

News from Around the Complex

October 2006

October 26, 2006

Goshute leader backs N-storage, *Deseret News*

GRANTSVILLE – Lawrence Bear has little to say about his recent election as chairman of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians, but he did make it clear he supports a plan to store nuclear waste on the Tooele County reservation. "I support PFS," said Bear, who according to preliminary results was elected, the Bureau of Indian Affairs said Wednesday. The election likely means the end of a decade of leadership by Chairman Leon Bear, whose leadership has been in dispute with some band members and the state for years, largely because of a deal he spearheaded with Private Fuel Storage, a consortium of nuclear utilities, to build a temporary storage facility on tribal land about 50 miles from Salt Lake City.

<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view2/1,4382,650201788,00.html?textfield=nuclear>

October 25, 2006

Hanford workers finish sludge cleanup of basin near Columbia, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

RICHLAND, Wash. -- Workers at south-central Washington's Hanford nuclear reservation have finished vacuuming radioactive sludge from one of two basins near the Columbia River. The K East and K West basins were built in the 1950s to store spent nuclear fuel. Workers completed the removal of 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel from both basins in 2004, but found removal of radioactive sludge that was left on the basin floors more difficult. The pools have been prone to leaks, making cleanup a priority. "It's been a lot tougher going than anyone expected," said Colleen French, spokeswoman for the Energy Department. "So reaching this point is a major, major accomplishment." The work completed by Fluor Hanford meets an Oct. 31 commitment to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, but that followed a string of missed deadlines. http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_WA_Hanford_K_Basin.html

October 24, 2006

Y-12 object of third bad report, Former DOE adviser says uranium stored in unsafe conditions, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE – The Y-12 National Security Complex is the target of a third negative report in two weeks. This time the topic is nuclear safety. Robert Alvarez, a former policy adviser at the Department of Energy and investigator with the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, released a new study that says Y-12's backlog of highly enriched uranium is stored in unsafe conditions in deteriorated facilities at risk from fires and earthquakes. "A large fraction of HEU, which accumulated at the Y-12 site for more than 50 years, is still in insecure and unstable forms - posing increased environmental, safety and health risk," Alvarez said in the report's summary.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5088808,00.html

October 22, 2006

Mired in Yucca Muck, Nuclear power is trendy again, but what about the waste? *US News and World Report*

Until just recently, no American president had toured a nuclear plant since Jimmy Carter-fitting for a country that's been spooked by atomic power since the partial, albeit contained, meltdown at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island plant in 1979. But President Bush has ended the freeze and taken tours of two nuclear plants. In May, he stood under twin cooling towers in Limerick, Pa., announcing that nuclear power is vital to energy independence and fighting global warming. "And," he noted, "nuclear power is safe." Beleaguered nuclear supporters have waited decades to hear such full-throated support. No new nuclear plant has been licensed since 1978-in part because of public backlash, but also because of basic economics. Cheap natural gas became the standard for the power industry. But the calculus is changing as natural gas prices have skyrocketed, energy independence has become a political mantra, and

pressure to cut greenhouse gas emissions-nuclear is virtually emission free-has increased. Some believe a "nuclear renaissance" is at hand.

<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30nukes.htm>

October 22, 2006

Critics say SRS can't handle dangerous material, *Wilmington Star*

COLUMBIA, S.C. – A plan to dump highly radioactive nuclear waste in a Savannah River Site burial ground is drawing criticism from activist groups, who worry that current waste storage is inadequate. "What's the hurry?" asked Leslie Miner, who tracks nuclear issues for Environmentalists Inc., a Columbia activist group. "They should study this plan more thoroughly." The Energy Department wants to bury material that is about 20 times more radioactive than first proposed in the 1990s.

<http://www.wilmingtonstar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061022/APN/610221920>

October 21, 2006

Nuclear waste plan opposed, *The Mining Journal (Michigan)*

WASHINGTON (AP) – A Canadian energy company's proposal to bury waste from nuclear power plants near the Lake Huron shore in Ontario is drawing protests from a member of the U.S. Congress and environmental activists on both sides of the border. Ontario Power Generation Inc. wants to develop an underground storage facility at the Bruce Nuclear Site in Kincardine, about 140 miles northwest of Toronto and about 50 miles east of the tip of Michigan's Thumb area. <http://www.miningjournal.net/stories/articles.asp?articleID=7344>

October 21, 2006

U.S. Public at Risk from Radiation: Scientists, *One World*

WASHINGTON, Oct 20 (OneWorld) – The United States, in a twist on social Darwinism, maintains protection standards so low that they shield only the strongest people from cancer-causing radiation. So say scientists whose conclusions are propelling a new campaign to provide greater safety for women, children, and others at greatest risk. "A central principle of environmental health protection--protecting those most at risk--is missing from much of the U.S. regulatory framework for radiation," said Arjun Makhijani, president of the Takoma Park, Maryland-based Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (IEER) and co-author of a study, released Thursday, that is driving the campaign. Many federal radiation protection standards, such as limits on how much residual radiation is allowed in contaminated soil, are designed to protect "Reference Man," a hypothetical Caucasian male, says the report, *Science for the Vulnerable: Setting Radiation and Multiple Exposure Environmental Health Standards to Protect Those Most at Risk*. <http://uk.oneworld.net/article/view/141233/1/5795>

Link to the IEER Report: <http://www.ieer.org/campaign/report.pdf>

October 18, 2006

Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant: Nuke-rod recycling proposed

Idea scares some, who were surprised by site's nomination, *Columbus Dispatch*

For nearly 50 years, southern Ohioans labored at a government uranium-enrichment plant, churning out the stuff of nuclear warheads and powerplant fuel rods. The Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant left a Cold War legacy of nearly 3,000 workers sick or dead from radiation related cancers and other illnesses. Now, some are frightened by the prospect of the Piketon plant housing technology to recycle spent fuel rods, recover uranium and burn plutonium and other waste in a reactor. President Bush's proposed Global Nuclear Energy Partnership could make Piketon – or one of 13 other sites – the destination for radioactive fuel rods from around the world. <http://www.columbusdispatch.com/news-story.php?story=dispatch/2006/10/18/20061018-E1-02.html>

October 18, 2006

Crackdown on nuke workers, Dope found at reactor site; staff playing cards, sleeping in trailer, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE – It sounds like something from a movie sequel called "Cheech and Chong Visit the Atomic City": nuclear workers sleeping on the job, watching TV, playing cards and smoking dope. As it turns out, they all were true. The crackdown came last week at the Molten Salt Reactor, an old experimental reactor at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Bechtel Jacobs Co., the Department of Energy's cleanup manager, and its subcontractors were preparing to remove tons of highly radioactive fuel salts stored there since the reactor was shut down in 1969. http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5073819,00.html

October 16, 2006

State revises WIPP permit to allow so-called 'hot waste', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

CARLSBAD, N.M. -- The New Mexico Environment Department issued a revised permit Monday, allowing higher levels of nuclear waste to be stored in underground repositories at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The permit enables WIPP to receive and dispose of remote-handled transuranic radioactive waste, currently stored at U.S. Department of Energy sites nationwide. The first shipments of the new waste could begin after regulatory approvals in coming months. "WIPP is a key element of the safe cleanup of this nation's defense waste, and the significance of this permit, which enables the department to continue its cleanup momentum, cannot be understated," Assistant Energy Secretary James Rispoli said. http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_NM_Hot_Waste.html

October 16, 2006

Post-9/11 Security Standards Not Being Met at Uranium Facility, Energy officials say they currently can't follow the guidelines but reject terrorism concerns.

The Energy Department cannot meet its own post-Sept. 11 security standards to repel a terrorist force at the Ft. Knox of uranium, a facility in Tennessee that stores an estimated 189 metric tons of bomb-grade material, agency officials acknowledged. The material is stored in five masonry and wood-frame buildings at the Y-12 facility, a key part of the nation's nuclear weapons infrastructure at the Oak Ridge site near Knoxville. http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-na-nuke16oct16,1,482058.story?coll=la-news-a_section

October 13, 2006

Ecology lab budget slashed again, University of Georgia program, *Athens Banner-Herald*

AIKEN, S.C. – The research arm that monitors the environment around the Savannah River Site will likely have its already diminished budget slashed again - to less than a quarter of what it received last year. The Savannah River Ecology Lab, which was started more than 50 years ago by the University of Georgia, is budgeted to get \$1 million in the U.S. Department of Energy's fiscal year 2007, \$3.5 million less than last year. "If it's \$1 million, we're history," ecology lab Director Paul Bertsch said. "We can't operate at that level." http://www.onlineathens.com/stories/101306/uganews_20061013038.shtml

October 12, 2006

Contract awarded for Mound's final cleanup, *Dayton Daily News*

MIAMISBURG – The Energy Department has awarded a \$25.9 million contract to an Idaho company for the final cleanup of the Mound plant in Miamisburg, the agency announced Thursday. Accelerated Remediation Co. of Idaho Falls, Idaho will clean up two contaminated areas on the former nuclear weapons plant, which is being converted to an industrial business park. "We are quite pleased that Accelerated Remediation Company is joining us for this project and look forward to the day this final piece of the cleanup is finished and we can declare victory," DOE Ohio Field Office Manager Bill Taylor said in a prepared statement. The company will remove radioactive materials to a level safe for industrial reuse, according to the DOE announcement. <http://www.daytondailynews.com/n/content/oh/story/news/local/2006/10/12/ddn101206moundweb.html>

October 12, 2006

Fallout-thyroid link gets boost, new downwind study headed by U. professor, *Deseret News*

A new study by 15 scientists, statisticians and other experts concludes that more downwind residents suffered thyroid damage from nuclear testing than earlier believed. Also, it says damage was still showing up 30 years after the blasts. The study's lead author is the University of Utah's Dr. Joseph L. Lyon, who has been pursuing the issue for many years. In March 2005, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based in Atlanta, abruptly canceled a study headed by Lyon that involved checking thyroid glands of downwind residents, looking for abnormalities. <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,650198068,00.html>

October 11, 2006

Utah regulators hold hearings on expansion of waste dump, *Salt Lake Tribune*

EnergySolutions is seeking state approval to merge two low-level radioactive waste cells into one supercell on a square-mile patch of land in Utah's west desert. The new cell would pile waste 83 feet high, up from about 53 feet under terms of the company's operating license. The Utah Division of Radiation Control will hold public hearings Wednesday in Salt Lake City and Tooele on the proposal that would expand the capacity of the waste site by nearly 50 percent. The division will continue to gather public comment until Nov. 10, then decide whether to amend EnergySolutions' license for the supercell, said Greg Hopkins, EnergySolutions vice president of communications. Hopkins said the division's Radiation Control Board gave tentative approval for the expansion last spring, with final approval awaiting a public airing of the company's plans. http://www.sltrib.com/cj_4474927

October 10, 2006

No Confidence in Yucca Mountain, *A Message from Governor Kenny C. Guinn*

On September 8th, the Secretary of the Interior vetoed the Private Fuel Storage (PFS) facility for storing radioactive spent nuclear fuel in Utah after PFS had already received a license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to construct the facility on the Goshute Indian reservation in western Utah. There are many lessons here for people on all sides of the radioactive waste debate. PFS pursued the license application over the strong objections of the people in Utah and their congressional representatives. In the federal scheme for nuclear power, the feelings of the citizens of Utah, or of any other state, don't matter because the federal government preempts all authority in this area. Opponents' arguments may drag things out, but the NRC has never seen an application it wouldn't license. So, after a nine-year licensing process, the NRC granted PFS a license in spite of almost unanimous opposition to the project within the state of Utah. http://gov.state.nv.us/EALERTS/eAlerts/2006/Governor_eAlert_2006-10-10.htm

October 9, 2006

DOE hopes to save tainted pond, Unusual proposal part of cleanup at former K-25 site, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE – To save a pond. The Department of Energy has proposed an unusual and elaborate strategy, loosely termed "ecological enhancement," to comply with environmental laws and reduce the risks at a 25-acre pond laden with polychlorinated biphenyls. The pond is on the outskirts of the East Tennessee Technology Park, the former K-25 uranium-enrichment plant, which is being converted to private uses. Before DOE turns over the deed to the sprawling plant site, the federal agency is obligated to clean up the place, and that includes the holding pond known officially as K-1007-P1. Instead of using a traditional "muck-and-truck" cleanup approach – draining, dredging and filling the pond with dirt – DOE wants to keep the pond and revise the aquatic habitat and inhabitants. http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5052667,00.html

October 6, 2006

Manhattan Project building preserved, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

LOS ALAMOS – Even as a secret community that gave birth to the atomic bomb morphed into a bustling government-lab town, many of its most historic sites remained tucked away from view. But preservationists have gone behind the security fences to preserve for the first time a structure in which the Manhattan Project scientists did their work at Los Alamos National Laboratory. They contend the building is as significant as George Washington's home or a Civil War battlefield. This weekend, a series of events will mark the restoration of a wooden, garage-like building where the world's first plutonium bombs were assembled.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1110AP_Manhattan_Project_Preservation.html

October 5, 2006

K East Basins close to cleanup, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy believes it is close to completing work on one of its most vexing Hanford projects: Getting the radioactive sludge in the K East Basins into underwater containers. DOE and its contractor, Fluor Hanford, missed a December 2002 deadline to start retrieving the sludge. Then under a new plan, they missed a DOE commitment to have all the sludge in containers by the end of 2004. The current plan includes a commitment to have the sludge vacuumed into containers by the end of this month.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8269741p-8166469c.html>

October 4, 2006

Court awards \$143M to reactor companies, *Hemscott*

WASHINGTON – The owners of three closed nuclear power plants have been awarded \$143 million because the government has failed to take away their used reactor fuel rods.

The award by the U.S. Federal Court of Claims settles a long-standing legal fight waged by operators of the three reactors in Maine, Connecticut and Massachusetts. It also could foreshadow a series of additional financial awards to operators of reactors nationwide who have argued the federal government broke contractual agreements that promised the waste would be taken by 1998.

<http://www.hemscott.com/news/latest-news/item.do?newsId=36483599928109>

October 3, 2006

New chapter at Alaska blast site, On Amchitka Island, former site of nuclear-weapons testing, a federal monitoring program takes effect this week, *Christian Science Monitor*

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA – The distant, fog-shrouded Aleutian Island of Amchitka holds a cornucopia of sea life. Sea otters, dwindling elsewhere in the Aleutian chain, gorge on the plentiful invertebrates that live in kelp forests within the reefs surrounding the island. Large flocks of emperor geese winter there. Nearby are fish-rich waters that support some of the world's biggest commercial seafood harvests. And buried beneath the sea grasses of the island, which is part of the sprawling Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, are three deep, bomb-carved cavities filled with radioactive waste. On Amchitka, an uninhabited island about 1,400 miles southwest of Anchorage, the Atomic Energy Commission detonated three bombs between 1965 and 1971 in the last underground US nuclear-weapons tests.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1003/p02s01-usgn.html>

October 2, 2006

Move of bomb-grade uranium saves millions, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE — Relocating stocks of bomb-grade uranium will save the government millions of dollars in security costs, federal officials said today. Ted Sherry, the Oak Ridge head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, said removing the highly enriched uranium from Building 9204-4 – also known as Beta-4 – means officials won't have to improve the security there to meet new requirements. The reduced security needs at Beta-4 will save \$17 million in the short term and about \$137 million between now and 2018, when a new Uranium Processing Facility comes online. At that time, all of the plant's enriched uranium will be stored at two facilities.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5036700,00.html

October 2, 2006

Agreement sets stage for Flats' upcoming life as wildlife refuge, Site of former plutonium trigger plant is officially considered no threat to the public or environment, *The Pueblo Chieftain*

DENVER – An agreement signed Friday declaring Rocky Flats ready to be removed from the Superfund sets the stage for the bulk of the former nuclear weapons plant to be turned into a national wildlife refuge. The \$7 billion cleanup of the 6,200-acre site 16 miles northwest of Denver was completed last year, years and billions of dollars short of original projections. The record of decision signed by the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and Colorado officials signals that the area is considered cleaned up and not a danger to the public and environment, said Frazer Lockhart, manager of the DOE's Rocky Flats office.

<http://www.chieftain.com/business/1159855323/4>

October 2, 2006

DOE gets more time in land transfer process, *Los Alamos Monitor*

The U.S. Senate granted unanimous approval Saturday morning to allow the Department of Energy five additional years to carry out a land transfer program with Los Alamos County. The FY2007 Defense Authorization Act includes land transfer language that allows the DOE until November 2012 to complete the land transfer process with the county. The bill will be forwarded to President Bush. "We certainly welcome the time extension because we still have land we need to have transferred from the original docket," said Councilor Fran Berting. "This is good news for us and we're certainly pleased to hear it." The bill, HR.5122, was approved by unanimous consent and extends past the existing deadline of 2007 by 10 years after Congress enacted the legislation authored by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-NM, to transfer surplus federal land to Los Alamos County.

http://www.lamonitor.com/articles/2006/10/02/headline_news/news01.txt