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[DOE National Cleanup Workshop](#)

September 29th-30th,
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Washington, D.C.

Editorial: Atomic bomb development worthy of national park
The Spokesman-Review

July 31, 2015

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Seventy years ago next month, the United States unleashed the most terrible weapon yet used.

The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945 persuaded Japan to surrender, ending the most cataclysmic war in history.

Fat Man and Little Boy, as the “gadgets” were called, emerged from one of the biggest yet most secret industrial development efforts in U.S. history: the Manhattan Project.

Grim as their mission was, the three installations that produced the bombs have a unique place in history, and the pending formation of a Manhattan Project National Historic Park will assure those sites are preserved. Tuesday, the Department of Energy and National Park Service signed a memorandum that will guide the

transformation of the Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, facilities into interpretive centers where generations might grasp the giant scope of the scientific effort, its consequences and the effects on the lives of those who worked there, and those ousted to make way.

Until Aug. 28, the public will be able to comment on that agreement, which is available at www.parkplanning.nps.gov.

Really, it's pretty dry stuff, focused mainly on the respective responsibility of the two federal agencies. Nuclear activity continues at all three sites, so unrestricted access is out of the question. It will be up to the DOE to identify the boundaries, and the Park Service to administer what the public can see.

At Hanford, the centerpiece will be the B Reactor, where the plutonium used in the test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, and in the Nagasaki bomb was produced. The reactor has been open to visitors – 10,000 in 2014 – but designation as a national park will attract many more. The Park Service has much more experience not just managing crowds, but assembling interpretive material.

Given the sensitivity regarding the development and use of atomic weapons, the information will have to go way beyond the usual commentary on area fauna.

But there is an incredible story to tell, one that is not all darkness.

That will take resources, and no money has been appropriated for operation of a park with centers thousands of miles apart. The Park Service got a 2 percent budget increase this year, but the agency is years and millions of dollars behind on maintenance at existing parks, let alone establishing a new one.

Hanford will be a unique addition to the national parks, recreation areas, and historical parks, sites and reserves that already make Washington a premier destination for tourists. Although its opening may be some years ahead – it took three to produce the bombs themselves – the achievements at Hanford, Oak Ridge and Los Alamos deserve recognition.

For good or bad, mankind entered the Atomic Age at the three facilities. Only a small fraction of the thousands of employees at the sites realized or understood what they were undertaking. We think we have the answers today, but the new park should touch on what we don't know today as much as what we did not know in

1945.

BPC Releases Issue Brief on State Regulatory Authority Over Nuclear Waste

Bipartisan Policy Center

July 2015

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Late last month, the Bipartisan Policy Center released an issue brief on “State Regulatory Authority Over Nuclear Waste Facilities.” The brief cites the 2012 Blue Ribbon Commission’s call for a new, consent-based approach to siting disposal and storage of spent nuclear fuel and waste in its exploration of options for providing states and federal agencies with new regulatory authorities as one critical element in making consent-based siting work. The full brief can be read [here](#).

WIPP will not meet target opening date of March 2016

Alamogordo News

July 31, 2015

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CARLSBAD>> The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant's anticipated opening date of March 2016 has been pushed back, WIPP officials said, due to a series of bumps in the recovering process.

A change in Department of Energy's standards, damage to a key piece of equipment and review of recommendations by the Accident Investigation Board for implementation all played a key role in the decision, which was announced on Friday.

The plant had been closed since a radiation leak was detected in February 2014, and a new opening date is being evaluated based on those challenges.

"We are disappointed that we will not meet the original target date for beginning waste emplacement, but (we) do not want to lose sight of the substantial progress that has been made in the recovery of the WIPP site, including great strides in mine stabilization, radiological risk mitigation and the closure of Panel 6 and Panel 7 Room 7, all of which have significantly increased safety in the underground," said acting Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dana Bryson in the release.

The news of the delay was not the news that Carlsbad Mayor Dale Janway had been hoping to hear.

"Of course we are extremely disappointed by this setback," Janway said in an emailed statement. "The eyes of the world right now are on WIPP, and it is up to WIPP to show that this recovery can be handled properly and efficiently."

While the mayor said he understood the setback, he added that he wanted to see a better process in the future.

"While we understand that some of these setbacks are due to legitimate safety concerns, many setbacks, such as damage to shipped ventilation equipment, were due to additional errors being made," Janway said. "WIPP should find a path forward that will significantly reduce such errors."

With the WIPP recovery relying on an increased number of workers given access to the underground, damage done to a temporary ventilation system while in transit to the site means keeping up the pace in the recovery will be difficult.

The April 2015 report issued by the Accident Investigations Board with recommendations that range from improving the pilot plant's safety culture to ineffective oversight are being reviewed for implementation.

WIPP will most likely be the first to begin more rigorous DOE standards when it comes to the site-specific Documented Safety Analyses, or a site-specific analysis of safety procedures.

A WIPP spokesman said that, so far, WIPP stakeholders have viewed the decision as a logical response to these issues.

"It means we are taking all necessary steps, that we're doing it safely because we value safety over the timeline," the spokesman said.

State warns DOE of ramifications of Oak Ridge cleanup funding concerns

Frank Munger's Atomic City Underground

July 30, 2015

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The state of Tennessee has historically worked cooperatively with

the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge operations on cleanup issues and has adjusted project schedules and milestones because of technical complexities and budget shortfalls.

However, a state official earlier this year warned DOE that the agency's Oak Ridge budget request for Fiscal Year 2016 puts the deadlines in the Federal Facilities Agreement "in jeopardy" and may force the state to take actions — such as adding more enforceable milestones — to "assure an acceptable level of funding" for cleanup in Oak Ridge.

Robert Martineau Jr., commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, expressed his concerns in a May 5 letter to Mark Whitney, DOE's principal deputy assistant secretary (and acting assistant secretary) for environmental management.

Martineau noted in background information that the state had been supportive in the DOE planning process for a balanced approach to cleanup and for completing the Oak Ridge cleanup around 2046. In April 2014 TDEC had agreed to "milestone adjustments" requested by DOE, he said, including the removal of some milestones related to transuranic waste.

"TDEC expected that the FY 2016 funds originally targeted to the transuranic project would be reallocated to other high priority projects on the (Oak Ridge Reservation) rather than moved to other DOE sites," Martineau wrote to Whitney. "However, it appears to have led to a 15 percent reduction of the DOE EM FY 2016 budget request for the ORR while the DOE EM budget request for the nation is reduced by less than 1 percent."

Beyond that, the Tennessee official said it was the state's understanding that the federal budget guidance was that the FY 2017 budget request and the request for future years would be based on the FY 2016 level of \$365 million.

"This is contrary to our understanding that the budget request would return to the \$421 million threshold and that future compliance schedules would not be jeopardized," Martineau wrote.

He added: "It appears that TDEC's willingness to collaborate with DOE on technical difficulties and adjust milestones has not only resulted in a reduction in the FY 2016 budget request, it has set the stage for that reduction being applied to the ORR cleanup for the foreseeable future."

The state official noted that Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam had previously informed then-Energy Secretary Chu that Tennessee was willing its “fair share” of funding cuts when the Department was faced with shortfalls. However, he said the 2016 request was not equitable and if allowed to impact future budget levels would be even more inequitable.

He closed his letter by stating, “If the DOE EM budget request for FY 2017 does not restore adequate funding to assure compliance with the FFA long term, TDEC may seek to increase the number of enforceable milestones or take other measures to assure an acceptable level of funding necessary for the timely completion of the cleanup for the ORR.”

DOE’s response to Tennessee’s concerns

Frank Munger’s Atomic City Underground

July 31, 2015

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In a June 11 response to the state of Tennessee’s concerns about funding for cleanup at the Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge operations, Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Whitney — who once headed the cleanup program in Oak Ridge — said the FY 2016 budget request would be sufficient to “continue cleanup progress” at Oak Ridge and other sites. And he listed a number of Oak Ridge projects that would be supported by the funding request — including work on U-233 disposition, design work on a mercury treatment facility at Y-12 and the first project in a new groundwater strategy.

In a letter to Robert Martineau, the commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Whitney said he wanted to “assure” Martineau that the state’s willingness to extend milestones for the transuranic waste program “did not result in a decrease of site cleanup activities in FY 2016.”

He noted, “I am sensitive to your concerns regarding the FY 2016 President’s Request for the Oak Ridge cleanup program as well as future budget requests.”

However, Whitney didn’t directly address Martineau’s concern about the reduction in Oak Ridge funding, compared to other DOE sites, or address Martineau’s concern that the budget guidance at DOE was to use the FY 2016 site funding levels for FY 2017 and

years beyond.

“No decisions have been made at this time regarding the amount of allocation of the FY 2017 funding request for the Office of Environmental Management,” Whitney wrote to Martineau. “Your letter expressing concerns on behalf of the State of Tennessee was timely and informative. I look forward to discussing these issues further with you.”

Whitney said he and Martineau “share the same goals for expeditious cleanup and long-term protection of public health and the environment.”

