

News from Around the Complex

July 1 – July 31, 2008

July 31, 2008

Hanford may see funding from bill proposed in Senate, *Tri-City Herald*

Nuclear weapons sites across the nation, including Hanford, would receive an additional \$250 million for cleanup programs under a second 2008 supplemental funding bill proposed Wednesday in the Senate. The additional money was pushed by Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, to help make up for cuts in the president's proposed budget for Department of Energy environmental management in fiscal 2009. In June, an initial supplemental funding bill for the current year was approved that included \$62.5 million for DOE cleanup. Two weeks ago, DOE announced that \$25.5 million of that will be spent at Hanford for cleanup along the Columbia River and to build water-proof covers over contaminated areas of the tank farms to keep pollution from spreading until the farms are cleaned up.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/258612.html>

July 30, 2008

Search finds two potential sites for spent nuclear fuel storage, *Platts Energy Services*

Two US communities are exploring the possibility of becoming the site of a commercial interim storage facility for utility spent nuclear fuel, according to the official leading the industry's site search. Officials from each of the small, rural communities wanted to continue looking at a commercial storage facility after touring dry storage installations at two nuclear plants in June, Marshall Cohen, the Nuclear Energy Institute's senior director of legislative programs, said in an interview Wednesday. He added that community officials will also meet with top-level nuclear fuel services executives in August to explore how a business plan might come together. Cohen would not name the communities but indicated they are in rural areas of states that already have nuclear power plants or nuclear businesses. Ideally, the nuclear industry would like to see two interim storage sites -- one in the east and one in the west -- come out of this volunteer process, he said.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/6930013.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

July 26, 2008

USEC Wants DOE Help to Build Piketon, Ohio, Plant, *Paducah Sun (Kentucky)*

USEC Inc. is counting on financial help from the U.S. Department of Energy to build a \$3.5 billion uranium-enrichment factory in Piketon, Ohio, to replace the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant starting in 2012. The Bethesda, Md., firm said Friday that it has applied under new federal legislation authorizing DOE to issue \$38.5 billion in loan guarantees through fall 2009, including \$2 billion for advanced "front-end" nuclear fuel-cycle facilities. USEC said it believes the Piketon plant qualifies because it represents the early commercial use of a new or significantly improved technology and will significantly reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases. USEC has upgraded decades-old gas centrifuge technology, which uses far less electricity and space than the outdated system at the 1,100-job Paducah plant.

http://www.redorbit.com/news/business/1496720/usec_wants_doe_help_to_build_piketon_ohio_plant/

July 26, 2008

Digging begins at Hanford's H Reactor, *Tri-City Herald*

Work has begun to dig up the waste burial grounds around H Reactor, a relic of the Cold War near the Columbia River at the Hanford nuclear reservation. The start of work meets a legally binding Tri-Party Agreement deadline to begin cleanup of the burial grounds by Oct. 31 with three months to spare. H Reactor irradiated fuel to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program and also tested new processes and equipment. Much of the waste from the reactor was disposed of in unlined trenches, starting during the reactor's construction in 1948 and continuing through its closure in 1965. To meet modern environmental standards, the Department of Energy expects to retrieve an estimated 276,000 tons of waste from sites near the reactor and the river. The work is being done by Federal Engineers & Constructors under a \$9 million subcontract awarded by Washington Closure Hanford, which holds the DOE contract for Hanford cleanup along the Columbia.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/252443.html>

July 25, 2008

Nuclear Material: DOE Needs to Take Action to Reduce Risks Before Processing Additional Nuclear Material at the Savannah River Site's H-Canyon, *GAO Report*

DOE plans to process 23 metric tons of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium using H-Canyon; however, its cost estimate of \$4.3 billion to \$4.6 billion to process these materials through 2019 does not include all associated costs. First, DOE may identify additional HEU and plutonium as suitable for processing using H-Canyon, which could delay H-Canyon's planned 2019 shutdown and increase operational costs. Second, the estimate does not include the cost of storing and treating the waste generated by H-Canyon operations--approximately \$253 million according to DOE. SRS's waste tanks are nearing capacity, and SRS cannot manage the projected waste from planned H-Canyon operations without critical enhancements. DOE is developing new technologies and building new facilities to meet these challenges. The most critical of these facilities--the Salt Waste Processing Facility--was originally scheduled to begin operating in 2009 but has been delayed twice and is now not projected to begin operations until as late as November 2013.

Summary available here: <http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-08-840>

Full report available here: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08840.pdf>

July 19, 2008

DOE still wants OK on WIPP shipments from LANL, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*
CARLSBAD — The Environmental Protection Agency is still seeking more information related to the latest errant drum shipped from Los Alamos National Laboratory to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. In June, a drum of transuranic waste with an open non-conformance report was mistakenly shipped from Los Alamos to WIPP and emplaced in the underground repository near Carlsbad. The standard waste box holding the drum was returned to Los Alamos, but the incident sparked an investigation as to why the mistake happened and what could have prevented the error. Shipments from other sites have resumed, but the EPA still doesn't support the resumption of shipments from LANL, according to a July 14 letter from Jonathan Edwards, acting director of the agency's Radiation Protection Division.

http://www.currentargus.com/news/ci_9936149

July 19, 2008

Craig, Simpson Announce Department Of Energy Funding For Idaho National Laboratory, *The Idaho Examiner*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig and Congressman Mike Simpson today praised the Department of Energy for releasing \$8 million for environmental management programs at the Idaho National Laboratory. The funding is part of the FY 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill passed by the Congress in May.***The \$8 million will be split evenly between the Idaho Cleanup Project (ICP) and the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Plant (AMWTP) project. ICP will use the funds for the purchase of additional equipment to continue the site's buried waste retrieval activities. The AMWTP project will purchase equipment in support of increased processing of transuranic waste.
<http://www.idahoexaminer.com/state/9928/craig-simpson-announce-department-of-energy-funding-for-idaho-national-laboratory>

July 18, 2008

Kohlhorst states case for Y-12, Knoxville News-Sentinel

The Y-12 manager today defended the Oak Ridge plant's role in the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and stated his case for modernization of facilities. Darrel Kohlhorst, the president and general manager of B&W Technical Services, the managing contractor at the Y-12 National Security Complex, testified this morning before the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces. He was among several top officials from design labs and production facilities to discuss transformation of the weapons complex. Kohlhorst said B&W supports the preferred plan laid out earlier this year by National Nuclear Security Administration, which identified Y-12 as the "Uranium Center of Excellence" and recommended keeping Y-12's traditional missions in manufacturing and dismantling warhead parts. With the shrinking of the nuclear weapons arsenal in the post-Cold War era, some members of Congress have called for dramatic reductions in the complex and possibly consolidating most, if not all, of the work at a single site.
http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/munger/2008/07/kohlhorst_states_case_for_y12.html

July 18, 2008

Pantex work may expand with plan: Proposal includes three new facilities, Amarillo Globe-News

A top Pantex official told a key House subcommittee Thursday that the plant is ready to accept different types of nuclear weapons work under a proposed plan to modernize the nation's nuclear weapons complex. Greg Meyer, B&W Pantex president and general manager, testified Thursday before a congressional subcommittee reviewing government plans to upgrade weapons plants and laboratories. The National Nuclear Security Administration is expected to finalize its plans later this year. Under the proposal, Pantex would become a "Center of Excellence" for nuclear weapons assembly, dismantlement and high explosives work. The plan also includes three large facilities that would be built at Pantex: an underground plutonium storage complex, new high-explosives pressing operations and a \$172 million weapons surveillance facility.
http://www.amarillo.com/stories/071808/new_10796724.shtml

July 13, 2008

Hot cells now processing transuranic waste for final disposal, The Oak Ridger
OAK RIDGE, Tenn.—Remote-handled transuranic waste resulting from decades of research activities at the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory is now being readied for safe, long-term storage out of state. Specially designed rooms called hot cells enable this environmental legacy to be safely sorted and packaged into containers with robotic arms, avoiding all human contact and

supporting worker safety. The hot cells became ready to receive waste on May 22 following months of preparation by the Oak Ridge Office's Environmental Management Program.

<http://www.oakridger.com/news/x1768845463/Hot-cells-now-processing-transuranic-waste-for-final-disposal>

July 12, 2008

Hanford vit plant gets emission stack, *Tri-City Herald*

It's made of steel, weighs about 140,000 pounds and it took four months to assemble. And Friday the 68-foot-tall emission stack was set atop the Analytical Laboratory building at Hanford's vitrification plant by 32 workers and engineers in an hour-long operation. The stack will help block the release of contaminants from the lab into the environment. "It's a significant milestone, a good symbol of our progress for the community to see," said David Leeth, plant construction manager. The \$12.2 billion Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant Project, of which the lab is a key component, will help take care of the 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemical waste stored in underground tanks at Hanford. The lab will analyze radioactive waste samples before they're treated to identify the best recipe to convert the waste into molten glass, and will ensure quality control in the treatment process.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/237599.html>

July 9, 2008

\$13.75 million settlement: Fernald's uranium mess has high price: Pollution from weapons plant may stay in water 100 years, *The Columbus Dispatch*

Radioactive waste left in the groundwater at the former Fernald uranium-processing plant in southwestern Ohio could linger for a century, state officials estimate. That's why the U.S. Department of Energy agreed yesterday to pay a record \$13.75 million to settle a lawsuit that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency filed in 1986. The payment, the largest of its kind in state history, is considered one of the final acts of a years-long \$4.4 billion cleanup at the plant, which refined raw uranium for nuclear weapons from 1951 to 1989. The site is now known as Fernald Preserve, a park area with wetlands, forests and prairies. Federal officials say the site will be safe for visitors when it opens this fall. The plant, 18 miles northwest of Cincinnati, was notorious for contaminating the air, land and water with uranium waste and radon -- both radioactive elements linked to cancer in humans. The agency settled a class-action pollution lawsuit filed by the plant's neighbors for \$78 million in 1989.

http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2008/07/09/Fernald.ART_ART_07-09-08_B1_STAMOR4.html?type=rss&cat=&sid=101

July 8, 2008

Domenici rejects Bush plea for WIPP cut, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*

CARLSBAD — A U.S. Senate subcommittee has approved a \$231.6 million budget for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. WIPP, a nuclear repository, is located approximately 27 miles east of Carlsbad. The Senate's budget, according to a news release from the office of Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., rejects President Bush's budget recommendation to cut about 10 percent from WIPP's annual budget and instead calls for \$231.6 million in funding. The \$33.2 billion FY2009 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill will be considered by the full Senate Appropriations Committee Thursday. The Senate's budget was \$20.1 million more than the executive branch's budget request, but was also \$3 million below current funding levels. The House Energy and Water Committee has also agreed to provide roughly \$20 million more than the amount requested by the Bush administration.

http://www.currentargus.com/ci_9822274

July 8, 2008

EPA threatens to pull out of Field Lab study, *Los Angeles Daily News*

Frustrated with a lack of transparency in the cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Lab, the U.S. EPA has fired off a harsh letter to the Energy Department threatening to pull out of a long-awaited radiation study at the former nuclear research site. In a July 2 letter, EPA Site Cleanup Branch Chief Michael Montgomery warned that "recent events demonstrate a significant lack of transparency in DOE's interactions with EPA and the public." Montgomery also wrote that the Energy Department planned to use radiation standards that were far more lax than EPA guidelines. And he added that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had learned that Boeing - the owner of the lab - was going to be conducting some of the radiological sampling itself instead of hiring an independent, outside contractor as promised.

http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_9822378

July 7, 2008

Outlook unclear for ORNL program: No funds to continue radioisotope production for medicine, industry, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - One of Oak Ridge National Laboratory's historically important missions - the production of radioisotopes for medicine and industry - is in turmoil. There currently is no money in the budget for the work, and the lab's supply of key isotopes is dwindling, particularly the californium-252. Neutron-emitting californium has broad uses in industry, ranging from well-logging equipment used in oil exploration to radiation scans that detect cracks and flaws in airplanes to sources that jump-start nuclear reactors.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/jul/07/outlook-unclear-for-ornl-program/>

July 6, 2008

Feds to investigate Livermore Lab's handling of toxic metal beryllium, *Contra Costa Times*

Five incidents involving Livermore Lab's handling of the toxic metal beryllium have prompted two investigations. A team of outside experts audited beryllium work at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory last month and federal regulators are set to follow up with their own review in September. Some of the incidents involved workers being unknowingly exposed to beryllium dust, which if inhaled can lead to beryllium sensitivity and chronic beryllium disease, an incurable and potentially fatal lung condition. In one of the incidents, the lab failed for five months to notify 178 contract workers with GSE Construction of Livermore who were exposed to the metal during a four-year seismic retrofit of a machine shop that ended in December 2006. Typically, only a small percentage of people who are exposed to beryllium, a very strong, lightweight metal used in nuclear weapons work, will be diagnosed with sensitivity. But studies show that one-third to two-thirds of those who do will go on to develop chronic beryllium disease within five to 10 years of their diagnosis.

http://www.insidebayarea.com/argus/localnews/ci_9799196

July 5, 2008

Nuke waste in holding pattern: Facility that accepted low-level waste now closed to Pa., 36 other states, *Times Leader (Pennsylvania)*

The only facility available for disposing certain levels of radioactive waste closed its doors to Pennsylvania and 36 other states on July 1, meaning the waste producers will have to hold onto that waste until a new site is found. That process will take years, and while officials stress a timely solution is necessary, producers are prepared.***Currently there are three disposal facilities in America for low-level

radioactive waste, but one site is open only to a coalition of 11 western states. A second in Utah accepts only the lowest level of waste. The third facility in Barnwell, S.C., accepted the other two levels of low-level waste, but now does so only from the states in its coalition – Connecticut, New Jersey and South Carolina.

http://www.timesleader.com/news/Nuke_waste_in_holding_pattern_07-05-2008.html

July 3, 2008

\$17.5M to support OR-based work: Funds are part of \$62.5M Congress approved for science, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - About \$15.5 million of a special midyear appropriations package for science will go to support Oak Ridge-based work on an international fusion project, and another \$2 million will supplement the funding at the Spallation Neutron Source. Jeff Sherwood, a Department of Energy spokesman in Washington, confirmed the numbers Wednesday and said the money is part of the \$62.5 million approved by Congress to ease a funding crunch in DOE's Office of Science. "The intent is to eliminate the need for furloughs," Sherwood said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/jul/03/175m-to-support-or-based-work/>

July 3, 2008

INL's waste problem has its roots in Cold War practices, *Idaho Statesman*

Behind the Cold War's curtain of secrecy, federal scientists and engineers settled for shortsighted, inadequate practices to dispose of the long-lived, deadly nuclear materials produced by reactors and processing plants. Today, federal taxpayers are paying the price to clean it up at the Idaho National Laboratory. Plutonium-contaminated tools, clothes and debris packed in barrels and cardboard boxes were dumped with hazardous chemicals in trenches and buried atop the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer, the water source for most of southern Idaho. The Atomic Energy Commission, the predecessor of the Department of Energy, chose the floodplain sediments at the end of the Lost River to bury radioactive materials such as plutonium. It was a decision Idahoans have struggled with since.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/102/story/432292.html>

July 3, 2008

INL deal 14 years in the making, *Idaho Statesman*

Kathleen Trever has spent more than the half-life of her career trying to safely get radioactive waste out of the ground in Idaho. For 14 years, Trever has worked to break a deadlock between the federal government and Idaho over nuclear waste buried above the Snake River Plain Aquifer, which provides drinking water to much of southern Idaho. On Monday, she saw the culmination of her work. "I feel like it's something that's important to the future of Idaho," Trever said. The agreement settles a dispute that started in 1995 over how much waste the Department of Energy was responsible for removing from the Idaho National Laboratory, an 890-square-mile federal nuclear research area west of Idaho Falls. Idaho leaders praised the deal - as did former Govs. Phil Batt and Cecil Andrus, who pushed the cleanup in the 1990s. The anti-nuclear group Snake River Alliance gave its cautious endorsement. Program Director Beatrice Brailsford said she was happy to see the state get more cleanup than the federal government originally intended, and she hopes the days of the INL burying radioactive waste are over.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/102/story/432291.html>

July 1, 2008

EnergySolutions confident on waste deal despite new Senate bill, Tooele Transcript-Bulletin (Salt Lake City)

A bill scheduled to be introduced in the U.S. Senate next week would forbid foreign-generated nuclear waste from being accepted by American disposal facilities. If passed, the bill would derail EnergySolutions' bid to take Italian nuclear waste at its Clive facility. The new bill, which is being introduced by Benjamin Cardin, D-Md., and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., would generally ban all waste generated in foreign countries from being imported to the United States. EnergySolutions spokesman John Ward said the new bill is somewhat similar to a bill that was proposed in the House of Representatives in March by Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Utah, as well as fellow House Energy and Commerce Committee members Reps. Bart Gordon, D-Tenn., and Ed Whitfield, R-Ky.

http://www.tooeletranscript.com/pages/full_story?article-EnergySolutions-confident-on-waste-deal-despite-new-Senate-bill%20=&page_label=home_top_stories_news&id=104168-EnergySolutions-confident-on-waste-deal-despite-new-Senate-bill&widget=push&instance=home_news_1st_right&open=&