

ECA Update: April 16, 2015



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GAO Report – Management Challenges at NNSA
Government Accountability Office
April 15, 2015
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A GAO analyst appeared before a Senate Armed Services subcommittee to share observations on the management challenges faced by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). While GAO did not issue any new recommendations, they did highlight a number of ongoing challenges NNSA faces in governing the nuclear security enterprise. The GAO's statement highlighted the following issues:

- The need to improve long-term fiscal planning and cost-estimating capabilities;
- Addressing and resolving the root causes of contract and management project challenges;
- And the need to ensure that the Stockpile Stewardship Plan is consistent in providing accurate cost estimates and

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[NNSA reports on MOX Program Cost Estimates](#)
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delivery schedules for major programs and nuclear facilities.

NNSA has taken actions to address GAO's previous recommendations, but the slow progress "suggests a lack of urgency or commitment" to solving problems according to GAO. The full report can be found [here](#).

Kevin Hall named DOE Oak Ridge Office manager

Oak Ridge Today

April 14, 2015

[LINK](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy has named Kevin Hall as the manager of its Oak Ridge Office. Hall has served as the office's deputy manager since April 2013.

As manager, Hall oversees the Oak Ridge Integrated Support Center, which provides critical mission support services in the personnel, finance, budget, procurement, legal, security, and emergency management, and employee health and safety on a local and national level, a press release said.

Hall is also responsible for managing the 33,500-acre Oak Ridge Reservation. This function involves managing issues that impact areas surrounding Oak Ridge National Laboratory, East Tennessee Technology Park, and National Nuclear Security Administration Production Office, and leading projects that may affect multiple sites.

"In his role as ORO's deputy manager, Kevin exhibited all of the qualities required to lead one of the Office of Science's most important assets," said Joe McBrearty, deputy director of field operations for DOE's Office of Science. "He has tremendous experience within the Department, and he is well-suited to advance the office's crucial work in Oak Ridge and across the county."

Hall replaces former Oak Ridge Office Manager Larry Kelly, 58, who died in February after a two-year battle with cancer.

Before arriving in Oak Ridge in 2013, Hall worked at the Department's Savannah River Site Office, or SRSO, in Aiken, South Carolina, where he served as the deputy federal project director for oversight, construction, and start-up of the \$7 billion Mixed Oxide Fuel Facility project. Until August 2012, he was

[Appropriations Markup of Spending Bill](#)

Week of April 20 or 27

[Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Labs](#)

[Meeting](#)

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[House Strategic Forces NDAA Markup](#)

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deputy manager for the SRSO. He managed oversight of the Tritium Extraction Facility startup, implementing a multiyear program that led to a successful nuclear startup and operations.

Previously, Hall was the assistant manager for Mission Assurance with SRSO—responsible for operations and weapons quality. Prior to that, he was acting assistant manager for Material and Facility Stabilization. In this capacity, Hall managed plutonium, uranium, and special nuclear material programs, and he served as DOE director of Safeguards and Security at the SRSO.

He has also served as the deputy project manager for the Accelerator for Production of Tritium project in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In this role, he established the project management framework and managed the technology development program for the \$5 billion program.

Hall has DOE experience in managing operations of nuclear material processing and waste management facilities. He also worked as a nuclear engineer at the Charleston Naval Shipyard and as a shipboard engineer in private industry.

Hall is a career member of the Senior Executive Service. He is a level III federal project director and acquisition professional. He is a certified project management professional and is a 2005 graduate of the DOE SES Candidate Development Program. He graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy with a bachelor's degree in engineering. He is a licensed professional engineer in South Carolina, a graduate of the CERN accelerator school, and in May 2010, completed the Institute of Nuclear Power Operators Senior Nuclear Plant Manager course.

Hall is originally from Biloxi, Mississippi, but he grew up in Tampa, Florida. His interests involve the outdoors, boating, hunting, and competing in triathlons and road races. Kevin and his wife Lydia have two children.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN: Safeguards and benefits are ripe for consideration

Las Vegas Review-Journal

April 12, 2015

[LINK](#)

On March 29, the Review-Journal published an editorial on Yucca Mountain under the headline: “Washington, make an offer on

Yucca Mountain.” The editorial deserves thoughtful consideration.

Yucca Mountain was designated as the nation’s site for geologic disposal of spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste in 2002. That decision, made by the Congress, overrode Nevada’s veto and is the current law of the land. When that occurred, Nye County passed resolutions to “actively and constructively engage” the Department of Energy to (1) protect the health, safety and environment of Nye County and its citizens; (2) manage the project for long-term success; and (3) ensure transportation safety and obtain sustainable economic development.

While Nye County supports advancing the completion of the license application process, we have consistently held that if it could not be done safely, we did not want it, either. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission recently completed five volumes of Safety Evaluation Reports of Yucca Mountain that determine Yucca Mountain can safely contain spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste for a million years.

The Review-Journal editorial was timely in that the license review will restart when and if Congress provides funding, which could be this year (FY2016). Nevada will have the opportunity to defend its opposition to the repository.

However, I believe it is time to start considering safeguards and benefits that will protect Nevada when/if the repository is built. Nevada should negotiate now from a position of strength to obtain legally binding agreements between the federal government and Nevada jurisdictions that include:

- An intervention process that includes a substantive state role in providing oversight and advice for any storage facility/repository, including influence in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s exercise of its “stop work” authority.
- A monitoring process: A role and funding for Nevada’s universities that would focus on public health and environmental monitoring activities designed to provide long-term protection for local communities and the state of Nevada. This could include funding to develop UNR and UNLV and/or a new national laboratory as centers of excellence for radiation safety, nuclear engineering and nuclear medicine.
- A benefits/impact assistance process: What does Nevada want? The Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as written, includes provisions for

“oversight authority” and “payments equal to taxes.”

Congressional legislation will be required to complete the license application process to build the Yucca Mountain repository and should include benefits for Nevada and local jurisdictions. This expanded “benefits process” for Nevada could be addressed in four major areas:

Water: The western watershed allocation of water resources, coupled with desalination plants on the California coast or Mexico, could be revised to provide more water to Nevada.

Land transfers: More than 80 percent of Nevada is owned, controlled or managed by the federal government. Land withdrawal and public land management can be changed as part of any enabling legislation.

Program implementation activities: Development of Yucca Mountain includes rail and road transportation improvements and the repository itself. Economic benefits and activity would result from the siting, construction and operation of storage and/or disposal facilities. This could include Interstate 11 construction and a rail route of our choosing that could avoid shipping waste through metropolitan areas while allowing connectivity between Reno and Las Vegas.

Direct payments: Repository delays are costing taxpayers \$500 million a year now and are projected to cost \$23 billion before we can site a different repository. Existing law includes provisions for direct cash payments. Negotiating for benefits could provide Nevada and its local communities between \$200 million and \$500 million per year to host the repository.

The opportunities associated with completion of Yucca Mountain are for us to define and Nevada’s for the asking. We ought to throw everything we want at the wall, prioritize those wants and secure legally binding commitments to that end. If we treat our glass as half full, we can be part of the solution, as opposed to being part of the problem in solving this national issue — a national issue that is not going to go away.

Dan Schinhofen is a Nye County commissioner.

Lab chief addresses need for new nuclear industry workers

The Aiken Standard

April 11, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Savannah River Site's aging workforce was addressed last week, as Site officials are looking for ways to find new workers to replace those who are retiring.

Terry Michalske, director of the Savannah River National Lab, spoke to the South Carolina Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council Thursday in Columbia. Michalske reported that he has been directed by DOE Secretary Ernest Moniz to assess what the future looks like for the lab's "ability to maintain a nuclear science and technology component in this country."

Michalske said the primary need is to establish the proper academic programs so students can be both ready and willing to step into future positions at the lab.

"It's really important for us to get the students in early, to get interns, post-docs," said Michalske. "What happens is, once they get in here, they say, 'This is really challenging and interesting stuff.' But you wouldn't know that (because) it just doesn't seem that interesting."

Currently, the Savannah River National Lab employs more than 800 workers and undergoes regional, national and international missions including assisting other contractors with cleaning up SRS legacy waste and closing out liquid waste tanks.

The site's aging workforce has been a constant concern, according to reports released in December that within three years, up to 50 percent of the SRS environmental workforce will be eligible for retirement. Five months earlier, Carol Johnson, president of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, said the average age of an SRS employee is 54, with a large portion of them eligible for retirement in the few years.

"Not all of them will go out the door at age 58, but there will be a fairly significant population that will. So we've got a big challenge ahead to fill those shoes," Johnson said in July.

One of the local initiatives to prepare students for employment is the Advanced Nuclear Skills Regionally program.

The program is funded by the Department of Energy and provides an annual stipend so the SRS Community Reuse Organization can continue bringing nuclear industry-related lessons to students. In

May, DOE awarded \$994,000 to continue the program, which includes new college fields to fulfill workforce needs directly related to local and national missions.

This past year, the National Lab celebrated its 10th year as one of only 17 national labs on the country. The lab is owned by DOE and is run in part by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the Site's management and operations contractor

Editorial: Do not neglect facilities at Savannah River Site

The Aiken Standard

April 14, 2015

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Any conversation about Savannah River Site's infrastructure must include the fact the Site was built about six decades ago. That should particularly be on the minds of policy makers as officials are requesting about \$30 million a year in additional funding over the next several years for upgrades and maintenance there.

Spending money on what's most immediately pressing rather than long-term facility needs isn't illogical. However, for facilities that have been in use for so long, it becomes increasingly imperative the dollars be there to keep them not only maintained in the short-term, but in the long-term, as well.

The funding of long-term maintenance for infrastructure can sometimes easily, but misguidedly, be put behind investments in areas such as research and development. As the Site gets older, though, the more problems that can occur.

Some of the specific needs, according to the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization, a group that looks to facilitate economic development opportunities associated with the Site, include replacement of the electrical power distribution system to several areas of the site. These types of improvement are imperative because if the money isn't put toward electrical distribution, then some of the equipment eventually becomes useless. This doesn't mean additional funding should be rubber stamped. However, there are certainly links between the infrastructure needs and missions at the Site. With such connection existing, potential mission risk associated with aging infrastructure must be taken into account.

Obviously, budget restraints exist. Also, additional funding for

infrastructure upgrades doesn't necessarily mean the Site would be able to perform greater levels of processing and storing of waste.

However, it does provide extra insurance that in the future, the facilities will be in the proper condition so that greater activity is possible. If the infrastructure continues to degrade, it will make it that much harder to perform current missions, much less attract new ones to the Site.

The appropriations of such dollars will be also competing with funding for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, a waste repository in Carlsbad, New Mexico, which suffered a shutdown because of a contamination. The site has consequently experienced a delay in receiving the authorization to begin accepting waste, which has also created a backlog of sites to store such waste. So while this problem at WIPP reemphasizes the need to have quality infrastructure in place to handle such problems, some of those dollars that Savannah River Site would be angling for will almost certainly be going to the plant in New Mexico. That's where it's important for federal lawmakers such as U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., and U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Tim Scott, R-S.C., to highlight these needs and the condition of facilities that help in the ongoing missions at the Site.

These calls for infrastructure upgrades shouldn't just ring hollow. By investing in facility needs, policy makers should see it as preventing the catastrophic failure of what's so imperative there – missions at the Site. While these missions are the proverbial bread and butter of what's done at Savannah River Site, this additional funding for infrastructure makes sure those are actually sustainable in the future.