

ECA Update: March 17, 2015



In this update:

WIPP Begins Underground Decontamination Activities
DOE

Carlsbad-area leaders weigh in on WIPP fine
Albuquerque Journal

What's the current design status on UPF?
Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground

On the verge: a new ORNL contract
Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground

Hanford Landfill Reaches Disposal Milestone
KVEWTV.com

Nuclear Speed-Dating
DOE

NRC comes up with \$2 million for Yucca groundwater study
Las Vegas Review-Journal

DOE Issues Final RFP for Idaho Cleanup Project Core
DOE EM

DOE Issues RFP for Waste Treatment Services
DOE EM

DOE Issues ROI for LANL Legacy Completion Cleanup Project
DOE EM

WIPP Begins Underground Decontamination Activities
DOE
March 13, 2015
[LINK](#)

Activities are underway in WIPP's underground facility to address the radioactive contamination that remains as a result of the February 14, 2014 event. Employees are using a modified piece of

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[Environmental](#)

[Management](#)

March 18

[SSAB SRS Meeting](#)

March 23-24

[Commission to Review](#)

[the Effectiveness of the](#)

agricultural spraying equipment that allows them to apply a fine water mist to the walls and floor. The water dissolves the salt and washes it down to the floor. When the salt recrystallizes, it encapsulates the contamination and prevents any re-suspension of radioactive particles.

In addition to the water misting, brattice cloth will be laid on the floor and previously mined uncontaminated salt will be placed over the cloth to trap any contamination on the floor. Brattice cloth is typically used underground to direct or block ventilation flow in open panels. It is a low permeability polyethylene (plastic) cloth. These activities will continue for the next several months throughout the areas where contamination is present. Employees performing these tasks are taking all necessary precautions, including wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

Carlsbad-area leaders weigh in on WIPP fine

Albuquerque Journal

March 13, 2015

[LINK](#)

Carlsbad leaders are urging New Mexico and the U.S. Department of Energy to reach a speedy resolution to the brewing fight over the state's decision to levy \$54 million in fines for failings at Los Alamos and WIPP that led to a radiation leak last year.

The city of Carlsbad, Eddy County and Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce are expected to sign an open letter to Gov. Susana Martinez, state Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn and U.S. Energy Sec. Ernest Moniz – as well as congressional delegations from all states with DOE facilities – making their case.

The “WIPP Resolution” argues that New Mexico has the right to fine the federal government, and DOE should not subtract funds to pay the fines from site budgets, “which takes money away from cleanup activities in the community most impacted by DOE’s violation of the law.”

It also contends that fines “should not be considered a revenue-enhancing vehicle” and should be used solely “to improve the status and safety of the WIPP project.”

The city and Carlsbad Department of Development have already adopted the resolution. Eddy County and the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce are expected to vote on the resolution in the coming

[National Energy Labs](#)

March 24, 2015

[Northern New Mexico
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March 25

[SSAB Nevada Meeting](#)

March 25

[SSAB Portsmouth
Meeting](#)

April 2, 2015

[Deadline for Congress to
Adopt a Budget](#)

April 15

[Nuclear Energy Peer
Exchange, Aiken County](#)

May 2015

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days.

“It is very important that this gets resolved and gets resolved as soon as possible,” said John Heaton, chairman of the Carlsbad Mayor’s Nuclear Task Force.

Settlement discussions have been underway since the Environment Department in December issued a compliance order requiring DOE to pay \$36.6 million for permit violations at Los Alamos National Laboratory and \$17.7 million for permit violations at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

The fines correspond to failings at both facilities that the DOE largely admitted to in its own accident investigation reports on a Feb. 14, 2014, WIPP radiation leak that originated in a drum of Los Alamos waste.

But the DOE took a hard line in its legal response to the compliance order in January, calling the fines “arbitrary” and challenging the state’s ability to fine the federal government.

A hearing is scheduled for July.

Flynn warned last month that another \$100 million in fines for additional permit violations could be on the table if an agreement isn’t reached with the DOE.

However, Flynn described the ongoing negotiations as “productive” and said “there has been high-level engagement.”

WIPP will need permit modifications from NMED before it can reopen, a public process “that could take two years and affect the opening date of WIPP,” Heaton said.

That process is unlikely to get underway before the fines are reconciled, he said.

“I don’t see that these negotiations are the biggest obstacle to WIPP reopening,” Flynn said. “There are a lot of other issues that need to be addressed in order to move forward. We have to make sure that when we do open that it’s safe for the men and women who have to go back underground and for the citizens of the state who have to have the waste moving on highways.”

“I think from the community’s standpoint the idea is to encourage everyone to get to the table and get this thing resolved,” said John

Waters, executive director of Carlsbad's Department of Development. "It's a sentiment across town."

What's the current design status on UPF? (Hint: It's somewhere between 0% and 100%)

Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground

March 15, 2015

[LINK](#)

Frank Klotz, head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, emphasized during his visit to Y-12 last week the importance of staying on track with the Uranium Processing Facility and achieving 90 percent design completion in Fiscal Year 2017.

That's important, he said, because that milestone sets the stage for construction to begin, and it's also the point at which the NNSA will reportedly declare the project's baseline cost — basically the government's commitment on a price tag for the multibillion-dollar UPF.

So, where does the UPF design stand at this time? According John Eschenberg, the federal project director, it's about 50 percent completed.

When the NNSA and its contractor team scrapped the early design, shifting instead to the Red Team's recommendation of multiple, phased facilities instead of a single "Big Box" that consolidated all of the enriched uranium operations, that didn't mean that the design effort had to start over scratch.

Eschenberg said he didn't know exactly where the design completion percentage was reset at the time of the transition, but he said it wasn't at zero.

"Let me explain it this week," Eschenberg said during a brief sideline interview at Friday's ceremonies celebrating a site-prep milestone for UPF. "So, what we've been working on is the process design, developing the technology for UPF. We've been working to develop all of the safety basis documents, and we've been working on the design — all concurrently. So, when we went from the large, single facility to the multi-building complex, the parts of the design that had to be redone are principally the structural design."

In response to questions, he said, "The technology stayed. The process design has stayed the same. We've not changed our

approach. So, all of that design work has been preserved.”

Klotz said that using the marker of 90 percent design completion before construction begins is one of the improvements that the Department of Energy/NNSA has made in its project management over the past couple of years. “That actually differs from the way we did it in the past,” he said.

On the verge: a new ORNL contract

Frank Munger’s Atomic City Underground

March 15, 2015

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I talked to Oak Ridge National Laboratory Director Thom Mason a couple of times last week, and both times asked him about UT-Battelle’s new management contract at ORNL. He acknowledged it’s essentially a done deal.

“Everything is worked out,” Mason said of the new contract with the Department of Energy. “It actually turns out there’s a fairly lengthy document, so there’s a lot of details that have to be sort of checked and cross-checked. But all the discussions are done. So, it’s just a matter of working through that process before we sign, hopefully, in the next week or so.”

He added wryly, “I’m pretty sure it’ll be done by April 1.” That, of course, is when the existing contract is due to expire.

Mason said the new five-year contract will be performed-based and very similar to the current one.

“The structure really doesn’t change,” he said.

Hanford Landfill Reaches Disposal Milestone

KVEWTV.com

March 16, 2015

[LINK](#)

RICHLAND, Wash. – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and its contractors have disposed of 17 million tons of contaminated material at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility (ERDF) since the facility began operations in 1996. The disposal record is a measure of the tremendous amount of progress being made at the Hanford Site.

The majority of cleanup waste at ERDF comes from the 220-square-mile River Corridor, located along the banks of the Columbia River. The low-level waste consists mainly of soil contaminated by the effluent of Hanford's nine plutonium production reactors, which operated from 1943-1987. In addition, ERDF also receives cleanup waste from other Hanford contractors.

“Reaching 17 million tons of material disposed at ERDF shows the excellent cleanup work being done at the Hanford Site,” says Mark French, Federal Project Director for DOE Richland Operations Office.

Designed to be expanded as needed, ERDF consists of disposal areas called cells. Each pair of cells is 70 feet deep, 500 feet wide and 1,000 feet long at the base. There are currently 10 cells at ERDF. The first eight cells can each hold 2.8 million tons of material.

Super cells 9 and 10 can each hold 5.6 million tons. As each pair of cells reaches capacity, an interim cover is installed to prevent the infiltration of water. A permanent cap will be placed over the facility when Hanford cleanup is completed.

“The team at ERDF can be proud of their amazing safety record. They are a hard working team but their priority is safety.” says Jeff Armatrout, Waste Operations Director for ERDF.

ERDF is managed by Washington Closure Hanford as part of the River Corridor Closure Project – DOE's largest environmental cleanup closure project. The landfill is the largest disposal facility in the DOE cleanup complex. It covers 107 acres at the base of the disposal trench – roughly the same area as 52 football fields – and currently has a capacity of 18 million tons. ERDF also accepts hazardous materials such as mercury, asbestos, beryllium, chromium and lead that can be treated onsite before disposal.

Nuclear Speed-Dating

DOE

March 10, 2015

[LINK](#)

The future of nuclear energy needs smart, creative thinkers. That's why more than 120 experts met up last week to "speed-date" each other's ideas.

The Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory led the charge. More than 120 experts gathered for simultaneous workshops in six different cities, representing National Labs, universities, nonprofits and major companies.

The goal? To answer some of the toughest questions about the future of nuclear energy in America:

— How can we increase energy access for all while reducing cost?

— How can we improve safety and security while reducing environmental impacts?

— How can nuclear energy complement other sources of energy to reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change?

The workshops kicked off with energetic remarks by Dr. Lynn Orr, Undersecretary for Science and Energy. "It's about supplying the energy the world needs and at the same time doing a much better job of dealing with climate and other environmental impacts," Orr said. In essence, that's the purpose of our all-of-the-above energy strategy.

To begin, organizers laid out some ground rules to make sure conversations were productive.

Participants presented their ideas, brainstormed in small groups and began to synthesize the winning ideas. Some participants shared their ideas on social media.

To capture the best ideas and do the most good, the ideas will be analyzed and condensed into a brief summary this spring and a full report in the fall. The report will provide recommendations to federal programs dealing with nuclear energy.

Some likened it to a wish list.

Stay tuned for more on the future of nuclear innovation!

NRC comes up with \$2 million for Yucca groundwater study

Las Vegas Review-Journal

March 15, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is planning two public hearings in Nevada this fall as it freshens up an environmental study of groundwater at Yucca Mountain.

The agency is eyeing September for the public sessions, a few weeks after a report draft is expected to be completed.

The report, a supplement to previous impact studies on the onetime nuclear waste site 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, was announced formally Thursday in the Federal Register.

The Department of Energy assembled massive environmental impact reports on Yucca Mountain in 2002 and 2008 when it was bidding for a nuclear waste repository license.

But the DOE, which no longer is interested in the site, declined to perform a full groundwater update as requested by NRC analysts. So the NRC is doing the work itself.

Analysts plan to update the potential for radioactive material to seep into groundwater beneath the mountain where 77,000 tons of decaying nuclear plant fuel would be buried in corrosion-resistant canisters. While the odds that the Yucca site will be developed into a repository might be growing long, scientists say there is still much understanding that could be gained from the exercise.

The study also will serve another purpose: To help burn off what little money remains in NRC coffers for the Yucca program.

The agency is under court order to keep moving forward on the project, at least until its money runs out or until Congress approves more spending, which hasn't happened for the past several years.

The NRC estimates the groundwater study will cost around \$2 million. Coupled with administrative wrap-up and science reports that were finished and released in the fall, NRC documents show it will have spent \$12 million or \$13 million of the \$13.5 million in its Yucca fund.

When the money runs out, and if Congress declines to spend more, the Yucca Mountain Project finally might get put on the back shelf to gather cobwebs — until it is resurrected.

DOE Issues Final RFP for Idaho Cleanup Project Core
DOE EM

March 13, 2015

[LINK](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today issued the final Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Idaho Cleanup Project (ICP) Core procurement. At the end of this contract the majority of cleanup will be complete in Idaho and remaining nuclear materials will be in safe storage. The ICP Core contract is a performance based contract type that includes Cost-Plus-Incentive-Fee (CPIF) Contract Line Item Numbers (CLINs) with hybrid fee structures for both CPIF and schedule milestone and performance incentive fees; and a Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee (CPFF) CLIN. The estimated dollar value for this procurement is greater than \$1 Billion, with a five year period of performance. This procurement will be full and open competition

DOE Issues RFP for Waste Treatment Services

DOE EM

March 3, 2015

[LINK](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Low-Level Waste (LLW) and Mixed-Low Level Waste (MLLW) treatment services that may result in the issuance of one or more Basic Ordering Agreements (BOAs).

The RFP is for the treatment of LLW and MLLW including liquid and solid Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) regulated waste, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and, asbestos. Also, under this requirement, DOE seeks a contractor to provide services such as: Treatment Storage Disposal Facility (TSDF) Authorized Release for Directed Disposal including Bulk Survey for Release (BSFR), Restricted and Unrestricted Recycling/Reuse, Low Activity Waste (LAW) Services, Ancillary Services, and support in establishing authorized release limits.

DOE Issues ROI for LANL Legacy Completion Cleanup Project

DOE EM

February 26, 2015

[LINK](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center today issued a Sources

Sought/Request for Information (RFI) seeking interested parties with specialized capabilities necessary to successfully perform all or a portion of the elements of scope for a potential upcoming competitive Environmental Management (EM) procurement(s) for legacy cleanup projects at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), hereafter referred to as “Los Alamos Legacy Cleanup Completion Project – Post Fiscal Year 2016 Contract(s)” and to further determine whether or not all or a portion of the work can be set-aside for small and disadvantaged businesses. The type of contracts and periods of performance is yet to be determined.

