

## News from Around the Complex

March 1 – March 31, 2009

Available on-line at <http://www.fffcleanupnews.org/news.htm>

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March 31, 2009

### **Radioactive waste, fuel rods stack up at 3 TVA plants, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

The amount of radioactive waste and spent fuel rods will continue to grow and be stored at TVA's three nuclear plants now that plans for a permanent storage site in Nevada have been shelved. TVA already stores almost 3,000 metric tons of nuclear waste at the Sequoyah plant in Soddy-Daisy, Tenn.; Watts Bar near Spring City, Tenn.; and Browns Ferry in Athens, Ala., according to utility officials. TVA spokesman Terry Johnson said on-site storage used at nuclear plants is a "proven, safe and secure solution for the foreseeable future." However, securing a permanent storage solution is "key" for the future.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/mar/31/radioactive-waste-fuel-rods-stack-up/>

March 29, 2009

### **Senate needs to say yes to Ines Triay's nomination, *Tri-City Herald***

[Opinion] As the Senate considers confirming Dr. Ines Triay as assistant secretary for the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management we eagerly watch ... and hope. It's a lot like discovering your favorite dessert is on the menu. All we can say is "excellent choice." Dr. Triay knows cleanup. She knows Hanford. She would serve as a tremendous resource for Secretary Chu. Before coming on board with DOE in an executive position, she spent 14 years at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. According to the DOE biography, "During her tenure there, the number of transuranic waste shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant increased from one or two per week to 25 per week. She also spearheaded a national effort to significantly accelerate cleanup of transuranic waste."

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/962/story/525425.html>

March 29, 2009

### **DOE may shrink Hanford's active area to 10 square miles, *Tacoma News-Tribune***

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.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/northwest/story/691851.html>

March 27, 2009

### **Obama administration to appoint nuclear waste commission: Reid, *Platts***

US Energy Secretary Steven Chu, not Congress, will establish a blue-ribbon commission to develop a new strategy for managing the country's nuclear waste, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Democrat-Nevada, said Friday. Reid issued the

comment after he and Chu agreed in a closed-door meeting that appointments to the panel would be made by the Obama administration with input from Reid and other parties affected by the high-level nuclear waste repository the Department of Energy wants to build at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/7761182.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

March 26, 2009

**Some suggest NM area could replace Yucca Mountain, *Las Vegas Sun***

Longtime Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest recalls the days when no one wanted to take the federal government's radioactive waste except his southern New Mexico community. Ten years after it opened, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, commonly known as WIPP, remains the government's only radioactive waste dump. But now, Forrest says, the climate for all things nuclear has changed, and communities across the nation are fighting for projects. Forrest himself believes the vast, 250 million-year-old salt beds that house WIPP east of his community of about 25,000 could store high-level nuclear waste such as that once destined for the Yucca Mountain project the Obama administration is apparently abandoning.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2009/mar/26/some-suggest-nm-area-could-replace-yucca-mountain/>

March 26, 2009

**Support for reprocessing and action on waste, *World Nuclear News***

A clear majority of US citizens would support recycling and reprocessing of used nuclear fuel, according to a new opinion poll which also found good all-round support for nuclear. The survey - conducted by Bisconti Research and GfK NOP on behalf of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) - found that 84% of respondents thought that nuclear energy will be important in meeting the USA's future energy needs. The same percentage of those questioned also supported the relicensing of existing reactors, proving they meet federal safety standards. On general questions it was found that over two-thirds of US citizens support nuclear energy, with the majority of people considering nuclear power plants to be safer now than at the time of the Three Mile Island accident 30 years ago.

[http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-](http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-Support_for_reprocessing_and_action_on_waste_2603094.html)

[Support for reprocessing and action on waste 2603094.html](http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-Support_for_reprocessing_and_action_on_waste_2603094.html)

Questionnaire available for download at:

<http://www.nei.org/resourcesandstats/documentlibrary/newplants/reports/march-2009-public-opinion-questionnaire/>

March 26, 2009

**Carlsbad's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, nation's only nuclear dump now 10 years old, *Las Cruces Sun-News***

ALBUQUERQUE — A top scientist for the federal government's only nuclear waste repository recalls the scene a decade ago when the first shipment rolled through the gates — 300 to 400 area residents and workers gathered in the predawn cold in the middle of nowhere, cheering. The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in the salt beds of southeastern New Mexico turns 10 on Thursday, with its supporters hailing it as pointing the way for the future of radioactive waste disposal in America, and its critics questioning whether the dump can really do the job it was designed for. WIPP is meant for defense-related waste such as protective clothing and tools, largely contaminated with plutonium, which remains radioactive for tens of thousands of years.

[http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci\\_12001102](http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci_12001102)

March 26, 2009

**Strong local opposition to storage site in eastern France: Areva says hopes to find site in exchange for jobs, *The Guardian UK***

PARIS, March 26 (Reuters) - Public opposition to storage sites for highly radioactive waste could derail France's prized nuclear energy programme, the scientific adviser at French nuclear energy group Areva told Reuters on Thursday. France, where 58 nuclear reactors produce 80 percent of the country's electricity, has not found permanent underground storage with the capacity to bury nuclear energy waste it has generated in the past three decades and the waste it will produce in future. The highly radioactive waste generated so far is currently stored in above ground facilities at Areva's nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in La Hague on the northwestern coast of Normandy. Under French law, Areva will have to bury the waste in a permanent repository by 2025. French nuclear authorities are considering permanently storing the waste, 500 meters below ground, near Bure in eastern France which has clay soil and where the group already has a waste-testing laboratory.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/feedarticle/8423200>

March 25, 2009

**Munger: Inspector General warns DOE of stimulus pitfalls, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

Perhaps coincidentally, on the same day that the Department of Energy announced the first distribution of money from the government's stimulus package (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act), DOE's Office of Inspector General issued a special report outlining the potential risks of such a large outlay of federal funding. The IG noted that DOE will receive more than \$38 billion to support science, energy and environmental cleanup programs. In addition, the department's authority to make or guarantee loans for energy-related endeavors has been increased to about \$127 billion. The report underscores the fact that the supplemental funding coming to DOE for rapid spending actually dwarfs the federal agency's annual budget (of around \$27 billion).

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/mar/25/inspector-general-warns-doe-of-stimulus-pitfalls/>

IG report available at: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-RA-09-01-New508.pdf>

March 25, 2009

**NRC racing to answer questions on depleted uranium, *Houston Chronicle***

SALT LAKE CITY — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is rushing to meet an April 2 deadline to turn over stacks of internal documents that could shed light on why it recently decided to classify large quantities of depleted uranium as the least hazardous type of low-level radioactive waste. The NRC's decision, which still must undergo a rule-making process that could take up to two years, would open the door for federal facilities and companies around the country to dispose of more than 1 million tons of depleted uranium in Utah and Texas. Democratic Reps. Jim Matheson of Utah and Edward Markey of Massachusetts, who is chairman of the subcommittee that oversees the NRC, have demanded the documents because they believe the agency's March 18 decision disregards the risk depleted uranium poses to public health and safety. They called the NRC's decision an "arbitrary and capricious mischaracterization" of the waste.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/6340665.html>

March 20, 2009

**Swarm of quakes bedevils Hanford, *The Oregonian***

It's been a jittery week at eastern Washington's Hanford Nuclear Reservation, where more than 100 small earthquakes have been detected in the past seven days. The quakes are part of an earthquake "swarm" that has puzzled scientists since it began at the first of the year. As of Friday, monitors at Hanford had detected more than 700 earthquakes since Jan. 4, said Alan Rohay, senior scientist and seismologist with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, which operates at Hanford. The quakes haven't disturbed the extensive stores of radioactive waste at Hanford or interfered with cleanup operations there.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2009/03/swarm\\_of\\_quakes\\_bede\\_vil\\_hanfor.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2009/03/swarm_of_quakes_bede_vil_hanfor.html)

March 19, 2009

**NUCLEAR COMMISSION: Radioactive waste storage is revised, *Las Vegas Review-Journal***

WASHINGTON -- The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is revising its estimates of how long nuclear waste can be kept safely at power-generating facilities as confidence shrinks that the radioactive material ever would be shipped to a Yucca Mountain repository. The agency could decide this summer that spent nuclear fuel could be stored securely in above-ground concrete and steel casks for at least 120 years, which is 20 years longer than current policy, NRC Chairman Dale Klein said at a Senate hearing Wednesday. The NRC set forth its proposal last fall, after the Department of Energy sent the agency a construction license application but before the election of President Barack Obama. He opposes the project and has indicated he will take steps to scale it back dramatically.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/41483587.html>

March 19, 2009

**Ruling clears way for EnergySolutions to store depleted uranium in Utah, *Salt Lake Tribune***

Depleted uranium is not your ordinary radioactive waste. Most hot waste gets less hazardous over time, like most of the stuff buried at EnergySolutions Inc.'s disposal site in Tooele County. But not DU, as it's called. The uranium enrichment by-product becomes more hazardous as it decays. And that's the reason the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest decision on depleted uranium is causing such a controversy. On Wednesday, the commission voted 3-to-1 to regulate DU as Class A low-level waste. And, in doing so, it made up to 1.4 million tons of DU potentially eligible to go to EnergySolutions' Utah site.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_11945578](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_11945578)

March 16, 2009

**Contract loss leaves future of SRS plant uncertain, *Aiken Standard***

As the only commercial client who intended to buy MOX fuel from the \$4.8 billion plant ends its contract, what will the ramifications be for the project and SRS? In December, Duke Energy let its contract to use the fuel in its reactors lapse. This leaves the multibillion dollar facility currently under construction without a customer. Duke Energy allowed its contract to buy the fuel expire Dec. 1, 2008, said Duke Energy spokesperson Rita Sipe. The mixed oxide fuel fabrication facility is a federal project to build a facility that would dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium and create mixed-oxide fuel, commonly called MOX, at the Savannah River Site. The facility is scheduled to open in 2016.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/local/0317MOXDuke>

March 16, 2009

**Low-level waste emerges as hurdle for new nuclear reactors, *New York Times***

While President Obama's plan to find alternatives to storing high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, Nev., is grabbing headlines, another problem has begun threatening license applications for new reactors. What can be done with low-level nuclear waste? \* \* \* "I'm going to argue low-level waste is a bigger issue than high-level waste right now," Edward Sproat, then-director of the Energy Department's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, warned at a Center for Strategic and International Studies event last fall. \* \* \* ...the low-level waste problem is already affecting reactor applications. \* \* \* The lack of storage space for low-level radioactive waste has grabbed attention on Capitol Hill. Lawmakers started getting involved after the operator of the Clive, Utah, Class A storage site filed a license in 2007 to import 20,000 tons of Italian low-level waste.

<http://www.nytimes.com/allbusiness/16greenwire-lowlevel-waste-emerges-as-hurdle-for-new-react-10146.html?pagewanted=2>

March 14, 2009

**Ines Triay nominated for key administration post, *Carlsbad Current-Argus***

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama announced Friday his intent to nominate the following individuals to key administration posts: \* \* \* *Ines Triay, nominee for Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, Department of Energy.* In her 24 years of work with the Department of Energy's environmental programs, Ines Triay has devoted her professional career to cleaning up the legacy of the Cold War. Triay spent 14 years at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico before moving to the Department of Energy, first in the Carlsbad field office and then in the Washington, D.C. headquarters.

[http://www.currentargus.com/ci\\_11916604](http://www.currentargus.com/ci_11916604)

White House Press Release: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/President-Obama-Announces-More-Key-Administration-Posts-3-13-09/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President-Obama-Announces-More-Key-Administration-Posts-3-13-09/)

March 14, 2009

**Deal off with single buyer of MOX fuel, *Augusta Chronicle***

Duke Energy, the only commercial nuclear power plant operator that had agreed to use mixed oxide fuels to be made at Savannah River Site, has ended its contract to use the material. The U.S. Department of Energy's \$4.86 billion MOX facility at SRS, scheduled to open in 2016, is designed to dispose of 34 metric tons of surplus, weapons-grade plutonium by using small amounts to make fuel for commercial reactors. The termination of Duke's contract -- disclosed Feb. 27 in a company financial filing with the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission -- raises questions about the government's ability to find power plants willing to use the fuel, said Tom Clements, the Southeast nuclear campaign coordinator for Friends of the Earth. "What that means, at least for right now, is that DOE has no reactors lined up to use MOX fuel," he said, noting that the project contractor, Shaw Areva MOX Services, issued an appeal in October urging companies to join the program.

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/03/14/met\\_514664.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/03/14/met_514664.shtml)

March 13, 2009

**Senators Seek Another Panel to Study U.S. Nuclear Waste Storage, *Global Security Newswire***

The U.S. senators from Nevada, Harry Reid (D) and John Ensign (R), submitted legislation yesterday to establish a commission to study how to store highly radioactive nuclear waste in the United States now that the Obama administration has rejected a longtime plan to consolidate the material in an underground

repository at Nevada's Yucca Mountain (see GSN, March 12). The concept appears to mirror an administration plan announced this week to form a blue-ribbon panel to study the same question. The Reid plan, announced in a release yesterday, calls for a commission to issue a recommendation within two years, while U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu said his panel would report by the end of this year.

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20090313\\_6770.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090313_6770.php)

March 13, 2009

**DOE lays out plans for 'energy park', *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy laid out plans Thursday for a regional "energy park" that would be anchored in Oak Ridge and leverage existing assets, including surplus federal properties, research capabilities and a highly trained work force. If successful, the project would clean up the environment, bolster energy security and create jobs in the four-state Tennessee Valley Corridor, and DOE said it could be used as a model for similar ventures elsewhere in the country. DOE did not release any dollar figures for what's being called the Tennessee Valley Energy Enterprise or estimate how many jobs could potentially be generated. But billions of dollars apparently would be invested over time, including federal stimulus money that's dedicated for cleanup and energy development.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/mar/13/doe-lays-out-plans-for-energy-park/>

March 11, 2009

**DOE monitoring possible spread of waste, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

Bailey Johnson has always savored the sweet taste of well water, shunning whenever possible the chemically treated city stuff. Now Johnson and his family members drink bottled water. It's delivered free of charge - courtesy of the U.S. Department of Energy - to their farm on the Clinch River, and Johnson sees the irony. "At one time we didn't want to drink anything but our groundwater," he said. "Now we want to drink anything but our groundwater." The sudden change is because of concern that hazardous waste from DOE's Oak Ridge property on the other side of the Clinch could be moving in their direction, perhaps using cracks or fissures in underground rock formations to travel beneath the waterway.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/mar/11/doe-monitoring-possible-spread-of-waste/>

March 11, 2009

**Chu Confirms INL Role In Future Nuclear Efforts, *KIFI LocalNews8, Idaho Falls***

Washington, DC - Idaho Senator Mike Crapo won a commitment from Energy Secretary Steven Chu Thursday that the Idaho National Laboratory will play an ongoing role in advancing nuclear research that could change the way the nation handles not only future technology but the disposal of waste products. Crapo told Secretary Chu he was disappointed that funding for nuclear initiatives and for the Yucca Mountain Repository has been cut back in President Obama's FY 2010 budget. \* \* \* Crapo said he was "very discouraged" in the President's decision to cut funding for the Yucca Mountain Repository because the federal government has signed a court agreement with the State of Idaho to remove high-level nuclear waste stored in Idaho to a new location by 2035. \* \* \* "It is my understanding that by 2035 it should be ready to ship out," Chu responded, citing the work of a blue-ribbon committee that will study the issue this year. \* \* \* Chu and Crapo agreed that work at the Idaho National Laboratory would be part of finding a solution to the waste issue. [http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=9990543&nav=menu554\\_2](http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=9990543&nav=menu554_2)

March 10, 2009

**Congressmen to NRC: Can US keep foreign waste out?, *Forbes***

Members of Congress from Utah, Tennessee and Massachusetts want the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to say whether it could prevent the importation of foreign radioactive waste for disposal in Utah's desert if a federal court rules a regional compact doesn't have the ability to keep it out. The letter sent Tuesday is in response to an application from Salt Lake City-based EnergySolutions Inc. to import up to 20,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste from Italy through the ports of Charleston, S.C. or New Orleans. After processing in Tennessee, about 1,600 tons would be disposed in Utah. If the NRC approves the company's import license, it would be the largest amount of nuclear waste ever brought into the country. The NRC has said the company's application approval is dependent on EnergySolutions having a place to put the waste and that the commission's decision will depend largely on the court ruling.

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2009/03/10/ap6151080.html>

March 10, 2009

**Appeals court affirms Wash. waste authority, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer***

SPOKANE, Wash. -- Washington State has authority to regulate mixed hazardous and transuranic wastes buried at the Hanford nuclear reservation, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday. The decision upholds an order the state issued in 2003 that required the U.S. Department of Energy to remove and process the equivalent of about 75,000 55-gallon drums at Hanford. The waste has been stored in unlined trenches since the 1970s at the site near Richland, Wash. "The federal court has upheld the state's authority to protect its people and its resources from the extremely dangerous wastes that were buried decades ago at Hanford," said Jay Manning, director of the state Department of Ecology. Hanford for decades made plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal, an activity that generated a huge volume of toxic wastes. The Energy Department for years has been working to clean up those wastes.

[http://www.seattlepi.com/local/6420ap\\_wa\\_hanford\\_ruling.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/6420ap_wa_hanford_ruling.html)

March 9, 2009

**USA to construct Jordanian storage facility, *World Nuclear News***

The USA is to design and construct a national storage facility in Amman for Jordan's radioactive waste and nuclear materials under a contract signed in Washington, DC. The agreement between the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) and the US Department of Energy's (DOE's) Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) was signed by Ned Xoubi, nuclear fuel cycle commissioner at JAEC, and Daniel Rutherford, contract manager at PNNL. According to a statement from Jordan's embassy in Washington, under the contract, the DOE will provide JAEC with \$370,000 for the construction of the central storage facility. The project - expected to be completed later this year - will comprise some 4000 square feet of storage space that will "host Jordan's radioactive waste and nuclear sources in a safe and secure environment for the next five decades."

[http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/WR-USA\\_to\\_construct\\_Jordanian\\_storage\\_facility-0903094.html](http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/WR-USA_to_construct_Jordanian_storage_facility-0903094.html)

March 7, 2009

**DOE to review waste removal options at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Energy will prepare a report this year on the future of high-level radioactive waste, new Energy Secretary Steven Chu said. That should give the Mid-Columbia a better idea of the future of Hanford's worst radioactive waste, now stored in underground tanks. Chu was grilled this week at a Senate Energy and Natural

Resources Committee hearing by Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, after saying that Yucca Mountain, Nev., will not be used as the nation's repository for high-level radioactive waste. The nation's used fuel from power production and Department of Energy high-level waste, including Hanford's, is required to go to a national waste repository. Yucca Mountain was the only site that was being developed for high-level waste.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/501354.html>

March 5, 2009

**GAO says DOE takes steps to bolster management, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Energy has taken steps to address weaknesses in its management of contracts and projects, the Government Accountability Office said Wednesday. It prepared testimony for the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, wrapping up DOE progress since it last appeared before the subcommittee three years ago. The GAO designated DOE's contract management as a high-risk area in 1990, the first year the high-risk list was published. DOE has taken actions to establish a more structured and disciplined approach for contract and project management and has substantially met three of five criteria needed for removal from the high-risk list, GAO said in a statement by Gene Aloise, GAO natural resources and environment director.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/915/story/498949.html>

March 4, 2009

**Contract and Project Management Concerns at the National Nuclear Security Administration and Office of Environmental Management, *Highlights of GAO-09-406T, a testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives***

Due to DOE's history of inadequate oversight and management of contractors, GAO continues to include DOE contract and project management on its list of government programs at high risk for fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. This testimony discusses (1) recent GAO work on contract and project management within two of DOE's largest program offices—the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Office of Environmental Management (EM), (2) preliminary results of ongoing GAO work on project management at NNSA's Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) project at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, and (3) actions needed by NNSA and EM to improve contract and project management.

Summary: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-406T>

Full Report: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09406t.pdf>

March 3, 2009

**Energy Department meets regulatory milestone with delivery to WIPP, *Carlsbad Current-Argus***

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. — The U.S. Department of Energy achieved a major environmental cleanup milestone this week with the first shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste leaving DOE's Oak Ridge Reservation and arriving safely at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M. "For the first time ever since its creation in 1943 during the war effort, the highest level waste from manmade nuclear materials is being shipped out of Oak Ridge," said Congressman Zach Wamp. "The safe removal of this radioactive waste is an important accomplishment for the Department of Energy and demonstrates its commitment to the continued environmental cleanup of the Oak Ridge Reservation."

[http://www.currentargus.com/ci\\_11830211](http://www.currentargus.com/ci_11830211)