

News from Around the Complex

May 15 – May 31, 2008

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

May 30, 2008

EPA decides to build cover for radioactive waste site, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

BRIDGETON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency formally approved a plan Thursday to build a multilayered cover over 40 acres of the West Lake Landfill containing radioactive waste. The plan also calls for a system of groundwater-monitoring wells to be installed at the 200-acre landfill, a Superfund site long slated for federal cleanup. Area residents and environmental activists had urged the EPA to remove waste from the landfill because of concerns over possible flooding and groundwater contamination. But on Thursday, EPA officials touted the approved plan as the best option. The EPA estimated that more than 250,000 cubic yards of waste would have to be removed if that were the option chosen, Askew said. "If you stacked that on the playing field at the Edwards Jones Dome, it would go goal line to goal line, sideline to sideline, more than 140 feet high," he said.

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/>

May 29, 2008

Workers probe drop in waste level in tank at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald*

Hanford workers are investigating the possibility of a recent leak at one of the nuclear reservation's underground tanks of high-level waste after an unexplained drop in the contents of Tank SX-104. "We want to protect human health and the environment and in that process treat it as a potential leaker until we can prove otherwise," said Steve Pfaff, the Department of Energy federal project director for tank retrieval. DOE contractor CH2M Hill Hanford Group is taking a conservative approach, knowing that leaks can occur because of weld failures in the steel liners of the concrete shells of the oldest tanks, said Herb Berman, a CH2M Hill vice president and chief engineer. However, there are other possible explanations, including changes in the waste from the installation of a pipe in the tank or gas escaping from the solids of the tank. Tank SX-104 was built in the early 1950s and is suspected of having leaked about 6,000 gallons of waste before 1988. It's one of 149 single-shell tanks built to hold high-level radioactive waste left from processing plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program during World War II and the Cold War.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/11561.html>

May 23, 2008

Senate OKs funding to boost Hanford budget, *Tri-City Herald*

The U.S. Senate on Thursday approved an additional \$300 million for cleanup of the Department of Energy's nuclear sites, including Hanford. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., worked to include the money in the Senate supplemental appropriations bill for fiscal year 2008 because of her concern that cleanup deadlines at Hanford are at risk and layoffs may be required. "This funding is a way to restore some of the shortfall that has been created through years and years of administration cuts," she said in a statement. The Senate passed the domestic portion of the bill 75-22. It next goes to the House.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/11540.html>

May 22, 2008

DOE Should Reassess Its Approach to Designing and Building Spent Nuclear Fuel Recycling Facilities, GAO Report

DOE's original approach of building engineering-scale facilities would meet GNEP's objectives if the advanced technologies on which it focused can be successfully developed and commercialized. The advanced technologies would reduce waste to a greater degree than existing technologies by recycling radioactive material that a geologic repository has limited capacity to accommodate. The advanced technologies would also mitigate proliferation risks relative to existing technologies by increasing the difficulty of theft or diversion of weapons-usable nuclear material from recycling facilities. Nonetheless, DOE's engineering-scale approach had two shortcomings. First, it lacked industry participation, potentially reducing the prospects for eventual commercialization of the technologies. In particular, the approach included some technologies that may introduce unnecessary costs and technical challenges while creating waste management challenges; industry representatives have questioned whether such technologies could be commercialized. Second, DOE's schedule called for building one of the recycling facilities (a reprocessing plant for separating reusable materials from spent nuclear fuel and fabricating recycled fuel) before conducting R&D on recycled fuel that would help determine the plant's design requirements. This schedule unnecessarily increased the risk that the spent fuel would be separated in a form that cannot be recycled. The other two facilities DOE had planned to build (an advanced reactor for using recycled fuel and an R&D facility) would allow DOE to conduct R&D that existing DOE facilities have limited capability to support.

Highlights: <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d08483high.pdf>

Report: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08483.pdf>

May 21, 2008

U.S. Department of Energy Awards Contracts for Waste Storage Canisters for Yucca Mountain, DOE Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that Areva Federal Services and NAC International have been awarded contracts for the design, licensing, and demonstration of the Transportation, Aging, and Disposal (TAD) canister system. The two contracts have a total value of up to \$13.8 million if all options are exercised by DOE and are each for a term of up to five years. The TAD canister will be the primary means for packaging spent nuclear fuel for transportation to and disposal in the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, about 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/6267.htm>

May 21, 2008

State regulators OK West Texas nuclear waste dump, Houston Chronicle

AUSTIN — State environmental regulators voted 2-1 today to grant a Dallas company's license to dispose of waste from nuclear weapons processing and uranium mining in Andrews County in West Texas. Chairman Buddy Garcia and Commissioner Bryan Shaw voted to issue the "by-products" license to Waste Control Specialists, a company owned by Harold Simmons, a top donor to Gov. Rick Perry, who appoints members of the environmental commission. Commissioner Larry Soward dissented. He said the license application should first be reviewed in a contested case hearing because of concern by some of the agency's own scientists that the dump site is too close to ground water. The Sierra Club and 11 residents of Eunice, N.M., which is five miles from the dump, asked for an administrative law judge to hearing evidence about the site. The executive director of the Texas Commission on Environmental

Quality rejected their requests, saying there was not sufficient public interest because no Texas residents sought a review.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/5794774.html>

May 21, 2008

Appeals court: Hanford initiative no good, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

YAKIMA, Wash. —An appeals court has upheld a lower court ruling striking down Initiative 297, Washington state's voter-approved measure that would have barred the federal government from shipping waste to the Hanford nuclear site until all existing waste there is cleaned up. Nearly 70 percent of Washington voters approved the initiative, now known as the Cleanup Priority Act, in 2004. The federal government immediately filed suit to overturn it. In June 2006, U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald of Yakima ruled the initiative was unconstitutional because it violates federal authority over nuclear waste, as well as the Constitution's interstate commerce clause. The state appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, which upheld McDonald's ruling on Wednesday.

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2004429854_apwahanfordinitiative2ndldwritethru.html

May 20, 2008

LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE: Status of Disposal Availability in the United States and Other Countries, *GAO Report*

Disposal of radioactive material continues to be highly controversial. To address part of the disposal problem, in 1980, Congress made the states responsible for disposing of most low-level radioactive waste (LLRW), and allowed them to form regional compacts and to restrict access to disposal facilities from non-compact states. LLRW is an inevitable by-product of nuclear power generation and includes debris and contaminated soils from the decommissioning and cleanup of nuclear facilities, as well as metal and other material exposed to radioactivity. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) ranks LLRW according to hazard exposure--classes A, B, C, and greater-than-class C (GTCC). The states are responsible for the first three classes, and the Department of Energy (DOE) is responsible for GTCC. Three facilities dispose of the nation's LLRW--in Utah, South Carolina, and Washington State. The testimony addresses (1) LLRW management in the United States and (2) LLRW management in other countries. It is substantially based on two GAO reports: a June 2004 report (GAO-04-604) and a March 2007, report (GAO-07-221) that examined these issues.

Report: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-08-813T>

Highlights: <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d08813high.pdf>

May 20, 2008

Tearing down K-25 plant not an easy job, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Thousands of truckloads of hazardous garbage have already been hauled from the site, and the heavy-duty demolition work hasn't even started. Workers will begin taking down the walls of K-25 in October, but preparations - such as removing asbestos, mercury and PCBs - have been under way for a long time. Demolishing the World War II-era plant is a big deal. "It's the largest building in the DOE complex, and one of the oldest and most structurally challenged buildings in the complex," said Kelly Trice, project manager for Bechtel Jacobs Co., the Department of Energy's main cleanup contractor. "The whole intent of the project is to get to this point, to get to demolish it. That's what we've been working on the past couple of years."

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/may/20/tearing-down-k-25-plant-not-an-easy-job/>

May 18, 2008

Guest Column: New SRS operators forecast bright future, *Augusta Chronicle*

Change, whether large or small, a new job or a new pair of shoes, can be uncomfortable and vexing. It can also be an opportunity to put your best foot forward and celebrate. Usually, I find the latter to be true, and that is playing out as the new management and operating contractor for Savannah River Site, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, steps forward in its 90-day transition at the site. As the president of this new company, it was my pleasure in two town hall meetings last week to introduce our leadership team, and more importantly to listen and learn from SRS employees, their families and the citizens of the Augusta-Aiken area. We have another town hall meeting in Barnwell on Tuesday, and more to come. * * *

Chuck Munns is the President of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions LLC.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/051808/aik_228892.shtml

May 17, 2008

Tailings: Truck or track?: Feds tour cleanup area as discussions over transport continue, *St. Louis Tribune*

Officials of the U.S. Energy Department toured the Atlas tailings cleanup site near Moab last week as deliberations continued on whether trucks or trains should be used to haul away the massive uranium waste pile. "Their number one priority is the safety of our community, which we support, of course" said Joette Langianese, a Grand County Council member who met with Energy Department officials. The 130-acre, 16-million-ton pile of uranium-processing waste, called tailings, leaches ammonia, uranium and other contaminants into the Colorado River, which serves more than 30 million people downstream. The pile is located just north of Moab in eastern Utah, on U.S. Highway 191 within a mile of the Arches National Park entrance. Members of Congress tangled with the Energy Department this spring over the timing of and funding for the \$300 million project. Langianese notes the Energy Department has until the end of June to report whether it can stick to the cleanup schedule Congress has set. Costs and safety are key factors in the current discussions, she said. James A. Rispoli, the assistant secretary for Energy and Environmental Management, and Cynthia Anderson, headquarters deputy chief executive officer, met with Moab and county officials.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_9290470

May 15, 2008

Global Nuclear Energy Partnership Members Convene in Jordan For Second Steering Group Meeting, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy today announced continued progress at the conclusion of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership's (GNEP's) second Steering Group meeting. Representatives from twenty-eight countries and three intergovernmental organizations attended the two-day meeting in the Kingdom of Jordan hosted by the Jordanian Atomic Energy Commission. The Steering Group discussed the formation of a third Working Group on the development of grid-appropriate reactors in order to promote the development of advanced, more proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors appropriate for the needs and capabilities of countries with limited resources or small and medium electric power grids. Actions will be undertaken to pursue formation of such a Working Group and to present the proposed Working Group to the Executive Committee for its consideration and approval.

<http://energy.gov/news/6258.htm>

May 14, 2008

Congress subcommittee to debate nuclear waste ban, *The Daily News Journal (Tennessee)*

WASHINGTON — Legislation U.S. Rep. Bart Gordon, D-Tenn., introduced to keep the U.S. from becoming the world's nuclear dumping ground will be the subject of a congressional hearing on May 20. The Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality will meet May 20 to discuss Gordon's bill and hear testimony from experts on the subject. Gordon's bill would prohibit the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from authorizing imports of foreign-generated nuclear waste for disposal in the United States. "No other country in the world imports foreign nuclear waste for disposal in its own sites," said Gordon of Murfreesboro. "Canada, Mexico and several European nations do not have adequate storage space for their own nuclear waste, and the United States has not licensed a new disposal site in more than 20 years. If we're the only nation that is accepting imports, it's only logical that we will see more and more countries that want to dump their radioactive waste here and be rid of it forever. But we need to preserve our disposal space for our own waste."

<http://dnj.midsouthnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080514/NEWS01/805140313/1002>

May 9, 2008

Lawmakers make plea for more Hanford money, *Tri-City Herald*

Members of Congress representing states or communities adjacent to former nuclear weapons production sites have made another plea to restore cleanup funds in the fiscal year 2009 budget. The bipartisan effort was led by Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., as chairman of the Nuclear Cleanup Caucus. He and 36 other lawmakers sent a letter to the leadership of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee this week asking for help in restoring money for nuclear cleanup funding at Hanford and other sites next year. They're asking for \$6.6 billion, which is down from peak funding of \$7.3 billion in fiscal 2005. If the budget remains at the proposed \$5.5 billion, layoffs are expected at Hanford. In addition, the Department of Energy will miss 23 legal deadlines. "Perhaps more troubling, DOE has stated that due to these cuts, a substantial amount of work necessary to meet future milestones and obligations will not be performed," the letter said. "As a consequence, DOE will continue to fall behind in meeting legal cleanup obligations well into the future."

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/179397.html>

May 8, 2008

Southwest Idaho company making millions by accepting toxic waste, *Tri-City Herald*

Railcars loaded with 6,700 tons of radioactive waste will roll across the Treasure Valley this week, the cargo destined for a remote site south of Boise on a sagebrush-dotted plateau near the Snake River. And it won't be the first time. This scenario has occurred regularly over the past several years. The site Idaho's only public hazardous waste dump has received more than 1 million tons of radioactive materials from the federal government during the past five years. The US Ecology facility west of Grand View in Owyhee County is one of only 18 commercial facilities in the country permitted to bury radioactive or other hazardous waste. Treating and storing waste can be a financially lucrative endeavor. In 2007, the Grand View facility received 800,000 tons of government and industrial hazardous waste from 37 states, with New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Missouri topping the hazardous waste suppliers. Boise-based American Ecology, US Ecology's parent company, reported revenue last year of \$165.5 million with gross profit of \$45.5 million. American Ecology also owns hazardous waste disposal sites in Nevada, Texas and Washington.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/11454.html>

May 7, 2008

DOE plan for nuke waste is reshelved: Too many 'unknowns' for recycling at Piketon site, *The Columbus Dispatch*

WASHINGTON -- Some say a multibillion-dollar recycling center for nuclear waste would be an economic blessing for southern Ohio. Others see it as little more than a radioactive waste dump. But both sides agree on at least one thing: The Department of Energy initiative will not happen anytime soon on the grounds of the former uranium-enrichment plant in Piketon -- or perhaps anywhere else. "There are too many unknowns to call it a real project at this point," said Greg Simonton, executive director of the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative, an economic-development group that has lobbied for the project in Piketon. "From my perspective, it remains on the shelf."

http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/business/stories/2008/05/07/nogrep.ART_ART_05-07-08_C10_95A4MLN.html?sid=101

May 2008

Key GNEP Decision Left to Next President, *Arms Control Today*

With its Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) already facing resistance from Congress, the Bush administration has decided to leave to the next president key decisions affecting the domestic leg of the controversial program. Administration officials have claimed that GNEP, which seeks to develop new nuclear technologies and new international nuclear fuel arrangements, will cut nuclear waste and decrease the risk that an anticipated growth in the use of nuclear energy worldwide could spur nuclear proliferation. Critics assert that the administration's course would exacerbate the proliferation risks posed by the spread of spent fuel reprocessing technology, be prohibitively expensive, and fail to significantly ease waste disposal challenges without any certainty that the claimed technologies will ever be developed. Congress has largely sided with the critics and last year sharply cut the administration's proposed budget for the program and restricted it to research.

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_05/GNEP.asp

May 6, 2008

TVA to design concept plan for nuclear waste reprocessing plant, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

The Tennessee Valley Authority has received \$4 million to develop a conceptual design for a nuclear waste reprocessing plant that could end up as a demonstration facility built on the former Clinch Breeder Reactor site. TVA president and chief executive officer Tom Kilgore said today in an interview that TVA has long-term plans to use the site for development of a small scale nuclear waste reprocessing facility to demonstrate technology that the United States hopes to develop as nuclear power again rises to prominence. Another possible site for the facility would be "somewhere on the Oak Ridge Reservation," where Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Y-12 weapons plant and the East Tennessee Technology Park are located, said Kilgore.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/may/06/tva-design-concept-plan-nuclear-waste-reprocessing/>

May 5, 2008

Officials: Areva decides on Idaho, not N.M., *Carlsbad Current-Argus*

CARLSBAD — Areva Inc. isn't building its \$2 billion uranium enrichment plant near Carlsbad, local officials said Monday. A proposed site between Carlsbad and Hobbs was one of five finalists for the French nuclear giant's first uranium enrichment plant

in the United States, but the company has elected to locate near Idaho Falls, Idaho, according to state Rep. John Heaton, D-Carlsbad. The plant will employ about 250 people and use high-speed centrifuge technology to enrich uranium, similar to the \$1.5 billion National Enrichment Facility going up near Eunice. Areva has yet to make an official announcement, but local officials found out about the decision from Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

http://www.currentargus.com/ci_9163666

May 5, 2008

How is the cleanup coming along at Harshaw Chemical Co. in the Flats?,

Cleveland Plain-Dealer

There isn't a huge amount of lingering radioactivity at Cleveland's old Harshaw Chemical Co. plant, where chemists, physicists and unskilled factory workers all joined the effort to build the atomic bombs that ended World War II. Left alone, the uranium, radium and other toxic stuff on the 40-acre complex will decay to utter harmlessness. The problem is, that would take millions of years. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has vowed to get the abandoned chemical plant near Harvard and Jennings roads clean well before the radioactive decay runs its course. Lately, the corps has been making some progress on its pledge. Exactly when it will finish its mandatory cleanup is still unknown: The corps hopes to finish a cleanup plan by next February and get more public input at the end of next year. After that, hazardous-materials workers will dig up or tear down just about everything contaminated, seal it up in barrels and ship it off to a secure disposal site in Utah for low-level radioactive waste. That could take years. Last month, workers shipped 140 barrels of lightly contaminated stuff from the site — things such as floor sweepings from several buildings, tainted soils and the "moon suits" that on-site workers wore — to Utah.

<http://www.cleveland.com/news/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/other/1209976249135100.xml&coll=2>

May 1, 2008

SRS to receive more than \$1 billion in federal funding, WRDW News (Georgia)

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) today said he was very pleased Savannah River Site is in line to receive increased funding under the 2008 Defense Authorization bill. Graham is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The bill passed committee unanimously and will now be sent to the full Senate. "With this budget the federal government can live up to the commitments it has made to the state of South Carolina when it comes to cleanup and new missions," said Graham. "I'm very pleased with the work of the committee and appreciate the support of my colleagues in recognizing and rewarding the hard work done at the Site. I will work with appropriators to fund the important work being done at the Site." Among the major Site highlights of the legislation: Overall the Site has been authorized to receive funding of \$1.28 billion, \$74 million above the President's budget request.

<http://www.wrdw.com/politics/headlines/18460244.html>