

News from Around the Complex

November 1 – November 30, 2008

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

November 30, 2008

State premature in Hanford lawsuit, *Tri-City Herald*

[Editorial] No question, the state's decision to sue the Department of Energy over Hanford cleanup is an unwelcome turn of events. It's bound to make the job of securing federal money for Hanford even more difficult for our congressional delegation. But allowing the federal government to run roughshod over Washington State's interests isn't an acceptable alternative either. About the best anyone can hope for now is that talks between the state and federal governments will resume soon and lead to a quick settlement. If a resolution depends on a federal judge's decision, the status of the Tri-Party Agreement -- the document governing deadlines and other details of Hanford cleanup -- could be in limbo for months or years.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/962/story/401080.html>

November 30, 2008

In our view Nov. 30: Clean Up Hanford: Gregoire, McKenna had no other choice; lawsuit against federal government is needed, *The Columbian (Vancouver, WA)*

[Editorial] When one form of government sues another, it annoys all constituents. Those governments are supposed to serve us, not fight each other. So it is troubling that the state of Washington last week sued the federal government to expedite cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation near the Tri-Cities. But it's not so troubling as to keep us from praising Gov. Chris Gregoire and Attorney General Rob McKenna for doing so. Our state has tried for years to get the feds to meet their obligation to clean up nuclear waste that already contaminates the aquifer and is moving toward the Columbia River.

<http://www.columbian.com/article/20081130/OPINION02/711309967/-1/OPINION>

November 29, 2008

East Tennessee makes push for nuclear fuel recycling site, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*

Where others see only radioactive waste, engineers at TVA and the Department of Energy envision another source of needed energy. Most of the potential energy in the nuclear fuel used to generate nearly 30 percent of the electricity in the Tennessee Valley remains untapped in spent fuel pools or dry casks at the Sequoyah, Watts Bar and Browns Ferry nuclear plants, said Sherrell R. Greene, director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory's nuclear technology programs. "We basically discard over 90 percent of the energy value that is still left in the fuel bundles after they are used," Mr. Greene said. "This spent nuclear fuel is potentially a very valuable resource for our country."

<http://timesfreepress.com/news/2008/nov/29/east-tennessee-makes-push-nuclear-fuel-recycling-s/?local>

November 29, 2008

Y-12's Alpha-5 nears its end: Maintenance costs above \$1M make demolition priority, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Construction of Alpha-5 was completed in May 1944 as part of the urgent wartime effort to enrich uranium for the first atomic bombs. Six decades

later, taking down the building has acquired an urgency of its own. Alpha-5 is a top priority of a proposed Oak Ridge cleanup program that would ultimately get rid of more than 400 contaminated structures and cost up to \$14.5 billion. The big building (530,000 square feet) is no longer needed at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. Just sitting there, it costs more than \$1 million annually for maintenance - and that doesn't include heating, which is another costly requirement.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/nov/29/y-12s-alpha-5-nears-its-end/>

November 28, 2008

Nuclear Waste Piles Up in State, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

The Beaver Valley Power Station in Shippingport could run out of space for its low-level radioactive waste in two to five years. A local university and hospital have changed their practices so they don't have to keep radioactive isotopes on their campuses. The problem is that Pennsylvania, like 35 other states, no longer has a place to get rid of its low-level radioactive waste. That means anyone generating the material has to store it, at least temporarily, until a permanent site becomes available.***Until July, Pennsylvania producers could send radioactive waste to a disposal site in Barnwell, S.C. But the site has been closed to garbage from anywhere except South Carolina, New Jersey and Connecticut. Another facility in Washington serves 11 Western states.

http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/mostread/s_600513.html

November 28, 2008

Oak Ridge Cleanup Plan Gets Early OK, *The Tennessean*

KNOXVILLE — The Department of Energy has given early approval to a potentially multibillion-dollar cleanup program that could change the face of its nuclear weapons plant and national science laboratory at Oak Ridge. The plan calls for demolition of more than 400 buildings at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Y-12 nuclear weapons plant over the next 20-plus years. More than 5 million square feet of structures would be torn down, some dating to Oak Ridge's secret-city founding in World War II. The program also would fix polluted groundwater on the sites — which make up a 33,000-acre reservation, about 20 miles west of Knoxville — and reduce environmental damage there after 60 years of nuclear operations. But it won't be cheap. DOE-Oak Ridge spokesman John Shewairy said last week that estimates range from \$9.4 billion to \$14.5 billion.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20081128/NEWS01/811280428/1002>

November 27, 2008

Foes slam nuclear waste plan: Oak Ridge is among recycling-site options, *The Tennessean*

A Bush administration project aimed at reprocessing nuclear waste in a global sharing arrangement is bringing opposition that's not always from anti-nuclear advocates as public hearings come to Oak Ridge and Paducah next week. *** "If you 'recycle' plutonium, it doesn't help at all," said Professor Frank von Hippel, of the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. "You still have huge amounts of plutonium in the spent fuel, and you've created a lot of new waste streams." Von Hippel, unlike some critics of what's called the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, is anti-reprocessing but not anti-nuclear. He's coming to Tennessee for the hearing in Oak Ridge and, also, a speaking engagement. The Government Accountability Office estimated just the construction of a reprocessing plant would cost more than \$40 billion, said von Hippel, a former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20081127/NEWS01/811270347/1006>

November 27, 2008

West Valley cleanup could take 30 years: Phased shutdown is one of four alternatives unveiled in Department of Energy report, *The Buffalo News*

WASHINGTON — State and federal agencies are recommending a phased shutdown of the West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project, a process that will take 30 more years. Their report leaves many crucial issues unsettled, including which level of government is ultimately responsible for cleaning up the site and where radioactive waste would be shipped. In a sense, the report punts to the incoming administration of President-elect Barack Obama questions about cost, responsibility and waste disposal that have been argued for decades. The proposal comes in what the U. S. Department of Energy calls a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the DOE's first such report on West Valley in 12 years.

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/story/506335.html>

November 26, 2008

State to file suit against DOE for missed Hanford cleanup deadlines, *Tri-City Herald*

The state of Washington plans to file a lawsuit today to force the Department of Energy to move faster to empty radioactive waste from underground tanks at the Hanford nuclear reservation and treat it. "In Washington state, we have been patient and reasonable in working with the federal agencies at Hanford," Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire said Tuesday in Richland. "Today our patience has run out." The state has been in talks with the Department of Energy for 18 months to renegotiate legal deadlines for cleanup after it became clear that DOE could not meet cleanup deadlines in the Tri-Party Agreement. The lawsuit, which is to be filed in federal court in Eastern Washington, will ask a judge to set new deadlines for cleanup and enforce them because the state and federal government failed to reach an agreement out of court.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/12464.html>

November 22, 2008

GAO criticizes DOE oversight, *Tri-City Herald*

Congress should consider giving authority to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to regulate all or some Department of Energy nuclear facilities if DOE does not improve oversight of safety, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office. DOE strongly objected to the report, sending the GAO 21 pages of single-spaced comments pointing out what it said were inaccuracies, faulty premises and flawed recommendations. The GAO report focused on DOE's program to offer independent safety oversight of its high hazard nuclear programs at Hanford and elsewhere, most recently through the 2-year-old Office of Health Safety and Security, or HSS office. The office is intended to be independent of program offices responsible for nuclear cleanup work as a way to avoid potential conflicts of interest and help to ensure public confidence in DOE's ability to regulate itself.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/393047.html

November 20, 2008

Cleanup project moving forward: Potential \$14.5 billion plan for Oak Ridge could take 25 years, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy has given its preliminary blessing to a massive Oak Ridge cleanup campaign that could cost as much as \$14.5 billion and take 25 years to complete. The DOE announced Wednesday that Jim Rispoli, the assistant secretary for environmental management, had signed papers for Critical Decision-1 - a major step that moves the project forward and sets the stage for

seeking congressional appropriations for the work. The Oak Ridge proposal, known officially as the Integrated Facilities Disposition Program, would demolish more than 400 contaminated buildings at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. The program also would focus on fixing polluted groundwater at the sites and reducing environmental damage done by 60 years of nuclear operations.
<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/nov/20/cleanup-project-moving-forward/>

November 18, 2008

DHEC keeping secrets, *The State (South Carolina)*

Locked in a government storage room are files that tell the story of a leaking nuclear waste landfill near Barnwell. But when environmental lawyer Bob Guild asked to see the documents one day five years ago, state regulators only gave him a thin folder. Landfill operator Chem-Nuclear had persuaded regulators to withhold many of the files, arguing the information included trade secrets. Without the records, Guild lost a court case that could have forced tougher disposal practices at the 37-year-old landfill. Columbia lawyer Bob Guild says DHEC denied access to records showing the magnitude of pollution at a nuclear waste landfill near Barnwell.

<http://www.thestate.com/local/story/593696.html>

November 16, 2008

Hanford ground water to be monitored for contaminants, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy has installed more ground water sampling tubes along the Columbia River, adding to a 13-year-old program to collect data about possible contaminants entering the river from Hanford. "(Hanford) remediation is directly geared to monitoring," said Jim Hanson, the DOE lead for some Hanford ground water cleanup. "It is a good indicator for us to prioritize the work we need to do." DOE and its contractors have just completed installing new aquifer monitoring tubes at 51 sites. It expands a program that started at Hanford in 1995 "almost as a research project," said Dennis Faulk, an Environmental Protection Agency scientist. "We didn't think they would have this durability."

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/385816.html

November 14, 2008

Seasonal maintenance underway soon at WIPP, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*

CARLSBAD — The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad will soon go into maintenance mode. From Nov. 23 to Jan. 20, no transuranic waste will be emplaced at the underground repository near Carlsbad. WIPP often has maintenance shutdowns during the holiday season, but this year's will be more than double the typical length. Roger Nelson, chief scientist of the Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office, said WIPP workers are going to stay busy taking care of a number of needed repairs and improvements.

http://www.currentargus.com/ci_10989013

November 12, 2008

Delaying Oak Ridge cleanup could be costly nightmare, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

[Editorial] One of the programs most likely to suffer under tight federal budgets is environmental cleanup, and that could put a crimp in Department of Energy plans in Oak Ridge. Several years ago, DOE sold officials in Tennessee and other states on the need to accelerate the cleanup programs in order to reduce the maintenance costs on old, surplus facilities and enhance safety by focusing work on high-risk areas. This strategy was at least partly successful, as big DOE cleanup projects were completed — including the closeout of entire facilities in Colorado and Ohio. But

accelerating projects on paper didn't make them immune to federal budget cuts, and other problems developed — such as the Oak Ridge accident in which a worker fell through a floor at K-25 — that forced DOE to reevaluate cleanup strategies and beg the states for forgiveness when missing deadlines.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/nov/12/munger-delaying-oak-ridge-cleanup-could-be-costly-/>

November 7, 2008

DOE says budget puts 23 Hanford cleanup deadlines at risk, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy has notified Hanford regulators that 23 legal deadlines for cleanup are at risk and may be missed because of the budget for fiscal 2009. All of the deadlines are for cleanup work in central Hanford as DOE focuses on finishing most of the cleanup along the Columbia River by 2015. DOE asked Hanford regulators, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology for extensions in a letter sent Wednesday. "This is a disappointing reminder of the Bush administration's legacy of shortchanging Hanford cleanup efforts," Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said in a statement. "Year after year, this administration introduced budgets that failed to live up to the critical milestones set forth by the Tri-Party Agreement and it's now clear that they will leave office with significant work left undone."

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/376210.html

November 7, 2008

US Energy Dept. would expand proposed nuclear dump, *International Herald-Tribune*

WASHINGTON: The Energy Department will tell Congress in the coming weeks it should begin looking for a second permanent site to bury nuclear waste or approve a large expansion of the proposed waste repository under a mountain in the Nevada desert. Edward Sproat, head of the department's civilian nuclear waste program, said Thursday the 77,000-ton limit Congress put on the capacity of the proposed Yucca waste dump will fall far short of what will be needed and has to be expanded. If not, another dump must be built elsewhere in the country, Sproat said. The future of the project beneath Nevada's Yucca Mountain is anything but certain. President-elect Barack Obama has said he does not believe the site 90 miles (145 kilometers) northwest of Las Vegas is suitable for keeping highly radioactive used reactor fuel up to a million years and believes other options should be explored. Sen. Harry Reid, leader of the Senate's Democratic majority and a resident of Nevada, has vowed to block the project.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/11/07/america/NA-US-Nuclear-Dump-Expansion.php>

November 7, 2008

U.S. Decides One Nuclear Dump Is Enough, *New York Times*

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration will recommend that Congress give up the idea of a second nuclear waste dump, dropping a grand bargain struck in the 1980s, and instead vote to enlarge the repository now proposed in Nevada, the director of the Energy Department's civilian radioactive waste management program said on Thursday. The director, Edward F. Sproat III, who is in charge of work on the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, said that the process of trying to open one repository had been so slow and expensive that this was not a good time to start looking for another. The future of the entire repository program may be in flux anyway because President-elect Barack Obama

has called for finding another solution. But Mr. Sproat noted that the law called for his department to pursue the opening of the Yucca site.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/washington/07yucca.html?_r=1&ref=us&oref=slogin

November 5, 2008

Assistant Secretary James Rispoli Announces Resignation, DOE Press Release
WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today released the following statement regarding Assistant Secretary James Rispoli's announcement that he will be leaving the Department in late November:

"Jim provided strong leadership and achieved significant success as the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management (EM) for the past three years. He enhanced the credibility of the EM program by instituting rigorous management practices during both the project planning and execution phases, and greatly improved the daily operations of the organization. He also demonstrated and set the example that technical and sometimes dangerous projects can be well managed while at the same time adhering to the highest safety standards. I am pleased that EM's project and safety performance have improved dramatically during his tenure, and I wish him the very best in his future endeavors."

<http://energy.gov/news/6706.htm>

November 5, 2008

Pantex cleanup project cleared: Upper-level aquifer focus, Amarillo Globe-News

The state of Texas and federal agencies have approved an overall cleanup plan for the Pantex nuclear weapons plant. The plan's aim is to clean up an upper-level aquifer that sits above the Ogallala Aquifer, a major regional water source. Elevated levels of high explosives and chromium have been discovered southeast of Pantex in the perched aquifer, which is not normally used for drinking. Environmental Protection Agency official Camille Hueni said contaminant traces have occasionally turned up in Ogallala Aquifer water samples, but repeated samplings have not shown a contamination "trend" that exceeds federal drinking-water standards. The plan also sets perched aquifer cleanup levels to prevent possible Ogallala contamination.

http://www.amarillo.com/stories/110508/bus_biz6.shtml

November 4, 2008

URS-owned contractor settles fraud allegations, Tri-City Herald

Washington Savannah River Co., the former management and operations contractor for the Savannah River, S.C., nuclear site, has agreed to pay the federal government \$2.4 million to resolve allegations of fraud. The U.S. Justice Department alleged that the company, owned by URS Corp., failed to disclose substantial projected increases in required pension fund contributions during 2003 contract negotiations. As part of the settlement, the contractor will withdraw claims for an additional \$35.6 million for the Department of Energy to cover the rise in its pension costs. The Department of Justice said that after the 2005 contract began Washington Savannah River Co. sought and received a \$1.2 million adjustment to the contract to cover what DOE believed were unexpected increases in required pension funding.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/915/story/372722.html>

November 3, 2008

Bad material found in SRS construction, Greenville News (South Carolina)

COLUMBIA -- The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has warned the nuclear industry to be careful in its construction oversight after finding problems earlier this

year with some bad concrete and faulty reinforcing steel in the foundation of the plant at the Savannah River Site that will produce nuclear reactor fuel from weapons-grade plutonium. In a report filed last week by the NRC, officials said problems discovered during construction of the SRS MOX plant near Aiken and two nuclear plants in Europe are reminders of problems found during the last wave of American nuclear construction in the 1970s and 1980s. "Both abroad and in the U.S., interest in new reactor and fuel cycle facility construction is resuming after many years," the NRC said in its report.

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/article/20081103/NEWS01/811030311/1001/NEWS01>