

PGDP cleanup gets major funding boost

The Paducah Sun, Saturday, January 18, 2014

LAUREL BLACK lblack@paducahsun.com



The groundwater above-ground treatment facility is used to remove contamination from below ground near the C-400 cleaning building at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. A federal spending bill expected to be signed by Sunday allocates \$265 million to the U.S. Department of Energy's cleanup operations at the plant.

Local officials reacted positively Friday to the prospective signing of a federal spending bill that allots millions in funding to U.S. Department of Energy cleanup operations at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

The \$1.012 trillion package included an allocation of \$265 million for the Paducah site, according to Chris Pack, press secretary for U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield. The bill, which prevents another government shutdown, passed the U.S. Senate 72-26 on Thursday. President Barack Obama was expected to sign it before the shutdown, scheduled for midnight tonight.

Pack told the Sun earlier this week that once the bill was signed into law, the DOE would be responsible for choosing a contractor for decontamination and decommissioning of the site, and that a portion of the money will help fund other cleanup contracts.

"The bottom line is that it means jobs for people," Paducah Mayor Gayle Kaler said. "(The cleanup operations) will put a lot of people to work,"

The DOE's current contractor for the site, LATA Kentucky, laid off 79 hourly positions and 12 salaried worker positions in December because of the government shutdown and lack of a fiscal year budget

Joe Walker, manager of environmental communications and outreach for LATA, said the company was awaiting official word from the DOE before commenting.

Decisions on how the \$265 million will be spent rest with the DOE. Chad Chancellor, president of Paducah Economic Development, said he hopes to learn details of the department's plans for the funds next week.

"Obviously, we want it (the money) to go immediately to cleanup, so that they can hire folks right out of the chute and also start cleaning our site up. It's a good thing from every perspective," he said.

Kaler and Chancellor applauded Whitfield, along with Sens. Rand Paul and Mitch McConnell, for their continued efforts to secure funding for the site.

"I've seen firsthand how big of a priority they've made it," Chancellor said.

Kaler stressed that the cleanup will be a long-term project that requires consistent funding.

"We hope to continue this type of funding each year, because that's what it's going to take to do the total cleanup," she said.