

ECA Update: February 26, 2015



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Monica Regalbuto renominated as EM-1

ECA has learned that Dr. Monica Regalbuto has been renominated by President Obama to serve as Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management. Dr. Regalbuto, who has served as Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Environmental Management since last June, was originally nominated to the position during the last Congress. Despite widespread support in the Senate, her nomination lapsed when Congress adjourned. Dr. Regalbuto began her career in 1988 at Argonne National Laboratory and recently served in the Office of Nuclear Energy as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fuel Cycle Technologies. It's not clear when the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will begin considering her nomination but we will bring you more information as it becomes available. This and other nominations can be found here <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/25/presidential-nominations-sent-senate>.

DOE Real Property Report
Government Accountability Office
February 25, 2015

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Upcoming Events

[House Energy Appropriations Hearing on FY16 Energy Budget](#)
February 26

[SSAB Portsmouth Meeting](#)
March 5

[SSAB Oak Ridge Meeting](#)
March 11

Nuclear Energy Peer Exchange, Aiken County
May 2015

Los Alamos Peer Exchange
July 2015

[LINK](#)

From 2003 through 2013, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM)—the office responsible for the deactivation and decommissioning (D&D) of the agency's contaminated facilities—disposed of nearly 2,000 facilities across 19 sites in 13 states, according to EM data. The majority of these facilities were disposed of through demolition because of their contamination levels. During this time, EM also disposed of a limited number of uncontaminated facilities and land parcels through transfer by sale. EM transferred by sale 21 properties—13 facilities and 8 land parcels—at the Oak Ridge Reservation in Oak Ridge, Tennessee to a community reuse organization (CRO)—an organization whose purpose is to facilitate the reuse of unneeded DOE properties—and the local government.

DOE's ability to manage its decentralized property-disposal process is impeded by data limitations and an unclear policy. DOE and EM each maintain a database that contains information on facilities that are undergoing or have completed D&D. However, neither system collects all the information DOE officials would need to effectively manage this subgroup of its real property portfolio, such as when D&D of a facility started or was completed. In addition, DOE's database, which serves as the agency's source of information on all real property holdings, is not always timely or complete, a shortcoming that limits the value to officials as a source of information for decision making. Furthermore, although DOE's policy requires that excess real properties appropriate for transfer for economic development purposes be identified and disposed of, it does not identify what entity is responsible for these tasks or when it should identify such properties. As a result, almost none of the officials GAO interviewed at headquarters and at the site-level was proactively or systematically identifying or disposing of these properties. Consequently, DOE may be forgoing opportunities to reduce its overall footprint and achieve efficiencies in the disposal process.

Conservation bill could block Yucca rail route, but prospects shaky

Las Vegas Review-Journal

February 19, 2015

[LINK](#)

Though its sponsors insist it wasn't their intent, a Nevada lands bill pending in Congress could throw up another roadblock to a Yucca

Mountain Project.

The legislation, introduced last year by U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., would restrict mining and energy exploration on more than 800,000 acres of federal land in two lonesome valleys straddling Lincoln and Nye counties.

The Senate minority leader has said he wants to withdraw the land in Garden and Coal valleys to protect “City,” noted artist Michael Heizer’s sprawling earth sculptor roughly the size of the National Mall. Supporters of the bill want a national monument dedicated to “City” and to the pristine basin-and-range landscape around it.

The designation would also block a future rail corridor for nuclear waste shipments to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, which Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman acknowledged Wednesday while saying Yucca Mountain is not why Reid introduced the bill or decided to target so much land for withdrawal. That’s just a welcome side effect, Orthman said.

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., who quietly introduced a House version of the bill last week, also said Yucca Mountain has nothing to do with it.

Motivations aside, the legislation faces an uphill battle in a GOP-led Congress already pushing back against such lands bills. Rep. Crescent Hardy, R-Nev., has vowed to fight the bill and a measure, also sponsored by Reid, to designate 350,000 acres at Gold Butte in northeastern Clark County a conservation area. Both areas are in Hardy’s congressional district.

The two bills also are drawing opposition from local officials and some rural residents.

And the push for increased protection of Gold Butte is further complicated by the lingering dispute between federal authorities and Cliven Bundy, whose cattle roam the area in defiance of court orders and aborted government roundups.

Titus said she still hopes to work on the lands bills with Hardy, whom she described as “more open” to protecting Gold Butte than in the past.

On Wednesday, Titus and Reid hosted a “conversation about conservation” in Las Vegas for an audience of several hundred people.

The enthusiastic crowd packed the jury assembly room at the Lloyd George U.S. Courthouse to celebrate the new Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument at the Las Vegas Valley's northern edge and call for the protection of Gold Butte and Garden and Coal valleys.

The preservation pep rally was for the benefit of Michael Connor, the deputy U.S. secretary of interior, who had just toured Tule Springs.

Gold Butte, less than 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas, is in particular need of preservation, Reid said by video link from Washington, where he is recovering from eye surgery.

"What a loss it would be if we didn't protect it," he said. "If we don't do something, it will be gone in a matter of decades."

Titus, in person, said the lands must be preserved "for us, for the whole country and for generations to come."

Art lovers argue that Heizer's masterwork warrants special protection and could become a World Heritage site one day. "City" has been described as one of the most ambitious pieces of art ever, a network of sculpted berms, plazas and geometric shapes a mile-and-a-half long and 900 feet wide inspired by ancient cities of South and Central America.

For a piece like that, "you need the scale of Nevada," said Michael Govan, head of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "It is almost finished, and that's why its protection is so paramount."

Several dozen people spoke of what Gold Butte, Tule Springs and the lonely valleys of the southern Great Basin mean to them.

Just one person opposed the conservation measures. The man, who called himself "John Q. Public," railed against the treatment of Bundy and criticized the government for trying to kick the public off public land.

EM SSAB Oak Ridge Reservation Meeting

Federal Register
February 26, 2015

[LINK](#)

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015

The purpose of the Board is to make recommendations to DOE-EM and site management in the areas of environmental restoration, waste management, and related activities.

Tentative Agenda

- Welcome and Announcements
- Comments from the Deputy Designated Federal Officer
- Comments from the DOE, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, and Environmental Protection Agency Liaisons
- Public Comment Period
- Presentation on the State of Oak Ridge EM Program/Fiscal Year 2016 Budget and Prioritization Planning
- Additions/Approval of Agenda
- Motions/Approval of February 11, 2015 Meeting Minutes
- Status of Recommendations with DOE
- Committee Reports
- Federal Coordinator Report
- Adjourn

New Hanford pricetag: \$110.2 billion through 2090

Union-Bulletin

February 25, 2015

[LINK](#)

An estimated \$110.2 billion is needed to complete the remaining environmental cleanup at the Hanford nuclear reservation, plus some post-cleanup oversight.

The price tag is down from \$113.6 billion a year ago, after spending more than \$2 billion since then.

If the estimated remaining costs for the plant were spread evenly among everyone living in the United States today, each person would have to pay about \$345 during the next 75 years.

The estimated remaining cleanup cost is based on completing most cleanup work in 2060 and then some continuing oversight and monitoring until 2090. The oversight, called long-term stewardship, would cost \$4.8 million.

This is the fifth annual lifecycle report since it became an annual requirement added to the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement in

2010.

The agreement requires the report to be based on completing work to meet all of its regulatory and cleanup obligations and deadlines, which can result in some unrealistic annual budget projections.

In recent years, the Hanford budget has been a little more than \$2 billion, and large increases seem unlikely given the federal budget climate. The Obama administration has submitted a budget request to Congress for fiscal 2016 of \$2.3 billion.

But the lifecycle cost report projects budgets of more than \$3 billion from fiscal 2016 through fiscal 2020 and again in fiscal 2036 and fiscal 2043. The fiscal 2019 budget would top \$4 billion.

Spending would start to drop below \$2 billion in about 2046 and below \$1 billion in 2049.

The reduction in total cost during the past year to an estimated \$110.2 billion is because of some changed projections, in addition to progress on cleanup since the 2014 Hanford Lifecycle Scope, Schedule and Cost Report was issued.

The cost estimate for community and regulatory support has been dropped by \$788 million based on recent spending. The money is used for regulator costs borne by the federal government, emergency preparedness, the Hanford Advisory Board and payments in lieu of taxes to local governments.

Infrastructure and services costs have been revised downward by \$2.8 billion, although some of those savings come from redistributing some costs to other budget categories.

Among the increases are an additional \$1.3 billion for central Hanford cleanup and \$113 million for removing radioactive sludge from the K West Basin not far from the Columbia River. Groundwater and deep soil cleanup cost estimates have increased \$432 million.

Many decisions on how to clean up Hanford remain to be made. For those projects, the report is required to make a plausible, upper-range estimate.

Some estimates are based on projected costs that are expected to change. DOE has said the costs for the \$12.3 billion vitrification plant are likely to increase as technical issues are resolved, but a

definite number has not been calculated to include in the latest lifecycle report.

The plan also does not reflect changes that might be ordered by a federal judge as the 2010 court-enforced consent decree is revised by the court. The consent decree is back in court after DOE said it is unlikely to meet any of its remaining deadlines for the vitrification plant.

The Hanford Advisory Board has criticized the reports for unrealistic assumptions that do not take into account escalating costs caused by budgets lower than those used in the reports.

Unrealistic annual budget figures could extend cleanup work 20 to 30 years beyond projections in lifecycle reports, the board said in June.

It took issue with the assumption in last year's report and this year's that all 28 of Hanford's double-shell tanks holding radioactive waste will remain fully operational for the 40 years projected for the vitrification plant to treat all 56 million gallons of waste in single- and double-shell tanks.

The oldest of the 28 tanks already has waste leaking from its inner shell.

The board also recommended in June that DOE and its regulators consider whether annually issuing the report is needed when DOE's master plan for Hanford cleanup has not changed.

A link to the new lifecycle cost report is posted at www.hanford.gov on the rotating banner.

Comments will be accepted until April 30. Send them to Stephen Korenkiewicz, Lifecycle Report Project Manager, Department of Energy — Richland Operations Office, P.O. Box 550, Mailstop A5-16 Richland, WA 99352.