

News from Around the Complex

November 2006

December 1, 2006

Major area at Savannah River Site cleaned and closed, Myrtle Beach Online
AIKEN – An area of the Savannah River Site that once served as port bringing parts to the former nuclear weapons complex has been officially shut down. The company that runs SRS for the government said Thursday that the cleanup of "T Area" was a success story. "This one is special because this one's the first," said Leo Sain, the executive vice president of Washington Savannah River Co., the private contractor that manages SRS for the Energy Department. It cost \$36.4 million to remove contaminated soil from T Area and cover it with a protective cap. That doesn't include the money spent to level 28 buildings that used to be located there. The Energy Department took a different approach to the cleanup, working to close the entire area at once instead of working piecemeal. The process saved years off the original schedule, officials said. "Our main focus has to be to the public that we can handle these cleanup issues," said Jim Rispoli, the Energy Department's assistant secretary for environmental management.

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/mld/myrtlebeachonline/news/local/16142338.htm>

December 1, 2006

Radioactive Find Prompts Survey of Area, Washington Post

PADUCAH – Six areas of overgrown, radioactive dirt mounds have been found east of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, prompting plans to survey all of the 6,463-acre West Kentucky Wildlife Management area to see if there are more. All the mounds have been roped off and posted with warning signs. "So far, the levels from raw data don't indicate biological risks or health hazards, but they do exceed levels for which we do postings," Mitch Hicks, health physicist for the Department of Energy's Paducah and Portsmouth, Ohio, Project Office, told the Paducah Sun. Larger mounds, estimated by tree growth to be at least 20 to 30 years old, are in wooded areas on both sides of a road running into the plant. They were found during routine DOE surveys during the first two weeks of November and were determined to contain uranium and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/01/AR2006120101187.html>

November 30, 2006

Yucca director downplays project timeline, He says nuclear waste repository unlikely to open before 2020, Las Vegas Review Journal

WASHINGTON -- While the Department of Energy has set a target month of March 2017 for Yucca Mountain to begin receiving nuclear waste, the project director said Wednesday it "most probably" won't be opened until at least three years later. Anticipated lawsuits by Nevada or others challenging a license for the Yucca site will account for the delays, Ward Sproat, director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, said in a presentation to a nuclear studies panel of the National Academies of Science. "Bottom line is while that (2017) is a best achievable schedule, the most probable schedule is probably in the neighborhood of ... plus three and a half years," Sproat said.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2006/Nov-30-Thu-2006/news/11141176.html

November 30, 2006

Department of Energy stops WIPP shipments, El Paso Times

CARLSBAD -- The U.S. Department of Energy has halted some radioactive shipments to its underground nuclear waste dump near Carlsbad after liquid was found in a drum of what was supposed to be dry waste. The Energy department on Sunday shut down shipments from the Idaho National Laboratory, which is trying to send 23,000 drums of waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The department's Carlsbad office gave officials in Idaho until Dec. 27 to report how the mistake occurred and how it will be fixed. The problem was discovered while waste drums were being prepared for shipment from Idaho to Carlsbad. WIPP is not allowed to

accept liquid waste because of the risks of leaks or potentially explosive materials. The drum in question had been cleared to be shipped after an X-ray showed it was liquid-free. The liquid was spotted after workers double-checked the X-ray under a new confirmation procedure the state of New Mexico required beginning Nov. 16, said Kerry Watson, manager of the DOE's WIPP office. http://www.elpasotimes.com/news/ci_4744074

November 30, 2006

DOE Proposes Nuclear Waste Dumps for 11 Communities, *Union of Concerned Scientists*

EDITORIAL – The Union of Concerned Scientists condemned yesterday's decision by the Department of Energy (DOE) to award \$16 million in grants to 11 U.S. communities to begin studying their suitability for hosting two dangerous new nuclear facilities. The plan is part of the administration's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership and if realized, would pose serious health, safety and environmental risks to the communities where the plants are located. The plan also would make it far easier for terrorists to gain access to materials that could be used to make nuclear weapons or potent dirty bombs. "Any community accepting one of these facilities is also accepting a de facto nuclear waste dump in their midst," said Dr. Edwin Lyman, senior staff scientist at the UCS Global Security Program. "People living near these proposed new nuclear sites have the right to know the truth and should have a say about the dangerous facilities that some of their elected officials want to bring into their communities." http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/doe-proposes-nuclear-waste.html

November 29, 2006

Department of Energy Selects Recipients of GNEP Siting Grants, Eleven sites to be analyzed for potential nuclear recycling facilities, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that 11 commercial and public consortia have been selected to receive up to \$16 million in grants, subject to negotiation, to conduct detailed siting studies for integrated spent fuel recycling facilities under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) initiative. DOE will award the grants early next year after negotiations are completed with prospective awardees. "As our economy grows so will the need for reliable, emissions-free energy generation. Nuclear energy can help meet that need and GNEP can do it in a way that maximizes the benefit of nuclear fuel while minimizing the risk of nuclear proliferation," DOE Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Dennis Spurgeon said. "That is why we are pleased that so many communities across the country are interested in hosting the initial facilities necessary to support this exciting project. These selections are an important initial step in proceeding to evaluate and select locations to host GNEP facilities." <http://energy.gov/news/4492.htm>

November 25, 2006

U.S. fights tribal lawsuit over Hanford, Government failed to assess harm to natural resources, *Yakamas say, Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

RICHLAND – The Energy Department is asking a federal judge to partially dismiss claims in a lawsuit brought by the Yakama Nation for natural resource damages at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The Yakama Nation -- joined by Oregon, Washington, the Nez Perce and the Umatillas -- is alleging that the federal government has failed to adequately assess harm to natural resources caused by nuclear contamination at Hanford from the production of plutonium for the nuclear weapons program. The suit asks the federal court to order the Energy Department to follow federal Superfund law and begin an assessment of how pollution has affected natural resources, such as vegetation, animals, groundwater and the Columbia River. http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/293683_doesuit25.html

November 24, 2006

GAO: \$150B nuke proposal needs oversight, *United Press International*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Energy Department has proposed a nuclear weapons complex overhaul that could cost more than \$150 billion over 25 years. The Government Accountability Office warns that if the program is to go forward, close congressional oversight is going to be needed to pull the program off. "Given the importance of the nation's nuclear deterrent, the

large amount of funding required, and DOE's history of poor project management, it is vital that the Congress closely oversee (the National Nuclear Security Administration's) implementation of its proposal," the GAO stated in a recent report on its recommendations for the new Congress' legislative and oversight priorities.

<http://www.upi.com/SecurityTerrorism/view.php?StoryID=20061124-094902-9763r>

November 24, 2006

Nuclear waste dump faces new roadblocks, *Ledger Enquirer (Georgia)*

WASHINGTON - When Congress targeted Nevada as the nation's nuclear waste dumping ground, the state didn't have the political power to say no. Twenty years later, the most ardent foe of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump is about to become Senate majority leader. Nevada Democratic Sen. Harry Reid's new job, which gives him control over what legislation reaches the Senate floor, could deal a crippling blow to the already stumbling project. Among Reid's first acts after this month's election was to convene a conference call with home-state reporters to declare Yucca Mountain "dead right now." "It sure is different now than when I came (to the Senate) in 1986," the senator observed.

<http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/mld/ledgerenquirer/news/politics/16090701.htm>

November 20, 2006

State has had radioactive recycling plant before, *Myrtle Beach Online*

SNELLING, S.C. - South Carolina is on the short list for a plant to create nuclear reactor fuel out of radioactive waste. It's not the first time the state has tried to create a nuclear recycling operation. In Barnwell County in the 1970s, a \$350 million industrial complex was built to recycle radioactive fuel from nuclear reactors. When the facility known as "Agnes" was ready to open, the federal government shut it down. There were worries that the recycled fuel could be turned into bombs. Now, part of the impetus behind the push to recycle radioactive material is to keep all that nuclear waste out of the hands of people who would hope to make a bomb. But as Agnes could see new life under the mixed-oxide fuel plan - the nearby Savannah River Site where the government once made nuclear warheads is another potential site - the dangers of banking on nuclear technology is highlighted.

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/mld/myrtlebeachonline/news/local/16056894.htm>

November 20, 2006

Is more waste on its way? Oak Ridge might process other states' transuranic materials, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Getting nasty nukes out of town is a top priority of the government's cleanup program in Oak Ridge, and there's a special emphasis on transuranic waste, a class of long-lived radioactive materials created by reactor operations. It's quite possible, however, that more waste could be headed this way. Steve McCracken, DOE's environmental chief, said transuranic waste from other federal sites could be brought to Oak Ridge for processing in the years ahead. There are no discussions under way at present, he said, but added, "We think the door is open to do that." In fact, the state has given its tacit approval for importing waste to Oak Ridge once some of the current backlog hits the road. "We have accepted the concept of treating out-of-state waste," said John Owsley, who heads Tennessee's Department of Environment and Conservation's Oak Ridge oversight office.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5156890,00.html

November 20, 2006

DOE Clears Way for Closure of Emptied Waste Tanks at Idaho National Laboratory, Secretary Bodman Signs Idaho Waste Determination After Consultation with NRC, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman yesterday signed a waste determination for the Idaho Tank Farm Facility clearing the way for the Department of Energy (DOE) to safely and permanently close the 15 waste storage tanks at the Idaho National Laboratory near Arco, Idaho. DOE will begin grouting the first 11 cleaned and emptied tanks at Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC) and plans to complete all 15 tanks by December 2012. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management James

Rispoli also signed an amended Record of Decision (ROD) implementing the Secretary's Section 3116 Determination. These actions follow extensive environmental analysis, public review and comment, and consultation with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and State of Idaho over the past three years. <http://energy.gov/news/4484.htm>

November 17, 2006

FBI Announces New Forensic Partnership with Savannah River National Laboratory, *FBI Press Release*

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Energy's Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) today announced the opening of a new laboratory and office suite for the forensic examination of radiological material and associated evidence, located at the Savannah River Site near Aiken, South Carolina. The new Radiological Evidence Analysis Lab Suite (REALS) will serve as a hub laboratory for the FBI and intelligence agencies who are involved in the prevention of terrorism and the investigation of the disbursement of radiological materials. The new REALS provides the FBI with a flexible radiological containment laboratory where FBI experts can safely conduct forensic examinations on items of evidence associated with radiological material. Traditional forensic laboratories are not designed for the safe examination of radiological materials and evidence associated with a radiological disbursement. <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel06/real111706.htm>

November 14, 2006

Comments heard on Complex 2030, Most object to plans to build more nuclear weapons at Y-12, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The government's plans for the nuclear weapons complex of the future - known as Complex 2030 - could expand work at the Y-12 warhead facility, including a possible role with plutonium. Y-12 historically has manufactured the secondary stage of nuclear warheads, specializing in work with highly enriched uranium. Under the new proposal, the Oak Ridge plant is among five sites being considered to process plutonium - one of the world's most hazardous materials - and manufacture warhead parts with it. The National Nuclear Security Administration, a part of the U.S. Department of Energy, held public meetings here Monday to begin preparations on an environmental impact statement. The EIS would supplement earlier plans for maintaining the nation's weapons stockpile and the production facilities. http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5141626,00.html

November 14, 2006

PFS settlement in works, Lawmakers to consider 'discount' proposal, *Deseret News*

Lawmakers today will consider a "discount" settlement of nearly \$850,000 with attorneys for Private Fuel Storage and the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians, who successfully fought state laws designed to keep out high-level nuclear waste. Members of the Legislative Management Committee can act on the settlement, which was negotiated down from more than \$1 million, Senate President John Valentine, R-Orem, said. "I think it'll be acceptable to the Legislature," Valentine said. "The settlement is a good discount for the state." Meanwhile, the state has filed a new appeal on a separate issue, challenging the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's granting a license for PFS. The Deseret Morning News has learned the amount of the settlement, which covers attorneys fees, is \$775,000 for PFS and \$68,000 for the Skull Valley Band. The money would come from a fund previously appropriated in the budget for the Department of Environmental Quality. <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,650206992,00.html>

November 13, 2006

Hanford ground water cleanup begins, *Hanford News*

Work has begun on nine new projects to help clean up the 80 square miles of contaminated ground water beneath the Hanford nuclear reservation. Congress set aside \$10 million in the Department of Energy budget for the recently ended fiscal year for projects that could protect the Columbia River from the migration of ground water contaminated by hazardous chemicals or radioactive waste toward the river. The contamination is left from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. Some technologies being used don't

work as well as the Department of Energy would like, and DOE lacks new technologies to address contamination issues. DOE began 2006 with a list of 23 proposed projects for the \$10 million earmark and relied on a steering committee, then an independent review panel to come up with the final list of nine projects this summer.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2006/story/8405126p-8300018c.html>

November 12, 2006

DOE eyes new plan for sludge treatment, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy is evaluating a potential new plan to treat radioactive sludge from Hanford's K Basins. DOE is weighing cost, schedule and safety factors as it looks at hauling the sludge to central Hanford for treatment rather than preparing it for disposal where it is now near the Columbia River. That could allow the area where the K Basins sit to be turned over to Washington Closure Hanford sooner to finish cleanup. The treatment process also could be less risky. But the change also could delay treatment of the waste for years.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8402053p-8296849c.html>

November 12, 2006

Experts: Reid's Senate rise to help fight against Yucca Mountain, *Las Vegas Sun*

RENO, Nev. (AP) - Sen. Harry Reid's rise to power in the Democratic-controlled Congress will give a big boost to efforts to halt a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, experts agree. The state also will benefit if Sen. John Ensign becomes head of the Republican campaign arm in the Senate as expected, they say. Reid, Ensign and other top Nevada elected officials have been fighting the Bush administration's attempts to get the stalled nuclear waste repository back on track. Bush wants to ship the nation's nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain, about 110 miles north of Las Vegas. Republican Jim Denton, a veteran campaign consultant from Henderson, said Reid's Senate leadership can't help but bolster the fight against Yucca Mountain. "Absolutely, that's big for Nevada. Yucca Mountain will go nowhere because of him," Denton said. "Reid is Senate majority leader. Ensign will move up. I don't know how Nevada could be in a better position from a national perspective, I just don't," Denton added.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/text/2006/nov/12/111210982.html>

November 12, 2006

Hanford's Cleanup Project Deserves Support, *Washington Post*

(Letter to the Editor from Governor Gregoire - Washington)

The Nov. 1 news story "Nuclear Cleanup Site Has Cities Cleaning Up Financially," about the economics of cleaning up the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington state, doesn't reflect all the facts and the real threat the site poses for the Pacific Northwest. Hanford is not only the most contaminated Superfund hazardous waste site in America; it also threatens the Columbia River, the lifeblood of the Northwest, and is a danger to public health and safety. Without adequate cleanup, it is a potential target for terrorism and threatens the economic vitality of the region. Along with members of Congress who have fought for us, I continue to call for stable funding to clean up this deadly waste.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/11/AR2006111100729.html>

November 9, 2006

Nuclear waste industry targets Ohio, *The Times-Gazette (Ohio)*

EDITORIAL - Plans to ramp up the nation's nuclear power industry could turn into an economic boon or environmental nightmare for the Buckeye State. The federal government's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership calls for the development of new technology and new facilities to recycle spent nuclear fuel rods. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) intends to issue site-study grants in order to locate the best places to build fuel-rod recycling centers.

Among the grant applicants is The Southern Ohio Nuclear Integration Cooperative (SONIC), a non-profit company pushing hard to bring nuclear recycling to the small community of Piketon.

<http://www.timesgazette.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=141195&TM=22920.41>

November 8, 2006

Sparse turnout reviews 'Mina' rail alternative, *Pahrump Valley Times*

AMARGOSA VALLEY – George Younghans certainly didn't plan on a rail line carrying high-level nuclear waste passing by his ranch when he invested in 180 acres in Oasis Valley back in 1981. But a rail line to Yucca Mountain may go right by his property, regardless of the corridor chosen: the Caliente from southeastern Nevada or the Mina alternative, from Hawthorne. "They want to put the rail line within one mile of my house. I've given them inputs twice previous. They came out to the ranch and interviewed me," Younghans said. But Younghans said he hasn't received any word about whether the U.S. Department of Energy will accept his recommendation to relocate the rail line five miles farther east, to keep it farther from his ranch. That would put it near the border of the Nellis Air Force Training Range. <http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2006/Nov-08-Wed-2006/news/10661696.html>

November 5, 2006

SRS investigates leak, Site shut off, *Augusta Chronicle*

Officials are investigating the cause of a nonradioactive tank breach Saturday that leaked 1,500 gallons of formic acid at Savannah River Site. No injuries were reported as a result of the accident at the Defense Waste Processing Facility, where high-level radioactive waste is encased in glass, and officials said it did not warrant the notification of people living near the site. However, authorities barricaded access points into the site and cut off traffic on South Carolina Highway 125 from 10:39 a.m., when the accident happened, until 2:17 p.m. Employees were told to remain indoors. Bobby James, a member of the emergency response team and a Washington Savannah River Co. employee, said the chemical was contained in a concrete holding area beneath the tank at the facility. http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/110506/met_103308.shtml

November 5, 2006

DOE adds Yucca Mountain info session amid state complaints, *North Lake Tahoe Bonanza*

The federal Energy Department on Tuesday scheduled another public meeting on revised plans for a radioactive waste dump in Nevada, while state officials and anti-nuclear advocates complained a first meeting was not informative. "There was not enough detail to offer an intelligent comment," Martin Malsch, a Vienna, Va.-based lawyer who represents Nevada, said of a meeting Monday in Washington, D.C. "Nobody could have a way to know whether they would be affected or not." An Energy Department spokesman called the meetings "listening sessions," to collect comments for environmental studies on waste-handling at Yucca Mountain and building a railroad to the site through Lyon, Mineral and Esmeralda counties. <http://www.tahoebonanza.com/article/20061105/Nevada/111050043>

November 5, 2006

Nuclear bombshell to hit Utah, *The Spectrum (Utah)*

Assistant Attorney General Laura Lockhart dropped something of a nuclear bombshell at the October Radiation Control Board meeting. Earlier in the meeting staff from the Division of Radiation Control - the chief regulatory authority over radioactive matters in the state - made presentations about two topics: The historical growth of the EnergySolutions (formerly Envirocare) nuclear waste dump in Tooele County and a brand new proposal to allow the waste dump to grow again by merging two of its existing waste cells into a new mega-landfill reaching nearly eight stories tall. If approved, the expansion would further enlarge the largest commercial radioactive waste dump in the country and mark the fourth time the Division has allowed EnergySolutions to expand radioactive waste disposal in Utah. Moreover, it would increase EnergySolutions' capacity for nuclear waste to over 13 million cubic yards - more than 5 times its original permitted size of 2.2 million cubic yards. <http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061105/OPINION02/611050331>

November 4, 2006

3 workers treated for radiation exposure, *Tri-City Herald*

Three workers at a Richland plant have been treated for radioactive contamination, possibly because of radioactive waste on the outside of a drum. Two of them were inside a hazardous materials room with drums of waste sent to Pacific EcoSolutions from an out-of-state commercial customer. They were wearing respirators, said Dave Dalton, president of PEcoS. The third worker, who apparently received the most exposure, was outside the room and not wearing a respirator. Routine monitoring during work with the drums detected the exposure, Dalton said. <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8374828p-8270090c.html>

November 2, 2006

Nuclear mess has Tri-Cities cleaning up financially, *The Register-Guard (Oregon)*

RICHLAND - Out on the Hanford nuclear reservation, a fantastically poisoned plateau where the federal government brewed up most of the plutonium for its nuclear arsenal, the cleanup is going rather badly. Now in its 17th year, the nation's largest and most complex environmental remediation project is costing many billions of dollars more than expected and will continue far longer than experts once predicted. That dismal forecast is music to the ears of local residents. "The silver lining is all local, where there are no consequences for failure and no misdeed goes unrewarded," said Robert Alvarez, a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and a former Energy Department official who monitored the cleanup during the Clinton era. By almost every measure, except the radiation and chemical illnesses suffered by some Hanford workers, five decades of making bombs were a blessing to Pasco, Kennewick and Richland - neighboring towns along the Columbia River that call themselves the Tri-Cities.

http://www.registerguard.com/news/2006/11/02/a1.hanford.1102.p1.php?section=nation_world

November 2, 2006

Agency to split nuclear site cleanup, *The Sun News (South Carolina)*

AIKEN - For the first time since the Savannah River Site opened in the early 1950s, work will be divided between two main contractors. The Department of Energy will hire one company to handle environmental cleanup and the Savannah River National Laboratory - a contract worth \$722 million - and another firm to manage liquid nuclear waste left over from the Cold War weapons production. The federal agency made the announcement Tuesday as it opened the formal process for bids on the environmental management contract. A separate contract to manage the liquid nuclear waste will be bid on later.

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/mld/myrtlebeachonline/news/local/15908101.htm>