1533; [acary@tricityherald.com](mailto:acary@tricityherald.com); more Hanford news at [hanfordnews.com](http://hanfordnews.com).

# DOE praised for steps taken to protect workers

DREW FOSTER

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A nonprofit watchdog group is praising the Department of Energy for steps it has taken to protect Hanford workers from exposure to chemical vapors.

Tom Carpenter, executive director of Seattle-based Hanford Challenge, said the protective measures were implemented after an October meeting where people said working at Hanford caused illnesses. Many also said their medical claims were not being handled in a timely manner.

Since that meeting, Carpenter said, numerous initiatives have been put in place to better protect Hanford workers.

He cited an approach called ALARA — As Low As Reasonably Achievable — as one of the most significant steps toward better safety at Hanford. In the past, he said, Hanford workers were allowed to be exposed to chemical vapors up to a certain level. Once that level was exceeded, the workers would be removed from the area, he said.

The ALARA approach eliminates the suitable threshold and instead focuses on reducing exposure as much as possible.

"You really can't say exposure at a certain level is OK or not," Carpenter said. "It's better to just assume that this

stuff is dangerous and hazardous, and you need to minimize people's exposure to it."

Hanford Challenge also praised DOE's hiring of a certified industrial hygienist who is taking steps to address safety and health concerns; DOE's support of the Hanford Concerns Council, which works to evaluate implementation of the industrial hygiene program; DOE's launching of a Health and Safety Community Forum that will allow workers to address issues surrounding chemical vapors; and DOE's work to improve medical and compensation systems for ill workers.

"I think they're moving the program appropriately into the 21st century," Carpenter said, adding that the "complacency mentality of the 1950s" is being replaced by a more proactive approach to mitigating health and safety issues.

"It's a really positive sign from our perspective because we know we have another 50 years of cleanup out there," he said.

Carpenter also praised DOE Office of River Protection Manager Shirley Olinger, who he said was a driving force behind the safety initiatives. "She took this seriously, she took this to heart," he said.

► Drew Foster: 585-7207;  
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26 JUN 09

# Hanford budget: Up, then down

9 July 09

Senate seeks increase;  
House would cut it

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Senate version of the Hanford budget for 2010 would increase environmental cleanup spending, but the House version would cut it.

Despite that mixed message, the budgets are good but not great news, said Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council.

The House version originally would have cut the Obama administration's proposed

budget by \$180 million. However, work by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., with Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., a member of the House Appropriations Committee, reduced the proposed cut to \$51.8 million.

In the Senate, Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., increased the administration's proposed budget by \$120 million.

Final versions of the two spending bills will be reconciled after they are passed by the full House and Senate.

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

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2 JULY 09

# Hanford worker injured in fall

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A Hanford worker was seriously injured when he fell through an access door to a catwalk 50 feet above the ground Wednesday morning inside a building at the Hanford 300 Area just north of Richland.

He hit the rail of a ladder halfway down, and then fell

the rest of the way to the ground, said Todd Nelson, spokesman for Washington Closure Hanford. The railing kept him from hitting the floor with full force, according to DOE.

The Washington Closure worker was taken to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland by ambulance with

4 JUL 09

# Museum offers (baby) mammoth view

**MICHELLE DUPLER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Families can get an up-close view of the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center's first exhibit before the center is even built.

A replica of a baby woolly mammoth skeleton discovered in Siberia in the late 1990s will be on display at the Columbia Center mall in Ken-

newick starting at 11 a.m. today, along with a box where people can enter a contest to name the mammoth.

The exhibit is at the south end of the mall near the Old Navy store through Dec. 31. The mammoth is about three feet long and 34 inches tall, and will be on display in a glass case.

The naming contest ends Oct. 15. The winner will be announced Oct. 31.

The original mammoth skeleton is at the North American Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point near Lehi, Utah.

Kimberly Camp, executive director for The Reach, said at a news conference Friday that she stumbled across the baby in December while searching for the Huntington mammoth skeleton, which is housed at the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum.

Camp was on a quest to acquire a replica of the mammoth — which is a type of hairless mammoth that roamed the Mid-Columbia during the Pleistocene epoch — but couldn't get to the museum because of snow.

A clerk at a dress shop suggested Camp visit the museum at Thanksgiving Point instead.

Camp said she toured the museum

See **MAMMOTH** | Page B2

Kimberly Camp, Hanford Reach executive director, introduces a replica baby mammoth skeleton that will be on display at the Columbia Center mall through Dec. 31.

Kai-Huel Yau | kyau@tricityherald.com



# Worker's fall came as contractor recognized for safety

Washington Closure had made significant safety improvements

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The fall of a Hanford worker 50 feet from a catwalk happened just as Washington Closure Hanford had received confirmation that it had made major improvements in its

efforts to keep workers safe.

It was notified it had been approved as a Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program Star site last month, DOE's highest safety recognition, but had not yet received the star flag to celebrate the accomplishment with employees.

The safety recognition marked a turnaround for the Hanford contractor since Chuck Spencer was named president of Washington Clo-

sure in January 2007. He came to Hanford following a series of problems with safety and conduct of operations in the contractor's first 18 months of work.

But as the serious accident last week showed, "you're only as safe as the job you're working on at the moment," Spencer said. "There are just so many hazards. You have to be focused every step of the way."

He feels blessed that the out-

come of the accident, as bad as it was, was not worse, he said.

On July 1, four workers were making preparations to remove a crane that runs across the top of the 336 Building, also called the High Bay Test Facility, which will be torn down. They were on a permanent catwalk with railings 50 feet above the floor of the building.

Three of the workers had climbed back down the ladder when one went back up using a

harness attached to fall protection equipment. At the top, the worker removed the fall protection equipment because it was not needed on the catwalk. However, the hatch on the floor of the catwalk was not closed behind him and he fell through as he worked.

About 25 feet down, he hit the railing that surrounded a landing for the ladder, bending the metal several inches, Spencer said. Then he fell to the floor below.

The worker's name has not been released but Washington Closure has described him as an experienced and safety-conscious worker.

The fall broke both legs, one of them in two places. He also had a cracked or broken rib, according to Washington Closure.

His co-workers are building a ramp at his house in preparation for his release from the

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

## BRIEFS

### 5 Fluor communications employees honored

Five members of the Fluor Hanford communications team are among the recipients of the APEX 2009 annual awards for publication excellence distributed.

The international competition is for communications professionals for work produced from Jan. 1, 2008, through March 2009. The awards are based on excellence in graphic design, editorial content and overall excellence.

The three members of the Fluor Hanford communications team awarded with the recognition of APEX Awards of Excellence were publisher Judy Connell, editor Deborah Dunn and graphic artist Brian Miller for their work on the Dec. 29, 2008, edition of the *Fluor Your Information-FYI* newsletter.

Michele Gerber received an award for her feature project, "Fluor begins demolition work at K East Basin," published in the June 30, 2008, edition of *FYI*. Gerber is one of 11 authors in the U.S. and Canada honored for scientific and environmental writing.

A Grand Award was given to Connie Eckard of ABC, Richland, for writing "Commander in a Hard Hat," a story about Hanford Fire Department's Lonnie Click published in the Sept. 15, 2008, edition of *FYI*.

This was the third year Fluor Hanford entered the APEX contest and the third year the communications

HANFORD CLEANUP

10 July 09

# Work to start on K reactors burial ground

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work should begin this month to dig up another Cold War burial ground at Hanford used to dispose of boron balls once employed to soak up radioactive neutrons.

The boron balls were part of a backup emergency system at Hanford reactors starting in the 1950s to slow down or stop nuclear reactions.

The burial ground, which holds assorted wastes from Hanford's K reactors, includes 16 unlined trenches and 11 silos. The silos contain the boron balls, radiation-contaminated reactor equipment and pieces, and ash from burning radiation-contaminated waste.

Washington Closure announced Thursday that it has awarded a \$9 million

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# Hastings wins support for Hanford budget

Ariz. Democrat joins push for cleanup funds; wants congressional visit to site

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The interim chairman of the House Appropriations Committee offered his support for environmental cleanup

funding for Hanford in a discussion Wednesday with Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., is in a position to influence the final amount included in Hanford's fiscal 2010 budget as House and Senate versions of the budget are reconciled in a conference committee.

"I recognize the importance of cleaning up Hanford," along with all the Department of Energy's nuclear

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weapons sites, said Pastor during a discussion on the floor of the House with Hastings. Pastor also mentioned the possibility of congressional leaders visiting Hanford to get a firsthand look at issues DOE faces.

The Hanford budget has had a difficult time in the U.S. House this year because of the perception that with \$1.96 billion in stimulus money allocated to Hanford, the nuclear reserva-

tion can stand some cuts to its annual budget.

The first draft of the House's fiscal 2010 budget for Hanford would have cut the Obama administration's proposal by \$180 million. Hastings worked to reduce that cut to \$51.8 million.

In the Senate, the administration's proposed budget has been increased by \$120 million to about \$2.1 billion, with the appropriations bill yet to go before

See **HANFORD** | Page B4

## **DOE planning workshop on Hanford budget**

The Department of Energy plans a daylong workshop Wednesday to discuss the 2011 budget for the Hanford nuclear reservation.

The workshop will start at 9 a.m. at the Hampton Inn in Richland. Public comment and questions will be heard about 3 p.m. Work is beginning on the 2011 budget as the 2010 budget is being considered in Congress.

**- Herald staff**

## DOE's Triay plans Hanford visit next week

17 Jul 09

Ines Triay, the new Department of Energy assistant secretary for environmental management, plans her first trip to Hanford on Thursday in her new role.

She is familiar with Hanford after working for DOE for 24 years, but in her new position is

responsible for environmental cleanup programs at nuclear sites, including Hanford.

She's expected to meet with people interested in Hanford cleanup, including officials with the tribes, organized labor, the Hanford Advisory Board, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Ecology.

A tentative schedule includes a visit to the HAMMER training center and to the site of a groundwater treatment system being built in central Hanford with federal stimulus money. Triay also plans to meet with DOE employees.

- Herald staff

# Hanford workers to learn more about radioactive sludge

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford workers have collected a first batch of samples of radioactive sludge from Hanford's K Basins to help design the system that will be used to get the sludge out of the basins and treat it.

New contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. wants to know as much as possible about the sludge as it prepares to treat it, hoping to avoid the sort of false starts and technical problems that have plagued earlier

work with the sludge for the Department of Energy.

CH2M Hill has submitted a plan for treatment of the sludge to DOE, which assembled a team of technical experts to review the proposal. The team's report is now being reviewed by DOE officials in Washington, D.C., who have not released information on the proposed plan.

"Sludge is still a pretty big challenge for DOE and its contractors," said Rod Lobos, environmental engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, the DOE regulator for the work.

DOE was legally required to begin treating the sludge by the end of 2008 and have all of it treated before December this year. It became apparent those Tri-Party Agreement deadlines could not be met after an independent expert review raised questions about the previous plan for treating the sludge.

Now about 38 cubic yards of sludge from both the K East Basin and the K West Basin have been vacuumed up and are stored in underwater containers at the sturdier K West Basin. Workers are excavating the K East

Basin after the last of the sludge was removed from it and its water drained.

For the sampling program, CH2M Hill workers have collected 54 bottles of sludge and basin water and have sent them to Pacific Northwest National Laboratory for analysis. Each bottle holds about a gallon.

"Sampling the sludge supports characterization and will provide a higher level of confidence when we treat the sludge," said David Del Vecchio, CH2M Hill vice president for work at the K Reactors. It also will help the contractor develop the systems needed to

remove the sludge from underwater containers and then store it away from the river until it is treated.

The K Basins are 400 yards from the Columbia River and as long as the K West Basin continues to store the sludge, the basin and potentially contaminated soil beneath it cannot be cleaned up and the K West reactor cannot be either sealed up for long-term storage or torn down.

The basins attached to the K East and K West reactors were used to cool

See **SLUDGE** | Page B2

# BRIEFS

## **\$472 million paid in Hanford, PNNL claims**

On the eighth anniversary of a program to compensate ill Hanford workers or their survivors, the federal government has paid out \$472 million for Hanford and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory claims.

Nationwide the program has paid out \$5 billion in compensation and medical claims for illnesses in World War II and Cold War workers in the nuclear weapons industry.

At Hanford \$389 million has been paid in compensation plus \$12 million for medical bills. At PNNL \$68 million has been paid in compensation and \$2 million for medical bills.

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act pays compensation of \$150,000 for employees with cancer or beryllium disease believed to be caused by radiation exposure on the job. A second part of the program pays compensation up to \$250,000 for a wider range of illnesses believed caused by exposure to radiation or hazardous chemicals.

For more information, call the Hanford Resource Center at 946-3333 or 888-654-0014.

# Hanford may see budget increase

Early 2011 budget proposal up modestly from 2010; includes \$690 million for vit plant

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy Hanford offices are proposing a modestly increased Hanford budget for environmental cleanup in fiscal 2011.

On Wednesday DOE held a public meeting for an early

look at the Hanford 2011 budget plan before the Hanford DOE offices submit their requests to DOE headquarters. The Obama administration then will prepare a proposed budget to submit to Congress next year.

At the Hanford Office of River Protection, the Hanford

23 JW 09  
budget request under consideration is \$1.098 billion, the same amount as proposed in the administration budget for fiscal 2010, which Congress currently is considering.

That number does not include federal stimulus money — \$1.96 billion for all of Hanford — that must be spent by the end of fiscal 2011.

At the Hanford Richland Operations Office the budget request being considered for

2011 is \$1.095 billion, which is up from the proposed administration budget of \$994 million for 2010 and the \$1.057 billion of the current budget, excluding stimulus funding.

The Office of River Protection budget plan includes steady funding of \$690 million for the vitrification plant under construction. That's the amount that DOE has said is

See **HANFORD** | Page B2

# Hanford reservation off research list

27 JUL 09  
Hanford taken off  
House Bill allowing  
sites as research parks

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford nuclear reservation has been removed from a bill that would have authorized designation of seven Department of Energy sites as National Environmental Research Parks.

The bill passed the House on Tuesday after Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., succeeded in getting Hanford deleted from the list of designated parks.

Including Hanford as one of the seven permanently pro-

tected parks could have unintended consequences as future uses of the site are considered, Hastings said in a statement to Congress.

"There is absolutely no reason to rush through legislation that could make cleanup at Hanford more difficult or take away the flexibility to make decisions on the future of the site and the surrounding communities," Hastings said.

The entire Hanford nuclear reservation was declared a National Environmental Research Park, or NERP, in the 1970s, but the designation was never authorized by Congress.

The bill would authorize \$5 million for each site for each of the next five years and provide guidance for the parks'

research, development, education and outreach activities, Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., said in a statement. He introduced the legislation in June.

"While I believe it is appropriate for portions of the Hanford site to conduct activities consistent with the NERP mission, I have very serious concerns about rushing through permanent decisions on Hanford lands via legislation that was introduced last month with zero input from either the Tri-Cities community or their elected representative," Hastings said.

Although environmental cleanup of Hanford will continue for decades, the Tri-Cities is discussing how different portions of the

586-square-mile site will be used.

"Clearly, the possible beneficial use of portions of land on this massive site to diversify the economy and ensure a robust post-cleanup future are options that must be open and available," Hastings said.

Among options being considered are developing areas of Hanford into an energy park to produce and demonstrate new ways of producing energy. The Obama administration's federal stimulus funding for Hanford and other nuclear weapon sites is intended to reduce their contaminated area with a goal of using newly available land for energy parks.

For breaking news throughout the day, go to [www.tricityherald.com](http://www.tricityherald.com)

# MID-COLUMBIA

SECTION B | [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) | Friday, July 17, 2009

CONTACT THE NEWSROOM: 582-1502; [news@tricityherald.com](mailto:news@tricityherald.com); fax 582-1510

## DOE raises more safety concerns at vit plant

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Two accidents at the Hanford vitrification plant construction project this month prompted the Department of Energy to send a second letter to its contractor outlining safety concerns.

In one incident a worker fell 4 feet off a ladder and broke his arm and

elbow. In the other, a worker needed 19 stitches after being cut with a saw.

In early May, DOE told Bechtel National that it was concerned about an increase in accidents requiring medical attention and other safety-related incidents at the plant.

Bechtel redoubled safety efforts then and succeeded in accumulating almost 900,000 employee work hours

at the site without a worker accident that required medical attention.

"However, the corrective actions implemented have not sustained the improvement noted in June, and do not appear to be effectively implemented," Thomas Williams, contracting officer at the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection, wrote to Bechtel this week.

The two accidents were preventable and avoidable, the letter said.

The fall occurred after a scaffolding ladder was partially dismantled while a worker still was on the scaffold. As the worker attempted to come down the ladder, it twisted and he fell, said Suzanne Heaston, spokeswoman for Bechtel National.

The cut to the worker's hand

occurred when a battery-powered portable band saw was inadvertently turned on.

"Both of the events had a high potential for more serious injury to the workers and provide an indication of poor work hazard recognition," Williams' letter said.



24 JUL 09

# DOE official makes first visit to Hanford since appointment

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy faces two major long-term challenges at Hanford — get radioactive waste out of underground tanks and finish the vitrification plant to treat the waste for disposal, Ines Triay said Thursday.

This was Triay's first visit to the Hanford nuclear reservation since being put in charge of the nation's environmental cleanup programs at DOE sites as the new DOE assistant secretary for environmental cleanup.

DOE must show it can build and commission the vitrification plant for \$12.2 billion and have it operating to treat radioactive tank waste by 2019, Triay said. To do that will take aggressive project management “until the day the switch is turned on,” she said in an interview.

The plant, formally called the Waste Treatment Plant, will turn up to 53 million gallons of radioactive waste now



**Triay**

## INSIDE

Work begins on largest ground water treatment system at Hanford. | **B1**

# Vit plant leader leaving Hanford for Oak Ridge

### Successor had worked for DOE in Idaho Falls

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER



Eschenberg



Girard

John Eschenberg, who has led the Department of Energy's efforts to design and build the massive Hanford vitrification plant, will be leaving Hanford to take a job at DOE's Oak Ridge, Tenn., site.

Guy Girard has been named acting assistant manager for the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection after spending several months at Hanford becoming familiar with the Waste Treatment Plant. However, DOE is required to advertise for candidates for the job before naming a permanent replacement.

Eschenberg's last day at Hanford as assistant manager is Sunday, although he will stay longer as needed to help

with the transition.

Girard had been working for the DOE Idaho Operations Office in Idaho Falls as the federal project director for the Sodium Bearing Waste Treatment Project, where he was responsible for cost, schedule and technical issues during its construction.

He also has been assigned to DOE in Washington, D.C., and has served as federal project director at the Salt Waste Process Facility at DOE's Savannah River, S.C., site. His career began with the Navy. He has a bachelor's of science in mechanical engineering.

He came to Hanford in February with his transfer to Hanford becoming

official this month.

Eschenberg, who has overseen the design and construction of the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant, has accepted a job as DOE assistant manager for environmental management at Oak Ridge.

"John has given his heart and soul to the Waste Treatment Plant Project for more than six years," said Shirley Olinger, manager of the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection, in a message to employees.

"His job wasn't always easy, but John has done a great job of balancing the needs and wants of the Waste Treatment Plant project with government requirements, and often helping us find alternatives to keep this important project on track," Olinger said.

Design and construction of the plant is close to being halfway completed and most of the technical concerns have been resolved.

Eschenberg led the project as it developed a credible long-term budget

and schedule and addressed technical issues, Olinger said. Under his leadership, longstanding earthquake safety issues were resolved.

He also developed and negotiated possibly the largest contractual agreement in DOE's history, Olinger said. Bechtel National and the Department of Energy spent about 18 months renegotiating the contract to build and commission the plant to turn radioactive waste into a stable glass form for disposal. The contract had to be renegotiated after the scope of work was changed significantly after earthquake design standards were revised.

"We will miss him at Hanford," said Pam Larsen, Hanford Communities executive director. "He is a very competent individual who has worked incredibly hard to keep the Waste Treatment Plant Project on track."

### Verizon adds cell sites in Hanford area

Verizon Wireless has added three new cell sites to provide better coverage in the area of the Hanford nuclear reservation. They were planned to provide improved service for smart phones, laptop computers and other wireless devices from Highway 240 to the Columbia River and north to Highway 24 at Hanford.

# Possible mercury storage at Hanford concerns state

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The state of Washington is concerned about the possible impacts on the environmental cleanup of the nuclear reservation if the Department of Energy picks Hanford for long-term storage of the nation's mercury.

DOE heard public comment Tuesday night in Richland as it begins to prepare an environmental study of Hanford and six other sites being considered to store mercury. The hearing drew about a dozen people, but only Ron Skinnarland, a Washington State Department of Ecology manager, commented for the record.

A few others attending the meeting said afterwards that they had concerns.

DOE is looking for one or more sites to store an estimated 8,300 to 11,000 tons of mercury from private sources over 40 years. It also may decide to store 1,300 tons of mercury left from its nuclear weapons program at the new site.

Storage sites are needed after the Mercury Export Ban

Act of 2008 prohibited the export of mercury beginning in 2013 and required DOE to have facilities ready then to manage and store excess mercury.

The state of Washington has supported the need to prevent mercury exposure and pollution in the environment, which is the goal of the new federal law.

But the state wants to make sure that as Hanford is considered for storage of mercury, the new use for the site would not interfere with its environmental cleanup, Skinnarland said. It also is concerned about cleanup money being diverted for the storage program, he said.

The state supports a "rigorous and thorough" study of possible sites to provide more information for the public and the state and to help make the best decision, he said. The state is working on more comprehensive written comments for DOE.

But Harriet Higgins of Richland has made up her mind.

It's unreasonable to require Hanford to store the nation's

See **MERCURY** | Page B2

# HANFORD TRIDEC says no to mercury storage plan

### Public hearing planned Tuesday

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Hanford nuclear reservation should not be used for long-term storage of the nation's mercury, says Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council.

The Department of Energy is considering Hanford as one of seven possible sites for storage of the nation's elemental mercury, it announced earlier this month. A public hearing is planned Tuesday in Richland to take comments on what should be included in an environmental study of the proposed sites.

See **MERCURY** | Page B2

# Perma-Fix allowed to treat more waste

### Processing paid for by federal stimulus funds

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Perma-Fix Northwest Richland has been given approval to treat PCB-contaminated Hanford waste, some of which has been awaiting treatment for two decades.

The treatment of several hundred Hanford drums of low-level radioactive waste contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls will be paid

for with federal economic stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, said Ty Blackford, vice president of waste and fuels management for CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.

Perma-Fix Northwest applied to the Washington Department of Ecology to have its permit modified to allow it to treat certain radioactive wastes with PCBs specifically

to give the Department of Energy and its contractor an efficient way to treat the waste stored at Hanford.

It includes waste collected from electrical systems in buildings and facilities across the Hanford site that had radioactive contamination before the 1980s. The drums hold at least 110 cubic yards of waste.

The permit is difficult to obtain and Perma-Fix is now the only company on the West Coast allowed to treat such waste with certain levels of

contamination, Blackford said. Getting the waste treated just off Hanford will eliminate the significant costs to ship it across the country and provide work to a local business, he said.

The Department of Energy has had another option to treat DOE-generated radioactive PCB waste, the Toxic Substances Control Act Incinerator in Tennessee. However, DOE plans to close the incinerator this year.

Shipments of the Hanford PCB waste to Perma-Fix

Northwest began last week. More PCB-contaminated waste may be generated during cleanup, but the waste being shipped to Perma-Fix in Richland now comprises all of Hanford's backlog of "legacy" or stored PCB-contaminated low-level radioactive waste.

The waste will be inspected and then processed, said Richard Grondin, Perma-Fix general manager.

After waste is examined to see what's in it, it will be

See **WASTE** | Page B2

# BRIEFS *BAUG 08*

## **Seats have opened up on B Reactor tour buses**

If you missed out on a seat on Hanford B Reactor tours earlier this year, you may still be in luck.

The Department of Energy plans to start taking walk-in registrations for 12 seats per bus for the rest of the tour season. The remaining tours are being held Saturdays through September.

Registration is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays at the B Reactor Tour Headquarters, 2000 Logston Blvd., Richland. Partic-

ipants must be at least 18 and have a driver's license, passport or other government-issued photo identification.

Tours depart from the B Reactor Tour Headquarters at 8 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. on the remaining Saturdays, but walk-ons need to show up 30 minutes early. The tours last about 3½ hours, including a bus ride and two hours spent inside historic B Reactor.

For more information, call 376-1647. However, registration may not be done by phone.

19 AUG 09

# Hanford leaders changing positions

**DREW FOSTER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington Closure Hanford president Chuck Spencer will become president of the tank farm contractor Washington River Protection Solutions on Oct. 1.

He will replace River Protection Solutions president and project manager Bill Johnson, who is retiring.

In a Tuesday e-mail to Washington River Protection Solutions employees, Johnson said retirement will allow him to spend more time with his family.

Spencer's move from Washington Closure to Washington River Protection Solutions is considered a transfer within the URS Corp. That company partly owns Washington River Protection Solutions and Washington Closure.



**Spencer**



**Brosee**

# Hanford pioneer, advocate dies at 88

Woman promoted historic village sites

HERALD STAFF

Annette Heriford, a pioneer of the Hanford site who for years was an organizer of the annual Hanford/White Bluffs reunion, died Wednesday in Kennewick at the age of 88.

Heriford was 21 years old in 1943 when the government condemned her father's 30-acre orchard between White Bluffs and Hanford, giving the family \$3,700 and 30 days to move out, according to Herald files.

They weren't told why, only that it was for the war effort. That effort turned out to be helping produce the atomic bombs that ended World War II.

The extreme action of evicting 1,200 people from their homes created the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The two towns were mostly razed by bulldozers, leaving little evidence behind other than the crumbling remains of the Hanford School and White Bluffs bank building.

Heriford was born on the farm that was settled in 1910 by her father, DeWitt Buckholdt, with his brother and mother. Her father took over the farm after his brother's death.

After Heriford's family was evicted, she worked for various Hanford contractors until retirement.

For many years beginning in 1968, Heriford helped organize annual reunions of the survivors of the two towns and their families. She also often gave presentations to various community groups on the early history of the Hanford site.

Heriford was a vocal advocate for preserving the history of early Hanford, and she and

other former residents of the towns successfully got the Department of Energy to drop plans to remove the remains of the old school and bank.

At a hearing in 1993, she testified, "While most people look at the old school and bank and see

“  
While most people look at the old school and bank and see fallen-down buildings, we see them as they once were and remember our friends.”

Annette Heriford,  
Hanford pioneer

”

fallen-down old buildings, we see them as they once were and remember our friends.”

In 1993, the 50th anniversary of the Hanford site creation, Heriford recalled for the Herald the family's farm and their white house with green shutters and screened porch. She said the orchard was primarily apples, which were shipped to market by river sternwheeler, but she said they also grew cherries, pears, plums, apricots, peaches and quince for family use.

And Heriford recalled what it felt like to drive away from the farm with a truck full of possessions and decades of memories. "I was so upset," she said. "I loved that valley, I loved my home."

Einan's Funeral Home in Richland is handling funeral arrangements.

# Hanford contractor pay to be cut up to \$2.3M

Washington Closure worker fell 50 feet in July accident

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy will reduce its payment to Washington

Closure Hanford by up to \$2.3 million after an employee of the contractor fell 50 feet July 1.

The worker is recovering at home after spending two weeks in the hospi-

tal and is expected to return to work.

"We are fortunate beyond all measure that this accident did not result in a fatality," said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office, in a statement.

Brockman notified Washington Clo-

sure of the pay cut Tuesday, but also indicated his confidence in the contractor's safety performance otherwise.

"This is a company whose safety programs, record and performance are very strong," Brockman said. "But

in that moment, a hole in those programs found us, and the consequences are life-changing for the individual involved."

DOE could reduce the pay cut

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

# Hanford waste study delayed over Yucca Mountain

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A long-awaited study expected to lead to final decisions on environmental cleanup of much of the Hanford nuclear reservation's waste has been delayed because of Yucca Mountain.

The draft Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement most recently was expected to be released in May. Now the Department of Energy is saying the draft report, expected to be thousands of pages long, will be available

by the end of the year.

The draft was originally planned to be ready in spring 2007.

"It's a very large, complex document that requires a very thorough and focused effort to get it done and done right," said Carrie Meyer, Department of Energy spokeswoman.

The wide-ranging environmental study was planned to address such key questions as how quickly to treat radioactive waste now stored in underground tanks, how much waste may be left at the bottom of the tanks and what to do with the tanks themselves.

However, because of the Obama administration's decision to sideline plans for opening a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, the Hanford draft study will be delayed.

Additional time is needed to align the draft study "with recent direction to re-evaluate the options for disposal of high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel," DOE said in a statement.

Hanford's high-level tank waste was planned to be sent to the nation's nuclear waste repository after being treated.

The study also will look at disposal

alternatives for Hanford chemical and radioactive waste and such wastes sent from other states to be buried permanently at Hanford.

DOE had completed a study on solid waste, but the state of Washington questioned whether ground water information was adequate. Then during the final stages of a lawsuit filed by the state against DOE to stop the importation of nuclear waste to Hanford, DOE discovered problems with the ground water information in the study.

It agreed to redo portions of the study as part of a settlement in Janu-

ary 2006 and to not ship most types of radioactive waste to Hanford until a new study was prepared. The solid waste study then was combined with the tank waste study that already was under way.

The study also will cover the final treatment and disposal of strontium and cesium capsules now stored in a pool at Hanford. And it will address the final shutdown of Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility.

◆ Annette Cary: 582-1533; [acary@tricityherald.com](mailto:acary@tricityherald.com); more Hanford news at [hanfordnews.com](http://hanfordnews.com).

## HANFORD REACH INTERPRETIVE CENTER

# Historic registry would mean more scrutiny

More environmental research would be required if site is placed on national list; tribes report significance of area

**JOE CHAPMAN**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Columbia Point's potential to be on the National Register of Historic Places means closer environmental scrutiny is needed for the Hanford

Reach Interpretive Center project.

The National Park Service announced the Richland site's eligibility for the national register in June after reviewing confidential reports by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the

Wanapum Tribe about the point's historical significance.

Located at the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima rivers, Columbia Point was a hub of Native American activity where people gathered for trade and social interaction, a letter from park service historian Paul Lusignan stated.

"The Native American community regards Columbia Point South as a highly sensitive area containing intact

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archaeological deposits, reported burials and the potential for yet undiscovered remains," the letter stated.

The potential for the site's inclusion on the register bumped up the degree of environmental study for the Reach center, which would be built south of Interstate 182.

"Many of the same, if not all of the same, types of issues are reviewed," said Pete Rogalsky, public works director for the city. "There just tends to be a little bit more public outreach and public coordination of those reviews."

The Richland City Council at its meeting Tuesday will consider amending a contract with HDR Engineering



# 'Energy challenge' is Chu's goal 11 AUG 09

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Against the backdrop of a high-tech 23-foot-long video display, Energy Secretary Steven Chu heard Monday what Pacific Northwest National Laboratory could do to help make the nation's power grid more reliable and efficient.

It's one way the lab is helping to address what Chu called

"the energy challenge" during his first visit to the Department of Energy's national lab in Richland.

"We at the Department of Energy want to lay the seeds for transformational technology," Chu told about 300 of the lab's senior technical staff and managers before touring PNNL.

The United States has the chance to be a leader in solv-



Energy Secretary Steven Chu addresses around 300 PNNL staff Monday, presenting his vision for U.S. energy research, development and policy.

ing energy challenges, or it can act like it's still 1950 while the gap between U.S. energy production and consumption widens, he said.

The United States has fallen behind in a range of important energy technologies, including solar photovoltaics, auto fuel efficiency,

batteries, electricity transmission and power electronics, he said.

"One by one we have ceded the leadership position in all these technologies," he said.

Researchers at PNNL have the ability not only to address specific problems but at the same time to make ground-

breaking fundamental science discoveries, he said.

Chu challenged them to work cooperatively across science fields to find solutions to the nation's energy problems. There will not be "stovepiping" as long as he's energy secretary, he said.

Much of his time on the tour was spent in the lab's Electricity Infrastructure Operations Center, lined with video displays where researchers are using powerful computing methods and mathematical analysis to improve operation of the power grid.

Now data from the power grid can be sampled every few seconds with about two minutes of computations required to estimate the condition of a large service territory.

See **GOAL** | Page A2

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# State, DOE reach deal on cleanup

Energy secretary announces tentative new deadlines while on tour of Hanford, vit plant

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington state and the Department of Energy have reached a tentative agreement on new court-enforceable deadlines for cleanup of some of Hanford's worst waste, Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced Tuesday.

"The timeline is aggressive and achievable," he said.

Chu made his first visit Tuesday to the Hanford nuclear reservation and toured the massive vitrification plant now under con-

struction, the historic B Reactor and the HAMMER training center, among other stops.

He was joined by the governors of Washington and Oregon and Washington's two senators to announce the tentative agreement on new deadlines, which follows more than two years of negotiations.

In perhaps the biggest surprise of Chu's announcement, the Department of Energy has agreed to extend a moratorium on importing most types of radioactive waste for disposal to Hanford. DOE would not be allowed to send waste

to Hanford until the vitrification plant is fully operational, which is scheduled for 2022.

Under the new deadlines, Hanford's oldest, leak-prone tanks would be required to be emptied of radioactive waste by 2040. The current deadline under the Tri-Party Agreement, which DOE is unable to meet, requires the 149 tanks to be emptied by 2018.

The waste would be required to be treated for disposal by 2047 under the proposed new deadlines, rather than the current deadline of 2028.

"Granted, that is longer than we had hoped," said Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire. "But it is reasonable and

it is achievable."

The deadline to begin treating waste at the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant would be extended from 2011 to 2019, with the plant fully operational by 2022.

The state began negotiating a new agreement with DOE in 2007 after it became clear DOE could not meet legally binding deadlines under the Tri-Party Agreement for treating waste. Among the state's concerns was a budget sufficient to empty just one tank a year — a rate that would stretch work over more than a century.

But talks fell apart under

25 AUG 09

# Contractor starts work at Hanford

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Mission Support Alliance took over support services for the Hanford nuclear reservation at midnight Sunday and two hours later was conducting an early Monday morning orientation for new security personnel.

The alliance — a limited liability company formed by Lockheed Martin, Jacobs Engineering Group and WSI, formerly Wackenhut Services Inc. — was awarded the \$3 billion Department of Energy contract in April.

The three-month transition period ended Sunday night as the Mission Support Alliance took over sitewide support services from Fluor Hanford as its contract expired.

"This is a first-of-a-kind contract within the DOE complex," said Karen Flynn, DOE director of site infrastructure and information technology, before a Monday reception to mark the start of the new contractor's work.

Work formerly done by Fluor Hanford was broken into two parts, with CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. taking over central Hanford cleanup earlier. Support services is being concentrated at the Mission Support Alliance, which will provide a wide variety of services, such as security, utilities and information technology, to support the two DOE Hanford offices and DOE contractors working to clean up environmental contamination at Hanford.

30 AUG 09

# Hanford's nasty waste might have to stay put

With President Obama's pledge to scuttle Yucca Mountain plan, waste may sit for years to come

**LES BLUMENTHAL**

WASHINGTON D.C. BUREAU

WASHINGTON — It is among the nastiest substances on Earth: More than 14,000 tons of highly radioactive waste left over from the building of the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal.

As the Obama administration and Senate leaders move to scuttle a proposed repository for the waste in Nevada, the Hanford nuclear reservation — along with facilities in Idaho and South Carolina — could become the de facto dump sites for years to come.

After spending \$10 billion to \$12 billion over the past 25 years studying a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, President Obama is fulfilling a campaign promise to kill it as a site for the repository. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada also stands to benefit, as polls show he could be in a tough fight for re-election next year, and Nevada residents adamantly oppose a the waste site.

Local leaders and lawmakers from the sites where the waste is now stored, however, are increasingly concerned that the Energy Department will leave it in place, even though that might violate legally binding cleanup agreements.

There's no backup plan for dealing with the waste. A promised commission to study the issue has yet to be appointed.

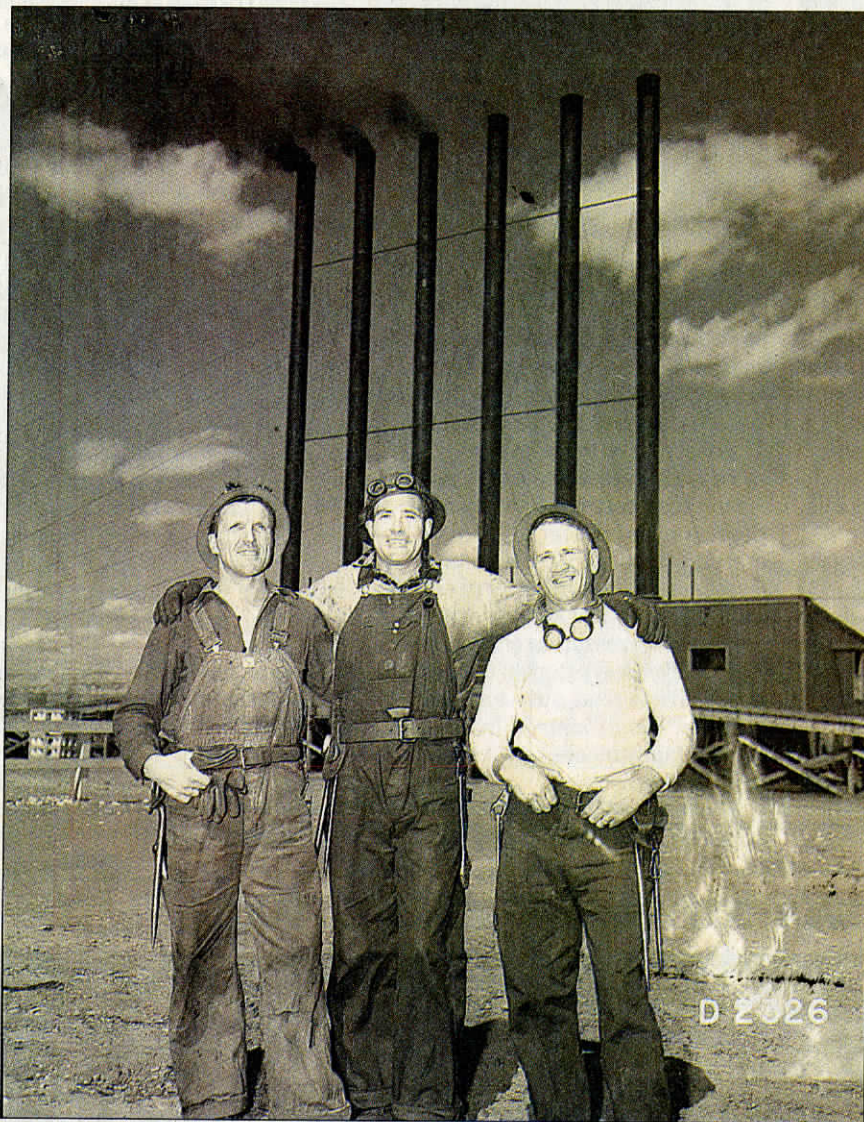
"We don't want to become a long-term repository without even having a discussion," said Gary Petersen of the Tri-City Industrial Development Council. "All of this waste is supposed to be going to Yucca. Without Yucca, everyone in the weapons complex has a problem."

Jared Fuhriman, the mayor of Idaho Falls, the largest city near the Idaho National Laboratory, agreed. "We are all concerned," he said. "Where are we going to store the waste we have?"

# DESERT LIVING

SECTION C | tricityherald.com | Sunday, Sept. 6, 2009

CONTACT THE NEWSROOM: 582-1502; news@tricityherald.com; fax 582-1510



## Hanford history

Photos show some of the 50,000 workers at Hanford's peak in 1944

**ANNETTE CARY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Sixty-five years ago the Hanford nuclear reservation was booming. About 50,000 workers were racing to build the reactors, processing plants and support buildings needed to produce plutonium for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, and then the Cold War nuclear weapons build up. This Labor Day weekend, the Herald pays homage to those early Hanford workers with a collection of government photos of work on the site that year culled from the Department of Energy's historic archives.

In 1944, Hanford was operating night and day, said historian Michele Gerber of Richland. "It was the peak," she said.

In September of that year, B Reactor, the world's first full-scale production reactor, began operating. By the end of the year D Reactor also went critical and T Plant was working to separate plutonium from irradiated fuel.

Workers were recruited from across the

or too cold. But in 1944 workers also had to contend with the "termination winds." Desert winds regularly whipped up dirt and sand from the site's many bare-dirt construction sites, causing discouraged workers to line up for what would be their final paycheck after each dust storm.

Workers didn't know what they were building until after the world's second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and days later WWII ended.

Today Hanford continues to dominate the Tri-City economy as its largest employer while workers clean up the massive environmental contamination left from WWII and Cold War work. It employs

Washington Closure Hanford is looking for workers or their families who lived at the Hanford construction camp during World War II. It's collecting oral histories to prepare a social history in connection with information gleaned from the archaeological excavation of the domestic trash pits used during the war at Hanford. Volunteers may call Amy Hood at 430-8522.



# DOE studying how contaminants enter river

Researchers have found evidence of ground water seeping into deep areas of Columbia

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

New technology is providing information on how contaminated ground water from the Hanford nuclear reservation may be entering the Columbia River.

A study for the Department of Energy of where ground water seeps into the river and what contaminants it contains won't be completed until the end of the year. But already there is evidence showing ground water enters the Columbia River in upwellings away from its shores, said Larry Hulstrom, Washington Closure Hanford project lead for the Columbia River investigation.

It's generally been assumed that ground water enters the river in seeps

and springs within the first 6 feet of its banks. But some of the ground water may become trapped below a hard layer in the ground and only seeps into deep areas of the river, rather than at its shores.

"We've never had the technology available to determine if it was upwelling further beyond 6 feet," Hulstrom said.

The bottom of the river is covered with cobble and boulders that make it difficult to probe and the swift current makes testing difficult.

Divers attempted to find out more about conditions away from the river bank about 15 years ago.

But when planning started on a comprehensive assessment of the Columbia River to make final decisions on cleanup of the nuclear reser-

vation along the river, officials were reluctant to send divers out again. The cold, swift water made it too hazardous, said John Price, Tri-Party Agreement section manager for the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Instead, Environmental Assessment Services of Richland has worked with Coastal Monitoring Associates of San Diego to adapt a probe that's been used to collect solids from sediment in the ocean rather than water.

"It's not a simple task to remain stationary in river currents flowing at

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268



Photo courtesy of Environmental Assessment Services

Scientists from Environmental Assessment Services and Coastal Monitoring Associates are using a heavy-duty probe to collect samples of water from beneath the Columbia River. Hanford officials want to better understand whether contaminated ground water from Hanford is welling up in the Columbia River away from its shores.

For breaking news throughout the day, go to [www.tricityherald.com](http://www.tricityherald.com)

# MID-COLUMBIA

SECTION B | [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) | Thursday, August 20, 2009

CONTACT THE NEWSROOM: 582-1502; [news@tricityherald.com](mailto:news@tricityherald.com); fax 582-1510

ECOLOGY V. ACQUAVELLA

# 1977 water rights case nears resolution

6,630 defendants still remain in Yakima River Basin irrigation dispute

**JOHN TRUMBO**

of people in the same hardship: water right but no water.

Thirty-two years and some \$30 million in legal costs later, the Washington Department of Ecology is close to answering that question for Acquavella and about 40,000 people who

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268

Ecology is placing ads in the Tri-City Herald, Yakima Herald-Republic and Daily Record of Ellensburg to list

print, will fill two pages in Friday's Herald.

The lawsuit, which was filed Oct. 13, 1977, required everyone who claimed a right to surface water to file and defend their claims before the Yakima County Superior Court.

tributaries in Kittitas, Yakima, Klickitat and Benton counties. It has benefited cities, farmers, the Yakama Nation, federal government, business and industry, said Ben Bonkowski, adjudications manager for Ecology, in a statement issued this week.

# DOE considers building another Hanford landfill

Nonhazardous waste would stay; now trucked to Roosevelt

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is taking a look at building a new landfill in central Hanford to hold uncontaminated waste that's now being trucked 110 miles for disposal off-site.

"We're looking for greener ways to go," said Jim Butner, project manager for DOE contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.

The landfill could save taxpayer money and have environmental benefits, said Kevin Leary, a DOE environmental engineer.

The proposal is in early stages of development and a cost study has yet to be done. But Leary estimates that building a new landfill at Hanford could save \$2 million over the life of the project just in the cost of fuel for transporting waste to the Roosevelt Regional Landfill.

That doesn't consider the reduction in the site's carbon footprint by eliminating the carbon dioxide production from 3.3 million miles of driv-

ing back and forth to Roosevelt.

"I don't think shipping it to Roosevelt is in the government's best interest," Leary said at a committee meeting of the Hanford Advisory Board.

Central Hanford has about 900 buildings that will need to be torn down as part of environmental cleanup of the site.

That includes office buildings, guard shacks and warehouses that should not have any radioactive or hazardous chemical contamination from

the site's past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. Cleanup of central Hanford also will produce other debris such as tele-

phone poles and lines that likely would be shipped to Roosevelt under current Hanford practice.

Only nonradioactive, non-hazardous wastes would be accepted at the proposed landfill, Leary emphasized.

DOE is proposing building the landfill in an area that already has been partially dug up for fill dirt. The excavated area now is used for burning uncontaminated tumbleweeds. If the landfill were available, the tumbleweeds could be fed through a chipper

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
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## COLUMBIA POINT SOUTH

# Richland, tribes disagree over interpretive center

### Tribes oppose location but support project concept

**JOE CHAPMAN**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

PENDLETON — Richland city leaders and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Nation leaders gathered Wednesday in Pendleton, but found a gap between them on plans for Columbia Point South.

The Richland Public Facilities District's plans to build a Hanford Reach

Interpretive Center on the piece of land at the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima rivers was one of the main reasons for the joint meeting between the city council and the tribal board of trustees.

"The tribes' position hasn't changed," said Armand Minthorn, a tribal board member. "We still oppose the project at Columbia Point South. However, we still support the idea and

concept (of an interpretive center), mainly because it's a shared history. We can go back even as far as the Ice Ages with that history."

The \$40 million interpretive center would be a visitor and heritage facility where people could learn about the natural and cultural history of the Hanford Reach National Monument and greater Columbia Basin.

The tribes would like the center to be built somewhere else to preserve the historically significant grounds at

Columbia Point. The site was a hub of Native American activity, where people gathered for trade and social interaction before the westward expansion of U.S. territory.

Input from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Wanapum Tribe prompted the National Park Service to declare the site eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property in June.

That eligibility and the Federal

Highway Administration's monetary grant to the project raised the standard of environmental assessment the project has to meet to go forward.

The planners have to consider other possible sites for the museum. The project will only be able to proceed at Columbia Point South with highway administration funding if the site is determined to be the only viable location.

See **CENTER** | Page B2

# Hanford employees invited to DOE meetings

HERALD STAFF

All Hanford employees have been invited to meetings with the Department of Energy's two top managers of the nuclear reservation.

The meetings were scheduled after significant numbers of employees and former employees attended annual Hanford State of the Site public meetings to raise work place concerns. Issues have include hazardous vapors from waste tanks, exposure to beryllium, pension changes, layoff rumors and compensation for illnesses and injuries.

"Now we'd like to go beyond this annual public forum and create a periodic opportunity to talk directly with all interested

employees about whatever's on your mind," said Dave Brockman, manager of the Hanford Richland Operations Office, and Shirley Olinger, manager of the Hanford Office of River Protection, in a message to employees Thursday.

DOE's managers felt that workers should have direct access to them and the chance to raise issues without waiting for a public meeting, said Colleen French, DOE spokeswoman.

"There will be no presentation or speeches, just the opportunity to have a discussion, hear your ideas and share concerns or insights related to all aspects of our work at the site," the message said. "We're particularly interested in hearing your perspective on how things are going

relative to worker health and safety, and your ideas for improvements."

The annual public State of the Site meeting has not been scheduled yet this fall, but could be postponed a few months because of upcoming hearings on Hanford issues. Employees still will be welcome to raise issues at the State of the Site meeting, in addition to the new employee meetings, French said.

The employee meetings announced Thursday will be restricted to employees, with no media, employee families or retired employees invited. They will be held at a Richland hotel the evening of Sept. 17 and the morning of Sept. 18 as a convenience to shift workers. Attendance is voluntary.

# BRIEFS

## Hanford Reach Center fundraiser set today

An auction and wine event is planned today on Columbia Point in Richland to raise money for The Reach.

The River Blues fundraiser is set for 2 to 5 p.m. on the plaza of The Moorings, 386 Columbia Point Drive.

The event includes food, wine and music by the Coyote Kings. People are asked to give a donation of \$125, which will support The Hanford Reach Interpretive Center.

The \$40 million center is to be built on a piece of land at

the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima rivers. It would be a visitor and heritage facility where people could learn about the natural and cultural history of the Hanford Reach National Monument and greater Columbia Basin.

23 SEP 09

## Thai delegation to tour HAMMER center Friday

A delegation from Thailand will join members of the Washington National Guard for a tour of the HAMMER training center at Hanford on Friday.

The delegation is part of the Washington National Guard's State Partnership Program with Thailand. The partnership shares information on matters such as military support to civilian authorities, emergency management, disaster planning, port security, hazardous materials response, weapons of mass destruction response and airport security.

# Hanford K East Basin finally gone for good

## Excavation finished Wednesday despite significant challenges

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The infamous K East Basin is history after Hanford workers finished excavating it Wednesday night.

The leak-prone basin was considered one of Hanford's top environmental risks when it was filled with 1,100 tons of fuel that had been irradiated to produce plutonium. The basin is 400 yards from the Columbia River.

It also has been a challenge for the Department of Energy and its contractors as through the years of cleanup, it has yielded surprise after surprise.

The latest surprise was more contamination than expected as workers excavated near its bottom, slowing work while more shielding was placed to protect workers. But DOE and the new contractor on the project, CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., still met the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement deadline to have the basin gone by the end of this month with weeks to spare.

"It's almost historic the dang thing's gone," said Dave Brockman, manager of the Department of Energy Hanford Richland Operations Office.

The environmental risk from the basin was significantly reduced when workers finished removing the highly radioactive fuel, left unprocessed at the end of the Cold War, in 2004 and the sludge was removed in 2007. The sludge, which includes corroded fuel, is stored in underwater containers at the sturdier K West Basin until it can be treated.

After the water that provided radiation shielding in the 20-foot pool was drained, the biggest remaining environmental risk was the contaminants that had earlier leaked into the soil.

Removing the contaminated basin was "great work," said

Rod Lobos, an engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, a regulator on the project. "But now we need to take the next step — to tackle the contamination beneath."

DOE thinks the soil may be contaminated with plutonium, uranium, cesium, strontium and cobalt, and perhaps PCBs and chromium, Brockman said.

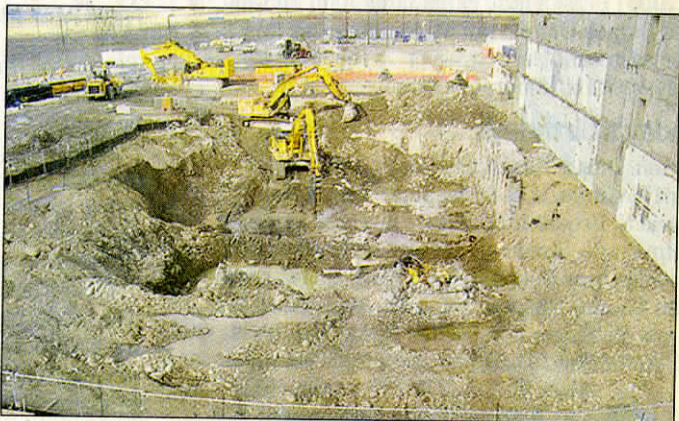
Federal Engineers & Constructors of Richland has been awarded a \$9 million subcontract for an initial phase of soil cleanup. The work should begin immediately, meeting another Tri-Party Agreement deadline.

The soil could be excavated by the end of the year,

See **BASIN** | Page A2

**WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK?**

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Courtesy of DOE

Workers excavate Hanford's K East Basin in June. The basin is next to the K East Reactor, right, and once stored tons of metal reactor fuel underwater. Hanford workers finished excavating the last of the nuclear reservation's infamous site Wednesday night.

15 SEP 09

## Federal money to satisfy most Hanford deadlines

The Hanford budget request for fiscal 2011 combined with federal economic stimulus money is enough to allow all legally binding deadlines in the Tri-Party Agreement except one to be met in fiscal 2011, the Hanford Advisory Board said at its September meeting.

However, board members are concerned about fiscal 2012 when federal economic stimulus money has been spent. Then a significant increase in the annual budget will be needed to meet clean-up deadlines, the board said in advice sent to DOE officials.

The deadline that would be missed in the fiscal 2011 request is for retrieval of waste from leak-prone underground tanks, where technical problems have caused retrievals to fall behind deadlines set years ago.

Funding for "minimum safe" or "base" activities continues to require a large portion of the Hanford budget, the board said.

At the Department of Energy Hanford Richland Operations Office, base operations are projected to cost \$607 million out of annual funding requested at

HANFORD

# Waste mixing being tested for vit plant

'Black cells' will have to operate for 40 years without humans going inside because of radioactive materials

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Orange liquid swirled and pulsed in a clear acrylic tank just outside the Hanford nuclear reservation.

The iron oxide that gave the tank's contents its bright color was one of several materials in the tank being

used to simulate the heavy particles in radioactive waste that tanks at the Hanford vitrification plant will need to keep mixed.

Once the vitrification plant begins operating to turn some of Hanford's worst radioactive waste into a solid glass form, some tanks will be in "black cells" that will be so radioac-

tive after operations begin that humans cannot enter again.

That means the mixing system that's been developed with no moving parts and is being tested now must work nearly perfectly for 40 years without the help of human hands.

The heavy solids need to remain suspended in the liquid waste, not settle at the bottom where they cannot be suctioned out of a tank and transferred to other tanks to continue treatment.

At the M3 Mixing Test Platform installed at Mid-Columbia Engineering, researchers can gather around and peer through the tank's walls to watch as air-driven pulse jet mixers suck up mock waste through nozzles and shoot it back into the tank to keep particles suspended.

"We can look inside and see how well the particles are mixed," said Russell Daniel, the Waste Treatment Plant M3 Project Manager.

Making sure the pulse jet mixers planned for the \$12.2 billion vitrifica-

tion plant being built at Hanford can keep high-level radioactive waste adequately mixed was one of 28 issues raised by an independent panel, the External Flowsheet Review Team, that looked in 2006 at technical questions about future operations at the vitrification plant.

All but two of the issues have been resolved, said Carrie Meyer, spokeswoman for the Department of Energy. DOE still is addressing concerns

See **VIT PLANT** | Page B2

HANFORD

# WWII history comes down with buildings

Federal stimulus funds helped tear down buildings that stored fuel underwater until it was deemed unsafe

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Concrete blocks from the 212-P building crashed to the ground Wednesday as a shear mounted on an excavator bit into its side, taking down part of Hanford's earliest history.

The 212-N, 212-P and 212-R build-

ings were used as early as World War II to briefly store fuel underwater that had been irradiated in Hanford reactors along the Columbia River.

But the buildings were closed in 1951 after the Atomic Energy Commission realized the irradiated fuel needed to be stored longer before pro-

cessing to protect the health of people who lived downwind from the nuclear reservation.

Tearing down the buildings didn't rise to the top of the Department of Energy's lengthy to-do list until this year, when federal economic stimulus money became available to shrink the contaminated footprint of Hanford.

"We're working toward reducing our footprint of cleanup activities to less than 10 square miles in the center of the 586-square-mile site," said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE

Hanford Richland Operations Office.

About \$12.5 million will be spent to clean up about four square miles between the Columbia River and central Hanford, the area where irradiated fuel was processed to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The area being cleaned up with American Reinvestment and Recovery Act money includes not only the building, but also soil where contaminated water was spilled or dumped and two locomotives and 13 railcars parked on

rails. About 40 workers have been hired to work with contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.'s staff.

The work will reduce the site's footprint and save maintenance costs. Some of the buildings' concrete blocks have cracked and wooden doors and the roofs of the buildings have been in poor repair for years. Maintenance and surveillance costs for the three buildings through 2035 were estimated at \$1.68 million.

See **HISTORY** | Page B2

FISCAL 2010

1 OCT 09

# Hanford budget gets big boost

\$2.1 billion budget a 'big win,' says Murray

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The final version of the Hanford budget for the fiscal year that starts today includes \$87 million more than the budget proposed by the Obama administration.

That gives Hanford a budget of almost \$2.1 billion for the year.

It's a "big win," Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a senior member of the Energy and Water Appropriations Com-

## HANFORD

Plutonium, unirradiated fuel shipments completed.

|B1

mittee, said in a statement.

"This bill moves us toward the consistent budgets we need each year

to deliver on cleanup goals."

The \$87 million added by Congress was in addition to a \$24 million increase included in the proposed administration budget over the fiscal 2009 budget.

See **BUDGET** | Page A2

## HANFORD NEWS ONLINE

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29 SEP 09

# Facilities board reconsiders site

**MICHELLE DUPLER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Richland Public Facilities Board on Monday decided to explore sites other than Columbia Point South for the proposed \$40 million Hanford Reach Interpretive Center.

The board then closed its meeting to the public despite a Herald objection. Kimberly Camp,

Reach CEO and executive director, said the board planned to talk about real estate matters.

A wrench was thrown recently into plans to build the center at the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima rivers in Richland after the region's tribes objected to the location and were backed up by the Federal Highway Administra-

See **SITE** | Page A2

# Hanford finishes shipping plutonium, unirradiated fuel

S. Carolina to receive  
waste, reducing site's  
security requirements

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford has completed shipping its leftover weapons-grade plutonium and unirradiated nuclear fuel to South Carolina, a major step toward reducing security requirements at the nuclear reservation.

About 2,300 containers of material were shipped, most of them coffee-can-sized canisters of plutonium that had been stored at the Plutonium Finishing Plant. Shipments of the canisters ended in April.

Since then, the Department of Energy has been shipping about a dozen packages of unirradiated fuel, with those shipments completed in September. DOE had set a goal to have the shipping done before the start of fiscal 2010, which began today.

"It is a major accomplishment with a lot of effort by many people here at Hanford, a lot of effort by transportation crews and by the people at the Savannah River Site," said Geoff Tyree, a DOE Hanford spokesman.

DOE decided in 2007 that the nation would consolidate its surplus plutonium from sources other than nuclear weapon triggers at Savannah River to make it more secure and reduce security requirements at other sites.

Sending off the Hanford material will help clear the way for accelerated cleanup and demolition of the Plutonium Finishing Plant and save more than \$100 million in security costs, according to earlier estimates.

The plant needed security upgrades to meet stricter requirements after 9/11, but those requirements, which could have cost more than \$100 million, were waived on the condition that the materials be moved off site.

Security restrictions remain in place at the plant for now because it still stores some irradiated nuclear fuel. DOE plans to transfer that to the Canister Storage Building complex in central Hanford.

For more than four decades, plutonium was produced at Hanford, made into metal buttons the size of hockey pucks at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant and shipped off site for conversion to weapons use. But at the end of the Cold War,

## 7 2007 07 **CH2M Hill receives high rating from agencies**

CH2M Hill has received an outstanding rating for its supplier diversity and small-business program after an audit by the Defense Contract Management Agency and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

It's the highest rating given and CH2M Hill has held it since 1998.

At Hanford, CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. is using small businesses to help with environmental cleanup. It has set a goal to subcontract 49.3 percent of its work and is halfway toward meeting it. Since the start of its contract a year ago, it has awarded \$220 million of work to small businesses.

13 OCT 09

## **Power outage stops Hanford vit plant work**

A power outage at the vitrification plant at the Hanford nuclear reservation that kept about 1,400 workers from going to work Monday is giving some of them another day off today.

Suzanne Heaston, a spokeswoman for project contractor Bechtel, said the outage that started over the weekend should be restored in a few days, and the cause still is being investigated.

The problem is believed to have occurred at a main junction on the Hanford site and required that all engineers

## Full power expected at vit plant today

Bechtel National expects the Hanford vitrification plant construction site to have full power restored this morning.

Construction was stopped at the Waste Treatment Plant campus Monday and Tuesday because of a power outage, but workers were expected to return today.

Although progress was being made Tuesday to restore power, workers still were advised to call the employee hotline at 373-3333 before leaving for work this morning.

# Falls still problem for Hanford workers

Most recent topple from scaffolding caught on tape

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Worker falls continue to be a problem at Hanford, with a recent fall captured on video.

The subcontractor employee near the K East Basin was on top of a 10-foot-tall scaffolding last week when he leaned over a railing too far and fell to the ground below.

His injuries were not serious.

But fall prevention has been in the spotlight at the Hanford nuclear reservation since a worker on another project was seriously injured in July when he fell through a catwalk 50 feet above the floor of the 336 Building in Hanford's 300 Area. The Washington Closure Hanford worker continues to recover at home from injuries that included broken legs.

Hanford contractors since then have reviewed their fall protection

programs, and most contractor employees have been required to participate in meetings, training or other reviews to learn more about preventing falls.

After the fall last week near the K East Basin, subcontractor Federal Engineers & Constructors conducted a safety stand-down for retraining, said FE&C spokeswoman Kathy Love. It's also done a complete review of the incident and is working closely with CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co.,

the DOE contractor for the work.

Work was under way Sept. 29 to haul contaminated soil dug up from beneath the K East Basin to a landfill for low-level radioactive waste.

The video was being shot to meet extensive requirements to document and record how \$1.96 billion in

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money is being spent on Hanford cleanup work.

Two workers were on scaffolding

on each side of a container tying down a cover using long-handled tools, when one worker leaned over the railing of the scaffold to secure the cover on the rear of the container.

The video shows him toppling over the railing and grabbing it to break his fall and avoid landing on his head.

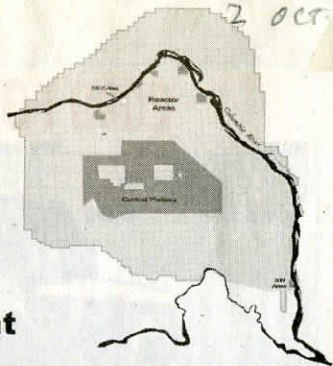
The worker was transferred to AdvanceMed Hanford on the site to be treated for shoulder pain and given pain medicine and then was released to return to work with some medical



See **FALLS** | Page B2

# Proposed Hanford Settlement Agreement

**for the retrieval of chemical and radioactive waste from the large underground single-shell storage tanks and the construction and startup of the Waste Treatment Plant**



## Public Comment Period October 1 – December 11, 2009

The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE), Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—the Tri-Party Agencies—want your input on a proposed Settlement Agreement that sets or revises dates for cleanup of the Hanford Site.

A proposed Consent Decree (court order) would set dates to:

- 2014 – Retrieve waste from C Farm's 10 remaining single-shell tanks
- 2019 - Complete construction and achieve startup of the Waste Treatment Plant
- 2022 – Retrieve waste from another 9 single-shell tanks

Proposed changes to Hanford's existing Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) include:

- 2040 - Retrieve waste from all single-shell tanks
- 2047 - Treat all tank waste
- 2052 - Complete closure of all double-shell tank farms

Under the TPA portion of the settlement, USDOE will prepare and submit to Ecology and EPA a report setting out the lifecycle scope, schedule and cost necessary to complete the Hanford cleanup mission.

**Submit comments in writing or electronically by December 11, 2009 to:**

*Lori Gamache*  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Office of River Protection  
P.O. Box 450, H6-60  
Richland, WA 99352  
Email: TPACH@rl.gov

*Annette Carlson*  
Washington Department of Ecology  
3100 Port of Benton Blvd.  
Richland, WA 99354  
Email: Annette.Carlson@ecy.wa.gov

**A public workshop is scheduled on October 6, 2009, at the Hampton Inn, Richland, Washington from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**The Agencies are in the process of planning for public meetings.**

The Proposed TPA Change Packages are available electronically at:  
<http://www5.hanford.gov/hanford/eventcalendar/>  
under Events – Public Comment Periods.

For Additional Information or a copy of the Proposed TPA Change Packages, call the  
**Hanford Cleanup Line: 1-800-321-2008**



# DOE looking for site to store up to 12,000 tons of mercury

14 SEP 09

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Making Hanford the nation's storage site for tons of excess mercury could interfere with environmental cleanup of the site, according to government agencies.

The states of Washington and Oregon, the Hanford Communities and the Confederated Tribes of the

Umatilla Indian Reservation each have submitted written comments to the Department of Energy outlining their concerns.

"It is unacceptable for the nation's leadership to consider sending 12,000 tons of elemental mercury to Hanford when it will be another 50 years before existing waste is cleaned up," the tribes said in a letter to DOE.

DOE is looking across the nation for

mercury storage sites after the Mercury Export Ban Act of 2008 prohibited the export of mercury beginning in 2013 and required the agency to have facilities ready to manage and store mercury generated in the United States.

DOE expects to need to store up to 11,000 tons of mercury from private sources over 40 years and possibly an additional 1,300 tons of mercury left from its nuclear weapons program.

The mercury would be stored in standard industry containers

approved for shipping by the U.S. Department of Transportation, including 76-pound flasks and 1 metric ton containers. In one proposed scenario, a 10-acre site would be required with a 150,000-square foot building with reinforced floors. Floors would be coated to withstand a possible leak and the air would be monitored for vapor releases.

The Hanford Communities said it was concerned about a proposal to ship more waste to Hanford in light of the Obama administration's decision

not to complete the Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository for nuclear waste. The Hanford Communities include the three Tri-Cities, Benton and Franklin counties and the Port of Benton.

Hanford's high-level radioactive waste, now held in underground tanks, was expected to be sent to Yucca Mountain once it is treated in the vitrification plant. Irradiated nuclear fuel that was not processed to

See **MERCURY** | Page B2



15 SEP 09  
DOE is paying costs for tower that will benefit 18 Mid-Columbia agencies

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work is under way to build a new tower atop Rattlesnake Mountain as part of a combined system to provide



construction cost of the Combined Community Communication Facility. It also will pay up to \$1.7 million to move tenants into it.

"We've been looking at this from

emergency communications for 18 Mid-Columbia agencies.

The Department of Energy has agreed to pay the \$3 million

every angle and have now found a solution that will meet everyone's needs and enable us to move forward with the important work of cleaning up Rattlesnake Mountain to shrink the cleanup footprint at Hanford," said Colleen French, DOE spokeswoman.

The top of Rattlesnake Mountain is in the original security perimeter of Hanford, which is DOE land now managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Hanford Reach

National Monument. DOE wants to remove structures from the mountain to meet its goal of shrinking the portion of the nuclear reservation needing cleanup to 75 square miles in its center by 2015.

It announced plans to reduce the footprint of manmade structures atop the mountain in March 2008, telling agencies leasing land there that leases would not be renewed and they would need to make plans to vacate.

Removing manmade structures

would meet a tribal request to protect an area covered by treaties that the tribes have used historically and consider sacred, DOE said then. DOE also has been concerned about the deteriorating primitive road up the mountain.

See **RATTLESNAKE** | Page B2

**HANFORD NEWS ONLINE**

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## EXTENDING CLEANUP DEADLINES

# Officials explain proposed Hanford settlement

Officials say proposed deadlines more realistic, easier to enforce

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Extending deadlines for cleaning up Hanford's worst waste by years or decades is not ideal, but officials who reached a proposed settlement agreement say meeting the proposed new deadlines is more realistic.

A round of public hearings in Oregon and Washington starts this month on the proposed agreement, but

already officials are answering questions like why these deadlines would be more enforceable than legal deadlines that already have been missed. And why leaving waste longer in leak-prone underground tanks may be a better option than building new storage tanks.

"The bottom line is that while we don't like the dates, we don't believe it is technically possible to dramatically move them forward, at least right now," said Ken Niles, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Energy, in a written response to concerns posted in an online discussion.

The settlement agreement reached between Washington and DOE was

## PUBLIC HEARINGS SET

► **What:** Hearing on Hanford proposed settlement agreement.

► **When:** Oct. 29, Open house 6 p.m. Public meeting 7 p.m.

► **Where:** Hampton Inn, 486 Bradley Blvd., Richland.

► **Other:** More hearings are Oct. 26 in Hood River; Oct. 27 in Portland; Nov. 9 in Spokane; and Nov. 12 in Seattle. See [tinyurl.com/ygmwo4d](http://tinyurl.com/ygmwo4d) for locations.

announced in August during a visit by Energy Secretary Steven Chu to the Hanford nuclear reservation.

It proposes a federal court order requiring that the 16 tanks in the C Tank Farm — which are among 149

single-shell tanks holding radioactive waste underground at Hanford — be emptied by 2014. DOE missed a legal deadline to have them emptied three years ago.

The court would order DOE to have a "hot start" to the vitrification plant, which is being built to treat the waste, by 2019. The current deadline is 2011, which neither DOE nor its regulators believe is achievable.

Longer-term deadlines would be adjusted in the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement, rather than under the consent decree. DOE would be required to have all single-shell tanks emptied by 2040, an extension of 22 years. All waste would need to be

treated by 2047 rather than the current deadline of 2028.

The most distant deadline, which likely won't occur while many of those who negotiated the agreement are still living, requires closing the 28 double-shell tanks by 2052. Waste in the leak-prone single-shell tanks is being emptied into the newer double-shell tanks until it can be treated.

The proposed settlement agreement would resolve a lawsuit filed by Washington against DOE in 2008 after it became apparent that DOE could not meet legal deadlines for emptying tanks and treating the

See **SETTLEMENT** | Page B2

# Contractor improves tank farm safety

Fewer workers injured than in previous year, incentives offered for meeting goals

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington River Protection Solutions has improved on the already solid safety performance of the previous contractor at the Hanford tank farms, it said.

WRPS took over operation of Hanford's underground tank farms, which store 53 million gallons of high level radioactive waste, a year ago as the contract of CH2M Hill Hanford Group expired.

WRPS reduced worker injuries serious enough to require a doctor's care by 48 percent from the previous year, it

said. It also had 68 percent fewer worker injuries that resulted in days off work, restricted work activities or a transfer to other job duties.

The new contractor has started an employee incentive program that pays workers a minimum of \$1,000 bonuses a year if the contractor meets certain goals, said spokesman John Britton. But no money is paid out if safety goals are not met first, he said.

The improvement in the safety record came as more than 200 new workers were hired and trained to Hanford safety standards, Britton said.

WRPS also has had its safety management system recently certified by the Department of Energy as meeting the requirements in its contract.

The Integrated Safety Management System "is much more than just safety," said Fred Beranek, WRPS manager of safety, health, quality and environment,

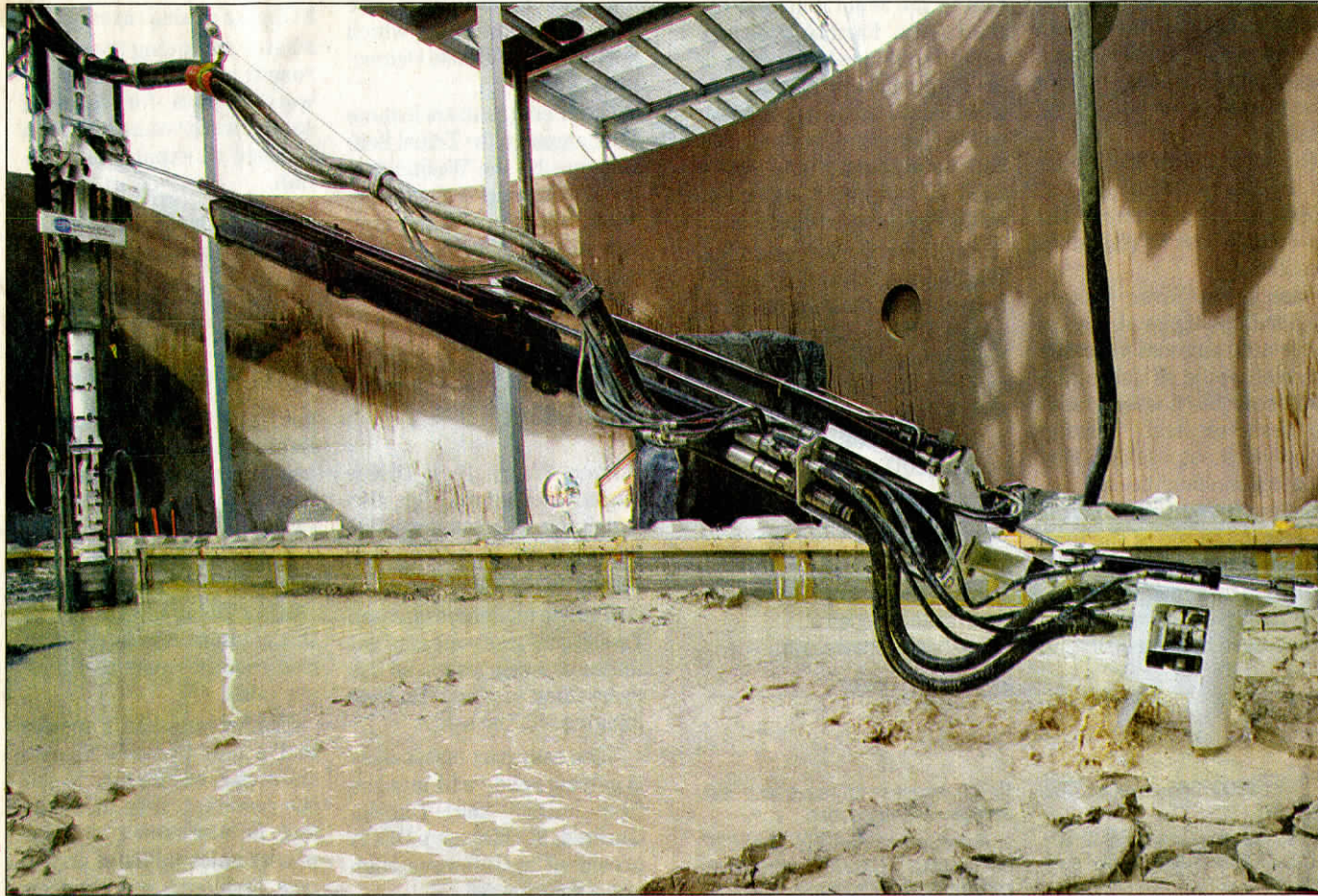
in a statement. "It's how we execute our work, from the contract requirements on down to how individual procedures are implemented in the field."

The certification followed a two-week DOE assessment that included 120 observations of work being conducted, more than 300 employee interviews and the review of 640 documents.

WRPS now is working to achieve DOE's highest safety standard, Voluntary Protection Program Star status, for all its work. Its base operations organization and the 222-S Laboratory, operated by WRPS, also have Star status.

Star status is awarded to contractors who demonstrate excellence in management leadership, employee involvement, work site analysis, hazard prevention and control, and safety and health training.

◆ *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com; More Hanford news at hanfordnews.com*



Testing of the Mobile Arm Retrieval System is under way at Hanford's Cold Test Facility. MARS uses a high-pressure spray of water to break up radioactive waste so the sludge can be removed from older single-shell tanks to safer double-shell ones.

Kai-Huel Yau | kyau@tricityherald.com

# DOE employs <sup>16 OCT 09</sup>robotic arm

Toughest system yet for radioactive waste undergoes testing

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The toughest and most versatile system engineers have devised to pull radioactive waste out of Hanford's underground tanks is showing promise in tests.

But the robotic arm, planned to reach every cranny of 1 million-gallon tanks, also is the largest system developed to date.

In a major departure from the past attempts to empty Hanford's 149 leak-prone single-shell tanks, this system is too large to fit down the risers

with 12-inch openings that provide access to the enclosed tanks.

Instead, a 52-inch hole will have to be cut in the top of the tanks to install a new riser with a 42-inch diameter while

shielding workers from the high-level radioactive waste held in the tanks.

"This is transformational technology," which fits in with high-level Department of Energy instructions to look for new technologies rather than making incremental improvements on existing technologies, said Scott Saunders, retrieval

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268

17 OCT 09

# PNNL set to get final \$12M for construction

### Lawmakers pushed to include money for \$224M facility

**DREW FOSTER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A \$224 million construction project at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland is poised to receive the final \$12 million toward its total price tag after the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Homeland Security funding bill Thursday.

Reception of the money hinges on the bill passing the Senate and being signed by the president.

The 200,000-square-foot Physical Sciences Facility has been under construction since July 2007 and has so far received \$212 million.

The five-building facility should be complete in 2010. PNNL spokesman Greg

Koller said the \$12 million in the Homeland Security bill is part of an effort by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and others to accelerate funding to the project.

"Instead of stringing the money out over a year and a half ... this will give us some flexibility in construction," Koller said.

The Physical Sciences Facility will house staff members who will initially work on national security and energy research missions. Many of the workers will come from Hanford's 300 area.

The Department of Homeland Security has so far contributed \$43,934,000, the Department of Energy's Office of Science \$98,444,000, and DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration \$69,623,000.

► *Drew Foster: 585-7207; dfoster@tricityherald.com*

## Senate OKs final funds for new PNNL facility

21

OCT 0

The U.S. Senate has approved the final \$12 million needed for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's new Physical Sciences Facility in Richland.

The 200,000-square-foot facility is under construction and all five of its buildings should be opened in 2010. The facility, which will replace lab and office space now being demolished as part of Hanford environmental cleanup, will cost \$224 million.

The last \$12 million from the Department of Homeland Security was scheduled to come to the lab over the next two years, but the Homeland Security appropriations bill accelerates that.

"Continuing to invest in PNNL creates high tech jobs and new economic opportunities in the Tri-Cities," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

## ILL HANFORD WORKERS

# Board OKs expanded compensation

## Hundreds more may be eligible for \$150,000 payment

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A compensation program for ill nuclear workers won key approval Tuesday to offer automatic \$150,000 payments to potentially hundreds more Hanford workers or their survivors.

An advisory committee to the federal government meeting in New York voted unanimously to further ease

compensation requirements for Hanford workers who may have developed any of a wide range of cancers due to radiation exposure on the job. Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of Health and Human Services, now is expected to recommend the eased rules, called a special exposure cohort, to Congress.

If Congress does not object, the special exposure cohort would be formed.

Under the special exposure cohort,

automatic \$150,000 compensation and medical coverage would be extended to any Hanford worker who was employed for at least 250 days from Oct. 1, 1943, through June 30, 1972. That's more inclusive than previous decisions to ease rules only for workers assigned to specific Hanford areas for certain of those years.

The eased rules could help some workers or their survivors who have previously had their claims under the Energy Employees Occupational Ill-

ness Program denied. It also could resolve claims that have been stuck unresolved in the federal system for years and could help some middle-aged Hanford workers and recent retirees who yet may develop cancer.

Under the compensation program, Hanford workers who develop cancer have received \$150,000 compensation and medical coverage only if the federal government concluded that an estimate of their individual radiation exposure was high enough that there

was at least a 50 percent chance it caused their cancer.

But if radiation exposure cannot be reliably estimated for groups of workers, a special exposure cohort may be declared by the secretary of Health and Human Services. Workers who developed any of about 20 types of cancers then are automatically compensated without a radiation exposure estimate.



Greg Atencio of Bechtel National looks over progress at the Hanford vitrification plant. The massive project has reached the 50 percent completion mark for combined design and construction. **See photo galleries at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com).**

Paul T. Erickson | [perickson@tricityherald.com](mailto:perickson@tricityherald.com)

# PASSING A MILESTONE

200,000 cubic yards of concrete, 14,000 tons of steel installed

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**E**ight years into work at Hanford's massive vitrification plant, the project has passed the halfway mark, the Department of Energy announced Thursday.

"It's great to be on the top side of the hill looking down," said Suzanne Dahl, of the Washington State Department of Ecology, the regulator on the project. "From now on we're getting closer and closer to getting waste into a glass form."

There were years when the ability to get a plant built to turn Hanford's worst radioactive waste into a stable glass form for permanent storage or disposal appeared in doubt. Plans made in 1989, 1993 and 1996 were terminated before any concrete was poured.

The current \$12.3 billion plant has

had technical issues to overcome, plus schedule delays, budget increases and an expansion of treatment capacity. It originally was planned — under what turned out to be a wildly unrealistic schedule — to be handling radioactive waste two years ago and in full-scale

operation in 2011. It's now expected to start operating in 2019.

As disappointing as delays in the Waste Treatment Plant's schedule have been, "the good thing is, it

was never terminated," Dahl said.

"While there may be challenges ahead, our progress to date gives us confidence in a successful completion," said Ted Feigenbaum, Bechtel project director for the plant. "It's going well."

Eight years into construction, design and purchasing for the plant, \$5 billion of the \$12.3 billion currently budgeted has been spent to get to the halfway mark, said Shirley Olinger, manager of the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection. That includes

\$500 million spent on research and technical development.

That leaves well over half the budget remaining to complete construction and commission, or get the plant ready to operate, in about nine years.

The project also is closing in on another important milestone, resolving all 28 technical issues that an independent panel identified in 2006 as needing to be addressed to assure confidence in the plant's operations.

Just one issue remains, and it's close enough to being resolved that Feigenbaum is calling it half an issue. Work still is under way to make sure that radioactive waste will be adequately mixed in fewer than 10 of 38 tanks of concern, which will be in areas of the plant that will be too radioactively hot for workers to enter once operations begin.

The technical issues that have been

See **MILESTONE** | Page A2

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# Hastings looks for answers

Congressman asks President Obama about his promise for blue ribbon committee

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., is asking the president how the nation plans to store or dispose of radioactive waste from the Hanford nuclear reservation and the Energy Northwest nuclear power plant.

The nation has spent \$10 billion to \$12 billion over the last 25 years to study Yucca Mountain, Nev., as a site for a national repository to dispose of used commercial nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste from Department of Energy defense sites, including Hanford.

But in February President Obama said that Yucca Mountain was not a suitable site for a national repository, as he had indicated he would when he campaigned in Nevada. Instead, he said he would launch a blue ribbon committee to lead federal efforts to look for disposal

## BRIEFS

### Full power expected at vit plant today

14 OCT  
09

Bechtel National expects the Hanford vitrification plant construction site to have full power restored this morning.

Construction was stopped at the Waste Treatment Plant campus Monday and Tuesday because of a power outage, but workers were expected to return today.

Although progress was being made Tuesday to restore power, workers still were advised to call the employee hotline at 373-3333 before leaving for work this morning.

The power outage affected about 1,400 workers, but only the construction crews did not report to work Tuesday. Engineers and professionals were assigned to work or training in town.

The cause of the outage still was being investigated Tuesday. The problem occurred on the vit plant campus after the Mission Support Alliance, which manages Hanford utilities for the Department of Energy, had delivered power to the campus.

22 OCT 09

# Picture of Manhattan Project life being unearthed

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**A** glass beer bottle with a faded label that says "brewed in Walla Walla." Two children's marbles. A 1938 Buick Roadmaster hubcap. Heavy white ceramic shaving mugs.

A blue graphic element consisting of a wavy line that loops around the text "Photo gallery".  
**Photo  
gallery**  
tricityherald.com

And more beer bottles — lots and lots of beer bottles.

That's just a sampling of the items that have been unearthed from pits at Hanford where trash generated by the tens of thousands of workers who came to the nuclear reservation

13 OCT 09

## Power outage stops Hanford vit plant work

A power outage at the vitrification plant at the Hanford nuclear reservation that kept about 1,400 workers from going to work Monday is giving some of them another day off today.

Suzanne Heaston, a spokeswoman for project contractor Bechtel, said the outage that started over the weekend should be restored in a few days, and the cause still is being investigated.

The problem is believed to have occurred at a main junction on the Hanford site and required that all engineers

and construction workers not come to the site. But Heaston said only the construction workers are being told to stay away today.

"Engineers and other support staff will be advised where to report," she said Monday evening. Some of those nonconstruction workers will be doing training at locations that are not involved in the vitrification project site or where the power outage occurred.

Bechtel's employee hotline, 373-3333, has the latest information about reporting to work at the site, Heaston said.

- Herald staff

31 OCT 09  
First National Day of Remembrance held to honor nuclear weapons workers

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**H**arold Copeland took an engineering job at the Hanford nuclear reservation in 1947, swayed by a recruiter's pitch that he would be paid a good wage and could live in a house with his wife in the government-owned town of Richland.

He took the job and the house rented for \$38 a month, which also included power, water, grass seed and handymen to change the light bulbs.

But it was supporting the Cold War that really made the work worthwhile, he said Friday during the first National Day of Remembrance celebration in Richland. The day was created by a Senate resolution to honor Hanford and other Cold War

nuclear weapons workers.

About 50 people attended the Richland ceremony, meeting old friends and swapping stories.

Bob Whiteside remembered taking a job in 1948 in the Hanford 300 Area, where uranium fuel for nuclear reactors was fabricated.

"No one told us what uranium was," he said.

On shift breaks, workers would light a piece of uranium, which burned "slow and steady," he said. Then they'd pass it around to light their cigarettes.

Was it a dangerous job?

“  
**No one told us what uranium was.**

Bob Whiteside, who took a job in 1948 in the Hanford 300 Area

”

Donna Whiteside was turned down for a position in Sunnyside because the chief then didn't think a woman could do the job and that the other patrol officers' wives wouldn't like it, she said.

She enjoyed the Hanford work,

No, he said.

But then, he took the job after serving as a fighter and bomber pilot in World War II.

His wife, whom he met at Hanford, in 1974 became the fifth female hired as a Hanford patrol officer during the Cold War.

3 NOV 09  
Pretreatment Facility  
HVAC to be installed

HERALD STAFF

Work has begun on the interior fittings of the Hanford vitrification plant's largest building as it continues to rise.

The Pretreatment Facility, which will stand 120 feet high, is now at 77 feet high in places and continues to rise steadily as concrete and steel are installed.

The facility will be used to separate radioactive waste now held in underground tanks into high level and low activity waste streams for separate treatment for final disposal. It's the largest building planned on the vit plant's 65-acre campus and measures 540 feet long and 215 feet wide.

"Up until now, we've primarily concentrated on the exterior structural framework of the facility," said Leon Lamm, area project manager for the Pretreatment Facility, in a statement. "Now we are integrating efforts to install commodities inside the building."

Crews have started installing a massive heating, ventilation and air conditioning, or HVAC, duct inside the facility's hot cell, a shielded area to protect workers from radiation as they conduct work inside it using remotely operated equipment. The duct is part of the primary ventilation system in the building.

The HVAC duct is 5 feet in diameter and will run more than 400 feet, the length of the hot cell. Because the hot cell will be used to separate the waste into high level and low activity waste streams, the ductwork must meet stringent nuclear-quality standards.

Intermech, a subcontractor to Bechtel National, will continue work to install the duct over the next few months. To prepare for the work, ceiling coatings were applied to structural steel and piping running above the ductwork was installed.

# Seattle group to hold Hanford summit

Hanford Challenge questions Tri-Cities' environmental commitment, invites participants to meeting today

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hanford Challenge of Seattle is organizing a Hanford summit, saying that polarization between the east

and west sides of the state has prevented discussion of important Hanford issues.

Western Washington and Portland are "concerned about Hanford's environmental impact past, present and

future," the advocacy group says on its website.

Tri-City residents "are less concerned with environmental impacts," it said, and characterized Tri-City groups as focused on jobs and economic development.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268

"This polarization has interfered with the ability to hold a dialogue about the important issues facing the region when it comes to Hanford," the group said, describing Hanford environmental cleanup as "broken."

Hanford Challenge says it is making plans to bring together government representatives, Department of Energy cleanup contractors, the tribes, businesses and the communi-

ties "to take a serious look at the situation and begin the hard work of developing a strategic plan that addresses all the issues."

It is bringing together an invited group of participants at 10:30 a.m. today for a three-hour meeting at the Richland Community Center to begin shaping the discussion. The group is

See **SUMMIT** | Page B2

HANFORD

13 NOV 09

# Murray praises stimulus jobs

Nearly \$2B of federal funds help save or create 2,500 jobs

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Ty Rose came home from Iraq last year with new leadership skills he thought would translate into a job stateside.

But it took creating new jobs with federal economic stimulus money for him

to find work, he told Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., Thursday. She was at the HAMMER training and education center to see how American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money was being spent that she fought to have allocated for Hanford cleanup.

Since \$1.96 billion in stimulus money

was designated for environmental cleanup at the Hanford nuclear reservation, more than 35,000 people have applied for the jobs, according to the Department of Energy.

The money has provided work for about 5,600 people so far. However, that includes people whose jobs are only partially paid for with stimulus money or

See **STIMULUS** | Page A2



# Contract workers' paychecks delayed

Direct deposit funds were not released by bank as scheduled

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A bank error left many employees of new Hanford contractor Mission Support Alliance without their direct deposit paychecks when they were expecting them Friday.

The Department of Energy contractor said about 1,500 employees were affected.

When paychecks failed to post to employee bank and credit union accounts, they were originally told that all paychecks would be posted no later than Monday.

At 3 p.m. Friday, Mission Support Alliance sent a memo to employees telling them U.S. Bank had promised they would have the money in their bank accounts by the end of the day, said spokesman Jeff Dennison.

At 5 p.m. Friday, U.S. Bank was still working on the problem, said Teri Charest, U.S. Bank spokeswoman.

Mission Support Alliance depends on U.S. Bank to post the payroll for employees and preselected subcontractor employees who use direct deposit not only to U.S. Bank, but also other banks and credit unions.

The Hanford contractor submitted the direct deposit file to U.S. Bank on Wednesday, but the file was not released as expected by U.S. Bank on Thursday night, according to information Mission Support

# ATL wins contract to continue at Hanford lab

Second bid award valued at \$48.8M; 222-S lab handles highly radioactive samples

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Advanced Technologies and Laboratories International will continue to operate the 222-S Laboratory in central Hanford after winning a second contract.

The Department of Energy announced that the contractor submitted the winning bid for a five-year con-

tract valued at \$48.6 million. The contract covers costs plus an award fee for the contractor.

The contract, under DOE's Hanford Office of River Protection, was reserved for a business with fewer than 500 employees. ATL is based in Maryland and has been in business since 1989.

ATL's present contract is set to expire Jan. 3; the new contract will take effect unless there is a protest by a losing bidder. DOE did not release information on how many companies submitted bids.

The 222-S laboratory complex, the primary laboratory for highly radioac-

tive samples at Hanford, includes a 70,000-square-foot laboratory and several support buildings. It has 11 hot cells.

Annually, the lab performs about 15,000 analyses on inorganic, organic and radiochemical samples, most of them from the 53 million gallons of radioactive waste held in underground tanks. The waste is left from the past chemical processing of irradiated fuel to remove plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The testing and analysis are needed to determine the waste composition, maintain control of the chemistry of wastes in the underground tanks and

prepare to turn the waste into a stable glass form at the vitrification plant under construction.

Work at the lab requires at least 70 employees, but employment could increase to meet a larger work load.

ATL was the first business to operate the laboratory after DOE decided to split the work out of the Hanford tank farm contract to create a small-business opportunity. The first

See **LAB** | Page B4

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20 NOV 09

# Employment projected to peak in 2010

## Just 2,100 workers expected by 2050, down from 10,800

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is predicting that employment at the Hanford nuclear reservation will peak in fiscal 2010 at about 10,800 employees and then begin a decline toward 2,100 workers by 2050, when most environmental cleanup work is completed.

The projections were requested by the Tri-City Development Council to help entities such as schools, utilities and counties with long-term planning, said Gary Petersen, TRIDEC vice president of Hanford programs.

For most communities in the nation, the closure of a plant or other complex

such as a military base that's a major employer happens suddenly and the jobs disappear quickly, Petersen said. The Tri-Cities has the advantage of being able to look ahead and prepare for the loss of Hanford employment, he said.

The work force projections are the Department of Energy's best estimates, based on current work planning and other information. But plans for Hanford cleanup, particularly first-of-a-kind and technically challenging work, and the amount of money Congress appropriates annually are prone to change.

When the estimates for the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland are added to Hanford estimates, total employ-

ment in the fiscal year that ended in September was about 14,700, increasing to a projected high of 15,000 in fiscal 2010.

The total for fiscal 2011 is predicted to drop slightly to about 14,800. The annual numbers are for fiscal years that end Sept. 30 and exclude several hundred lab workers who are not based in the Tri-Cities.

After 2011, a larger drop in employment is expected, largely because \$1.96 billion in federal economic stimulus money for Hanford cleanup will have been spent. The combined labor projection for the national lab and Hanford in 2012 is about 13,200 workers.

Projections for Hanford alone include about 9,000 workers in 2012; 9,500 in 2015; 8,000 in 2020; 7,900 in 2025; 6,600 in 2030; 6,300 in 2035; 5,500 in 2040; 4,200 in 2045 and 2,100 in 2050.

**WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK?**

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or call 585-7268

3 Dec. 09

# Last of high-security nuclear material gone from Hanford's PFP

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The last of the nuclear materials requiring high security has been removed from Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

"It eliminates the need for special security requirements for deactivation and decommissioning workers at the Plutonium Finishing Plant," said Geoff Tyree, spokesman for the Department of Energy. "It becomes like any other facility at the Hanford site going through D and D."

Work is under way to clean out and demolish the Plutonium Finishing Plant as part of the environmental cleanup of Hanford, where plutonium was produced for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

But security at the plant in

central Hanford has been some of the tightest at the nuclear reservation because of materials stored there. Workers had to pass through metal detectors when they arrived at the plant and materials taken out of the plant had to be scanned for security.

The last high-security material to be removed from the plant was irradiated fuel from the Fast Flux Test Facility that had been temporarily stored at the Plutonium Finishing Plant, said Matt McCormick, DOE assistant manager for central Hanford. It was stored there because of the amount of plutonium it contained and level of radiation.

It has been moved to the Canister Storage Building complex at Hanford after \$20 million worth of work to prepare

# Trial over Hanford union infighting under way

Steelworkers local president claims discrimination by international; secretary alleges labor violations

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A federal judge has begun sorting out the apparent bad blood between the United Steelworkers local and related labor organizations in a double trial.

At the heart of the two cases being heard are claims of discrimination

and what the United Steelworkers International describes in court documents as "an extraordinary and damaging internal grudge match at Local 12-369." That union represents about 1,280 Hanford steelworkers and others.

Stephanie Green, president of the local, sued the United Steelworkers International under three civil rights

laws and two labor laws, contending it discriminated against her because she is black and a woman.

The Hanford Atomic Metals Trades Council, an umbrella labor organization of 15 local unions whose members work at Hanford, also is named.

In a second case being heard at the same time, the local and its financial secretary, David Roberts, is suing United Steelworkers International claiming that a wide range of its actions violated the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act

and harmed them.

The international is responsible for the discrimination and retaliation suffered by plaintiffs because it had knowledge of the problem, but failed to act, effectively ratifying the harassment, according to court documents.

The plaintiffs in the cases are asking for unspecified damages, including punitive damages, and that the international be barred from setting up an administratorship that would allow it to take over the local and suspend the current leadership.

Senior Judge Robert Whaley has

set aside up to three weeks in Eastern Washington Federal District Court in Richland to hear the case, which began last week. It is a nonjury trial.

Fighting within the local started long before Green was elected president and Roberts was elected financial secretary in November 2005, according to court documents.

The former administration initially refused to install the newly elected officers, claiming that the election process had not followed the local's

# Sen. Murray comes to defense of spending on nuclear site cleanup

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The nearly \$2 billion in stimulus money being spent on environmental cleanup at the Hanford nuclear reservation made a list of questionable spending released Tuesday by Republican Sen. John McCain.

"Hanford nuclear site gets billions for failed cleanup effort," said the stimulus checklist that the former presidential candidate prepared with fellow Republican Sen. Tom Coburn.

The list included 100 projects, with Hanford at No. 10, which the senators said represented "billions of dollars of stimulus funding that have been wasted, mismanaged or directed toward silly and short-sighted projects."

But Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who fought to get the money for Hanford, dismissed McCain's list as "political posturing of the worst kind."

And it's flat out wrong, Murray said in a statement.

Hanford is extensively contaminated with radioactive and hazardous chemicals left from producing the majority of the nation's plutonium for nuclear weapons during World War II and the Cold War.

The site was picked to receive \$1.96 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money because it had contractors in place that could quickly begin hiring hundreds of people for what the government called "shovel-ready" projects at the 586-square-mile site.

In addition, the work was

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Comment on this story at [tricityherald.com](http://tricityherald.com) or call 585-7268



**McCain**



**Murray**

## Hanford contractor hits goal for no lost work time

Employees and subcontractors of Washington Closure Hanford reached 1 million of hours worked without a lost-time accident at the end of November.

It's the seventh time the team cleaning up the Hanford nuclear reservation along the Columbia River has reached the million-hour milestone since August 2005. It took the 1,100 employees about five months to reach the goal.

"A good safety record is synonymous with a well-run project," said Neil Brosee, president of Washington Closure, in a statement. "We have that, and it's because our workers are committed to working safely and ensuring their co-workers are doing the same."

The safety milestone comes as the contractor starts some particularly risky and challenging building demolition work and cleanup of one of Hanford's worst burial grounds, the 618-10 Burial Ground.

Environmental cleanup along the river corridor is halfway completed and should be finished in fall 2015.

# Hanford contract award for lab protested

Contract winner was first business to operate 222-S Lab

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A protest has been lodged in the Department of Energy's \$48.6 million award to Advanced Technologies and Laboratories International to operate Hanford's 222-S Laboratory.

The Department of Energy will have 35 days to address the protest, which was filed with the agency's Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center rather than the Government Accountability Office. The protest was filed Nov. 27.

Four bids were received for the small

business contract, which DOE awarded Nov. 20. DOE declined to say who bid on the project or which bidder filed the protest.

Advanced Technologies and Laboratories, or ATL, was the first business to operate the laboratory after DOE decided to split the work out of the Hanford tank farm contract to create a small-business opportunity. Its original five-year contract under the DOE Hanford Office of River Protection is set to expire Jan. 3.

"We feel good and humbled to continue our support to Office of River Protection," said Jou Hwang, ATL

president, when ATL was announced as a second-time winner of the contract in November.

The contractor now employs about 70 workers but expects to hire more because of increased sampling expected to be done by other contractors with federal economic stimulus money. Assuming the protest is settled in ATL's favor, ATL also plans to open a privately funded lab in the Tri-Cities, Hwang said.

The 222-S Laboratory at Hanford is the nuclear reservation's primary lab for highly radioactive samples and performs about 15,000 analyses on inorganic, organic and radiochemical samples annually. Most of the samples are from the 53 million gallons of radioac-

tive waste held in underground tanks from when Hanford was producing plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The testing and analysis are needed to determine the waste composition, maintain control of the chemistry of wastes in the underground tanks and prepare to turn the waste into a stable glass form at the vitrification plant, which is under construction.

The lab complex includes a 70,000-square-foot laboratory and several support buildings. It has 11 hot cells. Washington River Protection Solutions acts as landlord of the lab.

► *Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com; more Hanford news at hanfordnews.com.*



# Demolition of first processing canyon begins

Stimulus funds allowing work to get under way on U Plant teardown project

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work is under way at Hanford to prepare the first huge processing canyon in the Department of Energy's nationwide nuclear weapons complex for demolition.

DOE approved a plan for demolishing U Plant in central Hanford in 2005, but then decided to focus its

budget on environmental cleanup closest to the Columbia River first.

But with \$1.96 billion in federal economic stimulus money allocated to Hanford, DOE has been able to begin preparing U Plant to be torn down.

It's one of five processing plants at the Hanford nuclear reservation built to chemically separate plutonium from fuel rods irradiated in Hanford reactors for the nation's nuclear weapons program. The plants often are called canyons because of their high ceilings, narrow width and walls as long as the Seattle Space Needle is tall.

The work at U Plant, which is 810

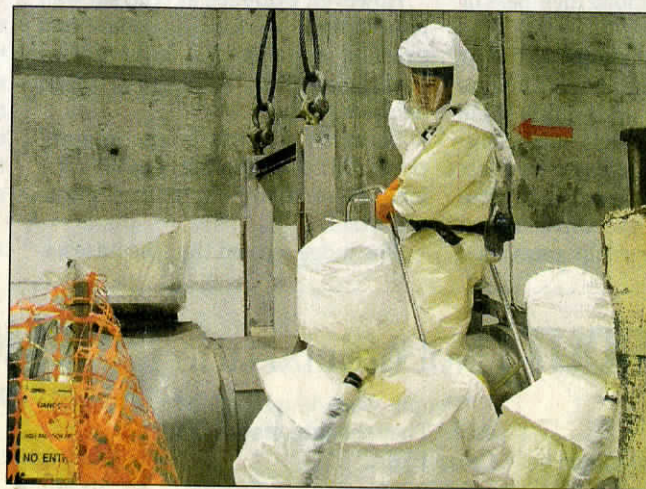
feet long, is planned as a potential model for work at Hanford's other processing plants, said Al Farabee, DOE federal project director.

Plans call for leaving radioactive waste permanently in place as the lower level of the plant is made into a giant waste receptacle for contaminated equipment from the plant.

Then the ceiling and walls will be collapsed and covered with an environmentally protective earthen cap

See **DEMOLITION** | Page B2

**Photo gallery**  
tricityherald.com



Hanford workers prepare a condenser on the deck of U Plant to be lowered into a cell below the deck for permanent disposal. Equipment that lines the walls of U Plant will be grouted in place in the cells beneath the deck to prepare the plant for demolition.

Photo courtesy DOE

11 DEC 09

# Study dismisses B Reactor for national park

## Los Alamos, N.M., only Manhattan Project site still being considered by park service

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A draft National Park Service study on preserving Hanford's historic B Reactor looks at several options but dismisses the possibility of making the reactor directly part of the national park system.

Only Los Alamos, N.M., is being considered to be named a Manhattan Project National Historical Park. However, most of the five options being considered for Hanford would offer some possible park service role to provide technical assistance or educational programs for B Reactor.

Most of the options for B Reactor would rely heavily on local groups or other non-profit agencies to preserve the reactor as a museum, develop and maintain exhibits and coordinate public visits. All options likely would require fundraising to keep the reactor open to the public.

The draft study did not reach a conclusion on the best option for B Reactor's future or other Manhattan Project sites.

"This is another step in the process to help identify the best way to achieve preservation of Hanford's historic B Reactor," Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said in a statement.

"Hanford workers played a critical role in our nation's defense for many years. It's a part of our nation's history that needs to be remembered and shared with future generations."

The study was required under a 2004 law written by Hastings and Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., to assess the potential for developing and using B Reactor and other Manhattan Project facilities as historical sites. A draft of the special resource study and environmental assessment being released for public comment was posted on the internet late Thursday.

Los Alamos was picked as the only possible site for a Manhattan Project national historic park because "the



# Hanford tank contractor donates to colleges

Manager says community benefits when people have chance to learn new skills

**SARA SCHILLING**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Washington River Protection Solutions is donating \$500,000 over two years to help Washington State University Tri-Cities and Columbia Basin College bolster science, technology, engineering and math offerings and provide student scholarships.

The announcement Thursday came a day after Gov. Chris Gregoire

released a first draft of a budget plan for the rest of the 2009-11 biennium that included deep cuts to higher education.

Dom Sansotta, work force resources manager for Washington River Protection Solutions, which is the Hanford tank operations contractor, said being able to find “well-educated employees with special skills” is “vital to our success” — and institutions like WSU Tri-Cities in Richland and CBC in Pasco make that happen.

The community also benefits when people have the chance to advance their education and learn new skills, he said.

The money will be given in \$125,000

installments starting this year.

At WSU Tri-Cities, the first round of funding will be used to upgrade Energy and Environmental Laboratory equipment, help with science and engineering research projects done by juniors and seniors and be used for student internships and scholarships, according to the contractor.

Most of the money given to CBC will support the nuclear technology program, which was revived this fall. Washington River Protection Solutions also will help with expanding the program and general scholarships, according to the contractor.

The contractor has committed to supporting the program — which this

year has 34 students — for five years.

WSU Tri-Cities Chancellor Vicky Carwein and Donna Campbell, vice president for instruction at CBC, said the donation will make a significant difference at their institutions, which are bracing for more state cuts. Both institutions already were hit with reductions during the last state legislative session.

The budget Gregoire revealed Wednesday isn't final. She plans to release another draft and the state House of Representatives and Senate also come up with their own plans. But educators are expecting more significant cuts in funding.

Sansotta said his group was only

going to announce its first year of contributions Thursday but then decided to firm up what it would give in 2010 and announce that as well after the budget was released Wednesday. The group wanted to make a strong statement of support, he said.

Campbell and Carwein said the donation will help their institutions continue their important work of educating students and in turn strengthening the community.

“We do not take for granted (the contractors) generosity,” Carwein said.

◆ Sara Schilling: 582-1402; sschilling@tricityherald.com.

17 DEC 09

# If Congress agrees, more workers who developed cancer because of radiation or their survivors will get payment

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The federal secretary of Health and Human Services has agreed to expand automatic compensation of \$150,000 to more Hanford workers who may have developed cancer

because of exposure to radiation.

If Congress does not object, the decision by Secretary Kathleen Sebelius takes effect Jan. 10. The action was recommended in October by a federal advisory board.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, will review 340 pending claims of for-

mer Hanford workers, some filed by their survivors. The claims are for workers who had cancers covered under the automatic compensation program and who worked at Hanford during the years the new expanded rules would cover.

Those pending claims are in addition to hundreds of past claims that have been denied but would be reviewed by the Department of Labor to see if they now qualify for compensation under the eased rules. The new

rules also could help some middle-aged Hanford workers and recent retirees who yet may develop cancer.

The rules would be eased by the formation of a new special 'exposure cohort for the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. The program calls for NIOSH to estimate the amount of radiation exposure each ill worker received and determine whether there was at least a 50 percent chance of causing their cancer.

But special exposure cohorts may be named if Sebelius believes radiation exposure cannot be reliably estimated for groups of workers. Then workers are automatically compensated if they develop any of a broad range of primary cancers or certain secondary cancers.

See **CANCER** | Page B2

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# Keep Hanford land options open, Doc says

Legislator says community needs to have leadership role in decisions on lands

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The federal government needs to keep all options open and prevent land from being locked up as cleanup is completed on parts of the Hanford nuclear reservation, Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said Thursday.

He discussed the future and funding issues for Hanford and other Department of Energy sites in Washington, D.C., as the keynote speaker at the semi-annual meeting of the Energy Facilities Contractor Group.

DOE expects to have most of the cleanup along the Columbia River at Hanford completed by 2015, shrinking the contaminated portion of the nuclear reservation from 586 square miles to about 75 square



**Hastings**

miles at its center. In addition, much of \$1.96 billion in federal economic stimulus money is being used to speed up cleanup and free up areas for other uses, such as a clean energy park to research and produce energy.

A top priority should be ensuring that local communities have a meaningful leadership role in determining their future with these lands, he said.

"It is critical that we remember the unique features of each site and each community," he said.

Earlier this year he worked to get Hanford deleted from a bill that would

have designated Hanford as a National Environmental Research Park, believing a designation that covered the entire site could have unintended consequences and reduce flexibility in making long-range land use plans.

Plans also are being made at Hanford's historic B Reactor, where supporters have worked for years to have

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17 DEC 09

# Armijo promoted to VP for Hanford contractor

HERALD STAFF

Frank Armijo of Richland has been promoted to vice president of energy and environmental services for Lockheed Martin's Information Systems & Global Services-Civil division.

The promotion was announced to employees Wednesday by Ken Asbury, president of IS&GS-civil.

Armijo has served in leadership roles with Lockheed Martin for 15 years, and most recently was Lockheed's director of information management for Mission Support Alliance.

He will lead the company's team in supporting Hanford Mission Support Alliance, energy and environmental services.

"With this new appointment, I look forward to continuing to deliver on Lockheed Martin's commitment to our Hanford customers, our Richland employees and the

Tri-Cities community," Armijo said in a statement.

He has been active in Tri-City community service, and is a past recipient of the Tri-Citizen of the Year award.



**Armijo**

Earlier this year, the Department of Energy selected a team led by Lockheed Martin to manage and operate the new Mission Support Contract at Hanford. Lockheed's partners in the 10-year, \$3 billion contract are Jacobs Engineering Group and Wackenhut Services.

The contract covers Hanford site services such as safety, security and environment, site infrastructure and utilities, site business management, information resources and content management and portfolio management.

# Bechtel plans change in vit plant leadership

## Waste Treatment Plant gets new project manager

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Bechtel National has named a new leader for Hanford's vitrification plant less than a year after the current project director was named.

Frank Russo, now the principal associate director for operations and business at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, will come to

Hanford after the holidays and take over as project manager for the Waste Treatment Plant on Jan. 18.

Ted Feigenbaum, the current project director, exceeded expectations, Bechtel National president David Walker said in a message to employees on Monday.

Feigenbaum has served as project director since March. His plans have not been announced.

Feigenbaum "set the stage for the project to move forward by substantially resolving technical concerns, managing improved cost and schedule

performance, and building the confidence of the customer and stakeholders," Walker told employees.

The \$12.2 billion plant is being built to turn some of Hanford's worst wastes now held in aging underground tanks into a stable glass form for disposal starting in 2019.

"DOE wants to thank Ted for his significant contribution in resolving outstanding technical concerns on the project," said DOE spokeswoman Carrie Meyer.

Earlier years of work on the vitrification plant were plagued with problems, including cost increases and schedule

extensions, but this fall it reached an important milestone, passing the 50 percent mark on design and construction.

Well over half the budget remains to finish the project and prepare it to operate in the next nine years.

A list of 28 technical issues focused on how efficiently the plant would operate has been whittled down to just one issue — making sure that waste remains mixed in tanks at the plant.

Now DOE is beginning to focus

# Battelle gets high marks for PNNL work

Company to receive  
97 percent of possible  
performance pay

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Battelle received good grades on its Department of Energy report card for fiscal 2009, earning it 97 percent of the maximum performance-based pay possible.

Battelle will receive \$8.73 million out of a possible \$9 million for managing and operating the national lab in Richland under a

DOE contract for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

The contractor particularly shined in meeting its science and technology goals at the lab. It was graded on three goals in that area and received two As and an A-minus.

In fact, it was the only one of DOE's 10 national lab contractors to receive an A for mission accomplishment, the key measure of quality and productivity of research and development.

"We think they did a great job running the lab," said Michael Weis, manager of DOE's Pacific Northwest Site Office in Richland.

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The lab's other grades for operation and management functions, such as security, safety, business systems and leadership, included three B pluses and a B.

"It's clear from these ratings that we are maintaining our strong delivery of science and technology to the nation as well as strong stewardship of PNNL in management and operations," Mike Kluse, PNNL director, said in a statement.

The grades are "a testament

to our staff's collective dedication, innovative thinking, high quality work and passion for making a difference," he said.

This is the second year in a row Battelle received 97 percent of its possible performance-based pay, which has been its best performance in the years DOE has been using the current evaluation system. Battelle received 92 percent of its performance-based pay in fiscal 2007 and 87.3 percent in fiscal 2006.

The lowest grade on the 2009 report card, a B for integrated safety, health and

See **BATTELLE** | Page A2



Kai-Huei Yau | [kyau@tricityherald.com](mailto:kyau@tricityherald.com)

Michael Mock, a staff scientist at PNNL, demonstrates research he is performing to develop new electric catalysts to improve the energy efficiency of ammonia production.



20 DEC 09

# DOE scraps cheaper waste treatment plan

## Washington, New Mexico oppose alternative

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy has dropped a proposal for a less expensive alternative to treating and disposing of some of Hanford's radioactive tank waste.

The alternative could have saved as much as \$459 million, according to figures in an earlier Government Accountability Office report, but Hanford officials were unable to win the regulatory support of the states of Washington and New Mexico. About \$40 million has been spent on the project.

Less than two months ago, DOE released a draft environmental impact study that included the less expensive option of sending some of Hanford's tank waste to a federal repository in New Mexico rather than glassifying it at the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant being built at Hanford.

But Friday, DOE published a notice in the Federal Register saying it was removing the option of sending waste from certain tanks to the federal repository in New Mexico from the draft environmental study.

The study, called the Hanford Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement, will lead to final decisions on how to treat Hanford's 53 million gal-

lons of radioactive waste that have been held in 177 underground tanks. Work began on the document in 2003 and the public comment period on it continues through March 19.

Officials at Hanford have said for more than five years that waste in at least eight and possibly as many as 20 underground tanks could be disposed of safely at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico.

That would not only save money, but empty aging leak-prone tanks sooner and reduce the amount of waste that needs to be processed at the vitrification plant, they said.

The vitrification plant was not planned to be large enough to treat all of Hanford's tank waste in a reasonable time, and treating all the waste that some officials wanted to send to New Mexico would take the vit plant three years.

The state of Washington has had legal and technical concerns about the plan to send some waste to New Mexico for disposal, the Washington Department of Ecology said in a statement published with the DOE notification in the Federal Register.

See **WASTE** | Page B2

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
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13 DEC 09

### Hanford site employees deliver food for needy

Employee volunteers from Mission Support Alliance, a Lockheed Martin/Jacobs/WSI Co., on Thursday delivered nonperishables collected during a food drive to local Veterans of Foreign Wars and food banks in the Tri-Cities, Burbank and Yakima.

The MSA purchased \$4,000 worth of frozen

turkeys that also were distributed along with the nonperishable items.

For the past 24 years, Hanford employees have collected nonperishable food items for those in need during an annual food drive.

The MSA led the Hanford Site Community Food Drive this year, which ran from Dec. 1-15. Major partners included the Kennewick Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team, Hanford Patrol Explorer Post, Costco Wholesale, Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council employees and the Department of Energy.

# Energy park holds promise for powering vit plant

Several possible energy sources cited in proposal

**DREW FOSTER**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A proposed energy park at Hanford could include piped natural gas, a bio-fuel plant and acres of solar panels that may help power the vitrification

plant and one day produce commercial power.

Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council, told Benton County commissioners Wednesday that Cascade Natural Gas has proposed piping

natural gas to the future site, which could supply a significant amount of the energy needed to power the vitrification plant being built there.

Two Cascade pipelines could be used. One would have to cross the Yakima River and the other would have to cross the Columbia.

Natural gas is one of four proposals being eyed to offset energy consumption by the massive plant being built

to turn some of Hanford's worst waste into a stable glass form.

Other options include building a bio-fuel plant or manufacturing anhydrous ammonia, which can be used as an energy source. He wouldn't reveal the fourth source. "It might attract lightning rods I don't need yet," he said.

"My hope is it's a combination," Petersen said of the possible energy sources used.

The vitrification plant will require 70 average megawatts of power to function and a portion of the facility will rely on up to 45,000 gallons of diesel each day to operate. Petersen hopes the proposed energy sources replace the plant's need for diesel.

"You may need some diesel storage for backup though," he said.

See **ENERGY** | Page B2

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**  
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# New rules take effect for ill Hanford workers

Waiting period ends; more workers with cancer, survivors eligible for \$150,000 federal compensation

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Hundreds more ill Hanford workers or their survivors now should be eligible for \$150,000 compensation from the federal government.

A special exposure cohort, a ruling that eases compensation rules for more Hanford workers, took effect this weekend after clearing a congressional waiting period.

Under the new rule, workers in any

part of Hanford who may have been exposed to radiation should automatically qualify for compensation if they worked for 250 days from Oct. 1, 1943, through June 30, 1972, and developed certain cancers. The list of cancers includes more than 20 that have been linked to radiation exposure by medical research.

The new rule expands the number of workers who are eligible for automatic compensation. Previous special exposure cohorts covered only cer-

tain years in certain areas of Hanford.

Special exposure cohorts are formed by the Department of Labor when it determines that radiation exposure cannot be adequately estimated for groups of workers at Department of Energy nuclear sites during World War II and the Cold War, including the Hanford nuclear reservation.

If a worker does not fall into a special exposure cohort, the federal government applies a tougher standard for compensation, trying to determine if the worker's cancer had at least a 50 percent chance of being caused by estimated exposure to radiation on the job.

The federal government already has identified 340 pending claims of Hanford workers or their survivors who appear likely to qualify under the new rule. All are claims for workers who have covered cancers and who worked at Hanford sometime from 1943-72.

In addition, past claims that have been denied will need to be reviewed to determine whether they now qualify for compensation.

Cancers that qualify, with some restrictions, include bone cancer, rectal cancer, some leukemias, some lung cancers, multiple myeloma, some lymphomas and primary cancer of

the bile ducts, brain, breast, colon, esophagus, gall bladder, ovary, pancreas, pharynx, salivary gland, small intestine, stomach, thyroid, urinary bladder and liver.

Some secondary cancers — those that spread from primary cancers such as prostate cancer — also are covered. They include lung, bone and kidney cancer.

Claimants should make sure their files are up to date if they have been

See **ILL** | Page B2

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# Stimulus job count changed to 1,423

HERALD STAFF

The Department of Energy has dropped the official number of jobs created at Hanford with federal economic investment money from about 2,500 to 1,423.

The change reflects not fewer workers on the job, but a uniform way of counting jobs across the DOE cleanup complex that better reflects those doing cleanup work.

The larger number at Hanford included estimates of all the people working on what DOE calls "common goods and services," which included work such as manufacturing heavy equipment ordered for Hanford cleanup and paid for with stimulus money.

The 1,423 is the number of full-time jobs directly created or saved because jobs did not have to be eliminated.

Rather than representing actual people, it is based on 40-hour work weeks.

It combines the hours of employees working full-time on stimulus-funded projects with those working part-time jobs and the hours covered by stimulus funds for workers who also do work paid for by the DOE annual budget.

The new total includes employees of major subcontractors and workers involved in manufacturing unique items commissioned for Hanford cleanup.

DOE also keeps a tally of the total number of workers who have done some stimulus work and that is now at 3,521.

Hanford expects to receive \$1.96 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Since April it has spent almost \$273 million.

from the pickup, the state patrol said.

He was taken to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland, where he was reported in critical condition, officials said.

## **DOE to take public comment on draft Hanford study** 10 JAN 10

The Department of Energy will hear public comments at a Jan. 26 meeting in Richland on a wide-ranging draft study that lays the groundwork for cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation for decades to come.

It's one of eight meetings planned in the Northwest. The Richland meeting at the Red Lion Hanford House will start with an open house at 6 p.m. followed by presentations by

DOE and the Washington State Department of Ecology at 7 p.m. Public comment then will be heard until 10 p.m.

Other meetings will be Feb. 2 in Boise; Feb. 9 in Hood River, Ore., and Feb. 10 in Portland. A Seattle meeting is being rescheduled and three more meetings will be added to the list.

Among the decisions the Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement recommends are entombing the Fast Flux Test Facility, emptying 99 percent of waste from underground tanks, leaving the emptied tanks in the ground and continuing to ban many types of radioactive waste from being sent to Hanford.

19 JAN 10

# DOE believes it can resolve concerns of nuclear safety board

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Inadequate mixing of some radioactive wastes at the Hanford vitrification plant could cause a criticality or a build-up of flammable gas that could cause an explosion, according to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

But the Department of Energy believes the problem can be resolved.

It initiated tests on the mixing system planned for parts of the vitrification plant after a panel of experts in 2006 identified it as one of 28 technical

issues that needed to be studied. It's the last major and complex issue to be resolved for the plant, which is half-completed.

DOE has been testing the mixing systems at the M3 Mixing Test Platform installed at Mid-Columbia Engineering near the Hanford nuclear reservation. It expects to have testing completed in April, including confirming any modifications that need to be done to the mixing system.

That's ahead of a legally binding Tri-Party Agreement deadline to have the work completed in June.

At issue is keeping heavy particles in high-level radioactive waste mixed with the rest of the waste in tanks at the vitrification plant, which is being built to turn the waste into a stable glass form for disposal.

The waste is left from the past production of plutonium at Hanford for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The mixing at issue will be done in black cells, which will be too radioactive for humans to enter once the plant starts operating. The operation is planned to be done virtually maintenance-free by using a system with no moving parts that relies on pulses of air to keep wastes mixed.

At the test platform, researchers can watch inside a clear, 200-gallon acrylic tank as air-driven pulse jet mixers suck up mock waste through nozzles and shoot it back into the tank to keep particles suspended. Researchers can try different configurations, such as changing which mixers fire at what time or changing the size of

nozzles, to improve mixing.

By the end of September, research had shown the pulse jet mixers should work well for 26 of the tanks, but more intensive work still was being done to analyze data for 12 tanks that researchers knew would be more difficult.

More mixing is needed in larger tanks and in tanks in the earliest steps at the pretreatment process at the vit plant, where waste is divided into high-level and low-activity waste streams.

Modifications will need to be made to the mixing system of some tanks already installed at

See **MIXING** | Page A2

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# Hanford contractor begins retrieving waste from tank

First time since tank farm operator won contract in 2008

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The new Hanford tank farm contractor began pulling radioactive sludge from another underground tank Tuesday, the first it has started since taking over operations 15 months ago.

Under proposed new legal deadlines, the Department of Energy must have all 16 leak-prone underground tanks in the area called C Farm emptied by 2014.

The tank farms have 149 single-shell tanks total that must be emptied into sturdier double-shell tanks, with some solids retrieval done on 12 tanks and retrieval completed on seven.

"Ecology expects this retrieval to kick start the remaining tank retrievals in C Farm, leading to completing all tank waste retrievals in the near future," said Jeff Lyon, project manager at the Washington State Department of Ecology, a regu-

lator on the project.

The contractor, Washington River Protection Solutions, began planning to start retrieving the waste from Tank C-104, when it became the tank farm contractor in October 2008 and started construction work needed for the retrieval a year ago.

At the same time it finished retrieving as much radioactive waste as possible from another tank in C Farm, Tank C-110, continuing work started shortly before it took over tank farm operations. That work was completed in the spring and no waste had been retrieved since then until now.

DOE and WRPS had expected retrieval of the high-level radioactive and hazardous chemical waste in Tank C-104 to be started sooner, but it's been a tough tank.

"This is the one that made us nervous — it's very high risk," said Scott Sax, project operations manager for WRPS. "To date it has been the most challenging tank we've retrieved."

Some work had been done toward retrieving the sludge from Tank C-104 as early as 2002, but efforts always had shifted to other tanks as difficulties were encountered.

"At some point you have to buckle down and push a retrieval effort to completion no matter how hard it is," said Steve Pfaff, DOE project director for retrievals.

The tank has the most solids of any C Farm tank on which retrieval has been attempted so far with 260,000 gallons of sludge left in the 530,000-gallon tank. Pumpable liquid waste already has been removed from all of Hanford's single shell tanks.

Not only is there a lot of sludge in the tank, but it also has one of the highest amounts of materials such as plutonium that emit alpha radiation in all the tank farms. The waste is left from the past production of plutonium at Hanford for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

All work to install equipment for the retrieval had to be done by workers operating remote equipment, and extra shielding against radiation was

required. The three transfer pits that needed new equipment installed for the work also were highly contaminated.

"It was just one challenge after another," Pfaff said.

Extensive work also had to be done in the double-shell tank farms to allow retrieval to begin on Tank C-104.

Retrieval is being done in the tank with the modified sluicing method, which uses high pressure nozzles lowered into the enclosed tank to spray liquid onto the sludge, which had the consistency of peanut butter. It's then washed to a central pump. Instead of water, liquid waste from the double-shell tanks is being used to reduce the amount of additional waste created.

A new type of pumping system had been installed in a double-shell tank five years ago that WRPS had to bring on line to pump enough contaminated liquid out to provide spray for the Tank C-104 work. In total, four transfers of waste were needed in the double-shell tank system to provide the contaminated liquid and make space for the C-104 waste.

WRPS had talked at one time of starting retrieval of C-104 in July, and the startup schedule agreed to with DOE said October.

But the extra time to do the work carefully and safely was worth it, Sax said.

"I'm totally jazzed about getting the tank started up," he said.

Modified sluicing likely will not be able to retrieve the hard heel at the bottom of the tank, leaving it as one of three tanks in the C Tank Farm only partially emptied of solids. WRPS also is working on technology to retrieve the heel.

As work begins on C-104 WRPS also is making preparations to retrieve waste in Tank C-111 with a goal of fewer months between completing work at one tank and starting at the next. It's also continuing to develop a robotic arm system that could empty the tanks more efficiently.

► Annette Cary: 582-1533; acary@tricityherald.com; More Hanford news at hanfordnews.com.

# Ex-Hanford worker sold house to fund cleanup company

17 JAN 10

## ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

**D**ick French made a gutsy move in 2001, selling his house and everything he and his wife owned to finance a startup company, Federal Engineers and Constructors, in Richland with two other investors.



**French**

But he had a business plan he believed could succeed.

After working at high profile Hanford nuclear reservation jobs, including as one of the Department of Energy's two top managers at Hanford and as president of ICF Kaiser Hanford, he could see that the

## **INSIDE**

Breakdown of spending on local and small businesses by Hanford's largest prime contractors. | **B7**

off with expanded cleanup work.

He and two investors with Hanford experience, Jim Watts and Lucy Love, planned a business focused on heavy equipment work. They also saw the potential for work in building roads and bridges in the Northwest, in supplying nuclear power construction as the industry re-emerges and in environmental cleanup for the mining industry.

years that Hanford officials spent studying and planning environmental cleanup were about to pay



## HANFORD FALLOUT

# More downwinder claims will go to trial

Judge to select 30 to go to trial as soon as October

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

More Hanford downwinders could be going to trial to have their claims heard in a 19-year-old case.

Almost 2,000 plaintiffs have pending claims, many of them asserting that past emissions of radioactive material from the Hanford nuclear

reservation were carried downwind and caused cancer or other thyroid disease. Some people also believe they developed other cancers from eating contaminated fish.

On Wednesday, Judge William Fremming Nielsen of Eastern Washington District Federal Court in Spokane said that he would select 30 of the claims for hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroids, to proceed to trial as soon as October. In addition, about 32 claims filed for thyroid cancer will be considered for settlement with the help of a mediator.

Nearly a year ago Nielsen indicated that trying cases in individual trials would be too time consuming and costly. Just 10 claims have been resolved through litigation since the case was filed in 1991 and some jury decisions since have been reversed by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

But Wednesday, Nielsen said that the two sides appeared to be far apart in their settlement talks, with plaintiffs and the defense disagreeing on how much radiation downwinders had been exposed to, according to attorneys at the hearing.

The defense, representing early Hanford contractors, had asked that the judge begin to randomly select cases to go to trial to break a logjam that the defense believes includes many weak claims, according to the defense's court filings. Although attorneys are representing early Hanford contractors, the U.S. government indemnified them and is responsible for costs and any judgments against the contractors.

The plaintiffs believe most of its claims are solid, contrary to the defense's portrayal, said plaintiff

attorney Richard Eymann of Spokane.

The case includes 636 claims for hypothyroidism that plaintiffs believe was caused by Hanford releases of radioactive iodine, which concentrates in the thyroid.

The defense and plaintiffs disagree on the method for estimating how

See **DOWNWINDER** | Page B2

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22 JAN 10

# Reach center may find home

Water park, indoor carousel, camping, amphitheater, disc golf also proposed

**JOHN TRUMBO**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The west end of Columbia Park could become home to the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center, a 61,000-square-foot cultural and regional museum.

The possibility was discussed Thursday by community stakeholders who are evaluating how to best use 146 acres of the park's riverfront from Edison Street to the Bateman Island area.

John White of Berger/ABAM, the consultant hired by Richland and Kennewick, revealed two versions of a master plan alternative for maximum public access and use of the nearly two-mile stretch.

"The only difference between them is one has the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center," White said.

Each alternative provides sites for an indoor carousel, a water park and a transportation museum. Also included are a riverside trail, a great lawn, amphitheater, restored duck pond, 18-hole disc golf course, nature paths and camping, White said.

The prospect of having the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center appealed to several members of the community resource team assembled to hear the consultant's report.

"Having a facility this size to anchor (the west end of the park) would be remarkable," said Ed Frost, a Kennewick planning commissioner.

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## BIRTH OF ATOMIC AGE

# Crowd wants B Reactor named national park

National Park Service officials decided status was not feasible

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Speaker after speaker at public hearings Thursday in Richland had the same message for the National Park Service: Make Hanford's historic B Reactor part of a new Manhattan Project Historical Park.

It's an option the National Park Service considered, but concluded was not feasible by the time it released a draft study that looked at options for the future of B Reactor and other Manhattan Project sites at Los Alamos, N.M., and Oak Ridge, Tenn.

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Managing a park that included all three sites could be unreasonably expensive, it said. Visitor access could be limited by safety concerns, and the park service has liability concerns.

But those concerns are exaggerated and could be overcome, said Maynard Plahuta, president of the B Reactor Museum Association, and many who spoke at the meetings agreed. About 85 people attended the afternoon session and 45 people attended an evening session.

B Reactor needs to be included in a national park to best tell the story of the birth

See **B REACTOR** | Page B2



Keith Dunbar of the National Park Service leads the first of two public meetings Thursday in Richland to hear public comment on the future of Hanford's historic B Reactor. About 85 people attended the afternoon meeting. Many who spoke asked that B Reactor be part of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Richard Dickin | [rdickin@tricityherald.com](mailto:rdickin@tricityherald.com)

# DOE vows to help with transition to fewer workers

Agency officials say  
community must  
come up with a plan

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is ready to help the Tri-Cities area make the eventual transition to fewer Hanford jobs, a top DOE official said Wednesday.

But first the community needs to agree on a vision of what it wants its future to look like, Mark Gilbertson, deputy assistant secretary at DOE, said at the Tri-City Development Council's annual economic outlook

conference in Pasco.

"We understand we are guests in your community," said Ines Triay, DOE energy

assistant secretary for environmental management. "We want to work together

and make sure we understand your vision for the community."

Triay originally was scheduled to visit the Tri-Cities for the conference, but instead

See **TRANSITION** | Page A2

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## BRIEFS

### **Hanford tech library planning guided tour**

The Hanford Technical Library plans a one-hour guided tour at 8:15 a.m. Feb. 4.

Participants can meet library staff and learn about the services, books, journals, standards, and technical reports available to the public at the research and technical library.

The library, operated by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, is located with the Washington State University Tri-Cities' Max Benitz Memorial Library and the Department of Energy Public Reading Room at the Consolidated Information Center on the WSU Tri-Cities campus in Richland. For more information, call 372-7430

# BRIEFS

## DOE launches new Hanford website

31 JAN 10

Finding basic information about the Hanford nuclear reservation will be easier with the launch of a new Department of Energy website.

DOE, with the help of Lockheed Martin and Mission Support Alliance, has launched a new site at its old Hanford web address — [www.hanford.gov](http://www.hanford.gov).

DOE has been working on the new site since early 2008 after concluding the former site was poorly organized and difficult to navigate. The new

site should help DOE reach a much larger audience, said spokesman Cameron Hardy.

It has everything from a section for children who are learning about Hanford at school to technical documents that Hanford workers reference. It also includes information on tours of Hanford and historic B Reactor, photo galleries and videos.

Links have been for Hanford information on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

“What it comes down to is that visitors can more easily find the information they need about the Hanford Site and DOE’s cleanup efforts,” Hardy said.



27 JAN 10

# FFTF restart, better Hanford cleanup among public concern

Over 100 attend first of 8  
hearings on cleanup study

ANNETTE CARY

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Speakers at a public hearing Tuesday night split their comments between calling for the Fast Flux Test Facility to be saved and worries that proposed cleanup plans for Hanford would not protect the environment and human health.

The Department of Energy hearing in Richland kicked off a series of eight meetings in three states to hear public opinion on a wide-ranging draft study that lays out options for cleanup of many areas of the Hanford nuclear reservation. More than 100 people attended.

Among the decisions that the Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement recommends are entombing FFTF, emptying 99 percent of radioactive waste from underground tanks, leaving the emptied tanks in the ground and extending a ban on sending many types of radioactive waste to Hanford.

The draft study did not include cleanup alternatives that would meet legal requirements and comply with drinking water standards, said Tom Carpenter, executive director of Hanford Challenge, a watchdog group.

"Every alternative shows severe risks to drinking water in wells miles away (in the future)," said Gerald Pollet, executive director of Heart of American Northwest, a watchdog group.

In addition, DOE knows too little about what is in the soil under Hanford's old tanks to have good information on which to base sound cleanup

# Hanford not recommended for mercury storage

23 JAN 10

## DOE study prefers commercial Texas site

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is recommending that a commercial storage site in Texas be used to store up to 11,000 tons of the nation's excess mercury rather than sending it to the Hanford nuclear reservation.

Hanford has been one of seven sites across the nation considered for mercury storage after the Mercury Export Ban Act of 2008 prohibited the export of mercury beginning in 2013 and required the Department of Energy to have facilities ready to manage and store mercury generated in the United States.

Storing the mercury at Hanford long-term has been opposed by the Tri-City Development Council, which wants Hanford to be cleaned up and become available for other uses, such as clean energy research and production.

The state of Washington, while supporting the intent of the Mercury Export Ban Act, has been concerned about the possible impacts on the environmental cleanup of Hanford if it is used for long-term mercury storage.

A decision on where to store the mercury has not been made, but DOE has released a

draft environmental study that concludes that Waste Control Specialists, west of Andrews, Texas, is the best option. Other sites considered include the Grand Junction Disposal Site in Colorado; the Idaho National Laboratory; Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada; Kansas City Plant in Missouri; and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina.

DOE will take comments on the draft study for 60 days and hold public meetings, which have yet to be scheduled. A final study is scheduled to be issued in the fall and then a decision will be made by DOE.

The draft study found that the commercial facility has the needed permits to store hazardous waste on its 1,338-acre site. It is surrounded by 13,500 acres also owned by the company. The company has a building available that could be used in the short term to store mercury until a new storage building designed specifically for mercury is constructed.

DOE liked the site's remote location, existing rail line, lack of nearby bodies of water and the few people living in the area.

At Hanford, DOE considered whether mercury could be stored in the Fuels and Materials Examination Facility, which

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## BRIEFS

### **Richland company gets \$30 M Hanford contract**

TradeWind Services of Richland has won a subcontract worth up to \$30 million to help expand Hanford's huge lined landfill for low-level radioactive waste.

The subcontract covers excavation of super cell 10 and construction of the liner and moisture collection system for super cells 9 and 10 at Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility.

The cells are called "super cells" because they are twice the size of the first eight cells, or waste disposal areas, at the landfill. The super cells are 1,000 feet long, 500 feet wide and 70 feet deep.

Washington Closure Hanford, which operates the nuclear reservation landfill for the Department of Energy, awarded the subcontract to TradeWind. Washington Closure expects to receive about \$100 million in federal economic stimulus money to expand the landfill and make other improvements.

DelHur Industries of Hermiston was awarded the contract to excavate super cell 9.

More details about the contract award will be announced Wednesday.

# Injunction granted in Hanford dispute

Federal judge order subcontractor not to contact employees of company that claims its workers are being 'hijacked'

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A federal judge has prohibited a Hanford subcontractor from hiring or even contacting employees of another company that has accused it of "hijacking" employees it found for Hanford jobs.

Federal Judge Edward Shea of Eastern Washington District Court granted substantial portions of a preliminary injunction requested by Oxford Global Resources, an international company, against BNL Technical Services, a small business in Richland.

In addition, he ordered the two

companies into mediation.

At issue is hiring being done at Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS), the Hanford tank farm contractor, since it began receiving \$326 million in federal economic stimulus money. WRPS expects to bring on board nearly 100 engineer/contractors over 12 months, according to court documents.

Oxford told the court that it had placed employees with WRPS in the past by going through ELR Consulting, a small Kennewick business that WRPS had preapproved as a subcontractor. ELR Consulting can help meet

certain WRPS goals for small-business subcontracting, including subcontracting with minority or disabled veteran-owned companies.

WRPS later asked Oxford for help hiring additional specialty engineers and interviewed and agreed to hire four candidates located and recommended by Oxford, according to the court order.

Oxford signed employment contracts with them, gave two of them cash advances to defray relocation costs, then arranged for ELR to subcontract the engineers to WRPS, the court order said.

Oxford does not qualify as a small business and was not one of three preapproved subcontractors for WRPS.

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However, WRPS then sent its three preapproved subcontractors, which included BNL, a request for bids for three of the employees and included the information that they worked for Oxford, said the court order.

BNL contacted the three engineers less than a week before they were scheduled to start work at Hanford and recruited them for BNL, said the court order. BNL told the engineers that Oxford could not subcontract directly with WRPS, which the court found was true after Oxford claimed the

13 FEB 10

# Hanford pumping stops again

Vapor worries persist for workers at leak-prone tank

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Pumping resumed on Hanford tank waste early Friday morning but quickly stopped as some workers again raised concerns

about chemical vapors.

Work to empty leak-prone Tank C-104, the only underground tank now being emptied, was stopped Feb. 2 because workers were smelling vapors vented from the tank and some developed symp-

toms that raised concerns.

Washington River Protection Solutions, or WRPS, restarted retrieval Friday after increasing safety measures. But for the second time this month, a tank farm worker used the authority granted to Hanford employees to call a halt to work they believe could be unsafe.

Friday morning officials from WRPS and the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council followed a Department of Energy process for responding to employee stop work orders and determined it was safe to resume work, said WRPS spokesman John Britton.

See **HANFORD** | Page A2

## HANFORD WORKERS

## DOE to improve beryllium disease protection

Planned review will be full-scale inspection of program

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Department of Energy is committed to improving a program to protect Hanford workers from beryllium, which can cause an incurable lung disease, top DOE officials said Tuesday.

It will boost a planned review of the Hanford prevention program to a full-

scale inspection of the program, said Glenn Podonsky, the DOE chief health, safety and security officer.

In addition DOE will follow recommendations made by the Hanford Advisory Board to improve the prevention program, said Frank Marcinowski, a DOE deputy assistant secretary for environmental management.

On Feb. 5 the Hanford Advisory

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Board sent a letter to DOE officials critical of Hanford efforts to protect workers from beryllium exposure, saying recommendations for improvements were not being followed. It was

### CLEANUP

Tank waste being pumped again. | B1

part of an exchange of letters that started when the board gave DOE advice 10 months ago.

DOE responded by calling a meeting Tuesday in Richland with Podonsky that included members of the advisory board, Hanford DOE leaders, organized labor officials and workers with chronic beryllium disease. The focus was to discuss the program and plans for the investigation.

Ines Triay, the DOE assistant secretary for environmental management,

had planned to attend by video conference but Marcinowski was a last-minute replacement because of a serious illness in Triay's family.

"I'm encouraged," said Mark Fisher, chairman of the Hanford Beryllium Awareness Group. But making

See **BERYLLIUM** | Page A2

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# Imported waste would increase contamination

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

A new draft study shows importing radioactive waste for disposal at Hanford would significantly increase pollution in ground water beneath the nuclear reservation, according to the Washington State Department of Ecology.

The state long has opposed the Department of Energy sending radioactive waste to Hanford for disposal. But the draft Hanford Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement that's open for public comment puts some numbers to that assertion.

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

Under some scenarios that appear likely, the amount of

certain long-lived radioactive isotopes that would be imported and buried at Hanford would account for as much as 90 percent of the releases of that isotope to the environment, according to the state. Some of the worst contamination could occur 1,000 or more years from now.

The draft study prepared by DOE looks at sending 107,000 cubic yards of radioactive waste, some mixed with hazardous chemicals, to Hanford for disposal. However, DOE officials agreed as part of a settlement agreement of a state lawsuit not to import that waste until the Hanford vitrification plant is fully operational to treat the waste. That's scheduled for 2022.

But importing waste could then again become an option.

In the summary of the 6,000-page draft study, DOE writes that "receipt of off-site waste streams that contain specific

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# Registration dates announced for B Reactor, Hanford tours

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Internet registration for Hanford tours in 2010 will open at 12:01 a.m. March 9, and registration for Hanford B Reactor tours will open at 12:01 a.m. March 16, according to the Department of Energy's Hanford website.

This year the Department of Energy plans 60 public tours of the nuclear reservation from April 13 to Sept. 15.

Registration, which is done at [www.hanford.gov](http://www.hanford.gov) under "Hanford Tours," can fill quickly.

Two Hanford tours a day will be offered on April 13, 14, 20 and 21; May 4, 5, 18 and 19; June 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 29 and 30; July 1, 13, 14, 15, 27, 28 and 29; Aug. 10, 11, 12, 24 and 25; and Sept. 14 and 15.

Hanford tours are offered only during the work week so participants can see cleanup work being conducted. Times have not been posted yet.

Details of what will be covered on this year's Hanford bus tours have not been finalized, but the high point for many participants is a walking tour of B Reactor.

In addition, the tours typically include a drive through the HAMMER training center, a look at the Hanford and White Bluffs town sites where residents were ordered to leave their land during World War II, a look at Hanford's huge landfill for radioactive waste and a look at several other cleanup projects.

An additional 50 tours of just B Reactor will be offered both during the week and on Saturdays. Dates are April 6, 7, 10, 24, 27 and 28; May 11, 12, 15, 25, 26 and 29; June 8, 9, 12, 22, 23 and 26; July 6, 7, 10, 20, 21 and 24; Aug. 3, 4, 7, 17, 18 and 21; and Sept. 7, 8, 11, 21, 22 and 25.

Participants ride a bus to the reactor on the nuclear reservation, which is closed to the public.

B Reactor, which supporters are hoping to have included in

a proposed Manhattan Project national park, was the nation's first full-scale nuclear reactor. It produced plutonium for the world's first nuclear explosion and the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

In addition to registration online, there will be opportunities for people to register for B Reactor tours by telephone or by visiting the B Reactor Tour Headquarters at 2000 Logston Blvd., Richland, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. after registration opens.

Participants on the Hanford or B Reactor tours must be at least 18. Only U.S. citizens may tour Hanford but there are no citizenship restrictions to visit just B Reactor.

Further registration details, including for phone and walk-in registration of B Reactor, will be announced before registration begins.

► *Annette Cary: 582-1533; [acary@tricityherald.com](mailto:acary@tricityherald.com); More Hanford news at [hanfordnews.com](http://hanfordnews.com)*

# Work halted to dig up waste in central Hanford

24 FEB 10

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Work has stopped to dig up waste contaminated with plutonium at Hanford after two incidents earlier this month.

Problems related to the incidents included hazards not being adequately identified and responsibilities of workers not matching their training or qualifications, said Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board staff in a weekly report just released.

"Worker and management responses demonstrated a failure to implement lessons learned" from previous problems encountered by other Hanford contractors, the safety board report said.

CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. has been digging up transuranic waste, typically waste contaminated with plutonium, that was temporarily buried after 1970. Then Congress said transuranic waste must be sent to a national repository, but until the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico opened, the waste was

buried for later retrieval.

Much of the transuranic waste retrieved so far was in drums and boxes neatly stacked in holes dug in central Hanford and then covered with dirt.

But CH2M Hill has begun work on Trench 11, where the waste was dropped in helter-skelter.

On Feb. 1 an excavator with a bucket was being used to remove some dirt that had been piled up at the trench when it unexpectedly hit a glove box that was close to the surface of the ground.

The excavator bucket knocked the cover from one of the ports where gloves would once have been attached to reach into the glove box and do work with radioactively contaminated items. At first workers did not know that a glove box was hit and only knew that

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# Hanford tank waste being pumped again

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Pumping of waste from Hanford's underground tanks resumed Tuesday, four days after a worker called a stop to work because of concerns about chemical vapors.

Washington River Protection Solutions had made several changes to better protect workers before the worker called a stop to pumping Friday and the contractor made no further changes before work was restarted Tuesday.

Friday was the second time this month that a worker had used his authority to halt pumping because he and other workers believed vapors posed a safety concern. Both times the contractor and organized labor officials followed Department of Energy procedures and investigated then determined that it would be safe to resume pumping, according to WRPS.

In a message to employees Tuesday Chuck Spencer, president of WRPS, said chemical readings are well below established action levels for chemicals detected and the contractor is taking steps that should further lower exposure.

"However, it's obvious chemical vapors continue to be of concern to a number of our workers," he said.

Workers with concerns should talk to their managers, he said.

"Rumors often flourish during times like these and we want to make sure you have the best information available," he said.

Although both halts called by workers were lifted, WRPS did stop work Feb. 2 because of vapor concerns and did not attempt to restart work until Friday.

During that down time it roped off a corridor that included the C Tank Farm, the nearby AN Tank Farm and an area between the farms where workers had smelled vapors in late January. Workers are encouraged to wear face masks that have a layer of carbon in that area, but wearing those masks or more protective respiratory gear remains voluntary.

Monitors that will sound an alarm when chemical vapors are detected at levels well below those requiring action have been installed in the area between the farms. In addition more samples are being collected for laboratory analysis from the roped-off area and from a stack that vents chemical vapors from Tank C-104 into the air.

While tank pumping continues, WRPS will continue to look at other options that may offer more "protection, confidence and comfort," Spencer said. Among possibilities discussed earlier is raising the stack at Tank C-104 higher than its current 17 feet.

Hanford Challenge, a watchdog group, had called for a stop to work at the C Tank Farm last week until workers are confident their health is protected.

In late January about a dozen workers reported smelling the chemical vapors and some had symptoms that WRPS said included watery eyes, throat irritation and a metallic taste.

Hanford Challenge said some workers also have had nosebleeds, numb lips and gums, irregular heartbeats, tightness in the chest, headaches and a burning feeling in the lungs.

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# 4 companies interested in Hanford energy park

## 60-square-mile site would fuel vit plant

**KEVIN MCCULLEN**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

There are four "fairly firm" proposals from companies interested in a proposed energy park at Hanford that would help provide power to the vitrification plant under construction at the site, a representative of the Mid-Columbia Energy Initiative said Tuesday.

The Mid-Columbia Energy Initiative, a group seeking to establish the energy park, is working to secure 20 square miles of reclaimed land on the Hanford site for the energy park by 2013 and 60 square miles by 2015.

Gary Petersen, vice president of Hanford programs for the Tri-City Development Council, told Richland City Council members at a Tuesday workshop that the types of energy the companies interested in the park would provide include piped natural gas supplied by Cascade Natural Gas, and bio-fuel, anhydrous ammonia and liquefied natural gas plants.

"These companies are anxious to move ahead on that site," Petersen said. He did not name the firms.

The energy will be needed to power the massive vitrification plant, which will turn some of Hanford's worst

waste into a stable glass form.

The vitrification plant will require 70 average megawatts of power to function and require up to 45,000 gallons of diesel each day to operate. The Department of Energy is interested in alternative fuel sources to help reduce the carbon footprint at the site and curtail dependence on foreign oil.

"In the next four years, we'll see the opportunity for development of this site," Petersen said. "The catch is offsetting the power needs of the waste treatment plant."

Petersen also asked if the city of Richland would be interested in supplying utility services to the proposed energy park, which is outside the city boundaries. He asked if the city could provide "some expression of support" to supply utility service that he could take to DOE officials.

Council members agreed to discuss the issue at an upcoming council retreat.

Petersen last month told Benton County commissioners that another portion of the energy park could include a commercially viable solar plant, which would cover miles of grassland with both photovoltaic panels and concentrated solar panels. Petersen said the panels could create 10 megawatts of solar-produced energy by 2014.

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# MID-COLUMBIA

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## STIMULATING WASTE CLEANUP

# Hanford to resume shipments to New Mexico

Federal dollars move up timeline for trucking waste out

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

Truckloads of radioactive waste will be rolling away from the Hanford nuclear reservation again starting in March.

No transuranic waste has been shipped from Hanford to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, in New Mexico, the nation's repository for

transuranic waste, since September 2008.

Transuranic waste at Hanford typically is debris such as laboratory equipment, protective clothing or tools contaminated with plutonium from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

The Department of Energy had not planned to resume shipments to New

Mexico from Hanford until 2014, but federal economic stimulus money has accelerated its plans.

Earlier, Hanford's annual budget money was shifted from work in central Hanford, where transuranic waste is stored, to clean up the area closest to the Columbia River.

"This is an opportunity to work with WIPP to get rid of additional waste," said Geoff Tyree, DOE spokesman.

Hanford will spend \$30 million in American Recovery and Reinvest-

ment Act money to speed up work to prepare the waste for shipments. Additional economic stimulus money is making more trucks and staff available for the project through the DOE Carlsbad Field Office in New Mexico.

DOE plans to start with two shipments to WIPP a week and then build to five a week by late spring and summer. In the fall it could be sending seven truckloads a week to New Mexico.

In 2008 when shipments were sus-

pending, about two truckloads a week were being sent to WIPP. Shipments to date total 432 out of an estimated 1,200 that may be required for Hanford's stored transuranic waste.

The waste is shipped in three 10-foot-tall cylindrical containers placed upright on a truck trailer. An average load would hold about 12 cubic yards of waste.

CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation

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# Triay says DOE will meet obligations on tank waste disposal

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Obama administration is committed to keeping its promises on disposal of high-level radioactive waste from Hanford and other Department of Energy weapons cleanup sites, said Ines Triay, DOE assistant secretary for environmental cleanup.

She spoke Wednesday at the first 2010 briefing for the bipartisan House Nuclear Cleanup Caucus organized by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., to provide information on DOE environmental cleanup to members of Congress and their staff.

President Obama is terminating plans for the Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository, where Hanford's high-level radioactive waste and irradiated nuclear fuel was intended to go.

Energy Secretary Steven Chu appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission to look at options for defense waste and used commercial nuclear power fuel that would have gone to Yucca Mountain for disposal.

Triay said she was encouraged by

the caliber of people appointed to the commission.

"Those kind of powerful minds can come together to designate a path forward that is going to make a future for high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel more robust," she said.

It also gives the DOE environmental cleanup program an opportunity to have new strategies and technologies for high-level waste vetted by the commission, she said.

Technology and science need to be used to come up with strategies that improve the efficiency of dealing with high-level radioactive waste, she said.

"The energy secretary feels strongly



**Triay**

we need to make an investment in this area to do this work better," she said.

Hanford has 53 million gallons of radioactive waste in underground tanks. Plans call for emptying leak-prone tanks that date to as early as World War II and turning the waste into a stable glass form at the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant under construction.

Vitrified high-level waste will have to be stored temporarily at Hanford without Yucca Mountain being available, but Tri-City leaders are concerned that the waste would remain permanently at Hanford.

The Obama administration's pro-

posed 2011 budget for DOE environmental cleanup includes \$60 million to develop tank waste technologies and \$25 million to better understand how ground water contamination spreads at sites such as Hanford.

It also includes a \$50 million increase in funding for the Hanford vitrification plant to help reduce risks that might prevent the plant from being ready to treat tank waste in 2019 or drive its cost above the budgeted \$12.2 billion.

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## WASHINGTON DELEGATION

# Congressional leaders support B Reactor park

9 lawmakers lobby for Hanford site's inclusion in Manhattan District plan

**ANNETTE CARY**

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The National Park Service needs to include Hanford's historic B Reactor in any plan for a Manhattan District

National Historic Park, nine members of the Washington congressional delegation said in a letter to the Park Service director.

The letter was signed by Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash. Washington representatives who signed the letter included Republicans Doc Hastings, Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Dave Reichert and Democrats Norm Dicks, Adam Smith, Jay Inslee and Rick

Larsen. In January, Hastings separately sent a similar letter to Park Service Director Jon Jarvis.

The Park Service has released a draft study of historical sites of the Manhattan Project, but "none of the draft alternatives as written fully provide for the preservation and interpretation of Hanford's B Reactor," the members' letter said.

Only some facilities in Los Alamos, N.M., initially including the homes of

Manhattan Project scientists, are considered in the draft study for inclusion in a national park.

"We believe that the most unique and historically compelling technical facilities at all of the sites under consideration must be incorporated into any final National Park Service plan," the letter said.

B Reactor was the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor. Built in about 13 months, it produced the plutonium for

the world's first atomic explosion and the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping end World War II. It continued to produce plutonium during the Cold War, along with other reactors based on its design.

The draft study eliminated B Reactor from consideration for a national park based on what Hastings earlier called "vague assertions and

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