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Upcoming Events

February 2016

EM Site-Specific Advisory Board

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[Hanford Meeting](#)

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FY17 Budget Request

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House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Hearing
"Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request for

ECA Staff

DOE-IG Report: Corrective Action Program at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant

ECA Staff

The Office of Inspector General has issued a report titled "Corrective Action Program at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant," Please [click here](#) to find a copy of the report.

Rep. Newhouse asks Obama for solid Hanford funding

Tri-City Herald

February 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

A reduction in nationwide spending for Department of Energy environmental cleanup would be a problem for Hanford, Rep. Dan Newhouse told President Obama as the administration prepares to ask Congress for fiscal 2017 funding.

The federal budget request to Congress is scheduled to be released Feb. 9.

Newhouse wants to avoid a repeat of last year.

For fiscal 2016, the Obama administration proposed a \$93 million cut for the Richland Operations Office, which is in charge of all Hanford environmental cleanup except the tank farms and the vitrification plant being built to treat the tank waste, Newhouse, R-Wash., pointed out.

The cut would have caused cleanup delays, missed legal deadlines for cleanup along the Columbia River and increased total project costs, he said.

Atomic Energy Defense Activities"

(2:00 PM)

[Visit website.](#)

August 2016

9-10

Third Annual
Intermountain
Energy Summit
Idaho Falls, ID

[Visit website.](#)

September 2016

14-15

DOE National Cleanup
Workshop
Hilton Alexandria Mark
Center
Alexandria, VA

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It largely was not implemented, thanks to the work of Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., with help from Newhouse. Congress approved an overall Hanford nuclear reservation appropriation for fiscal 2016, which started Oct. 1., of \$2.3 billion, which was \$79 million more than the Obama request.

Cleanup of Hanford along the Columbia River is near completion and “truly among the brightest success stories” of the nationwide DOE defense site cleanup program, Newhouse said.

“There are no technical reasons why work must stop within the river corridor at cleanup sites like the 324 Building and the 618-10 Burial Ground,” Newhouse said in the letter.

A reduction in funding for fiscal 2017 would be “extremely detrimental to cleanup progress and would diminish the ability of DOE to meet the legal commitments that govern the Richland Operations Office,” Newhouse said.

Formulating a workable budget for the Office of River Protection by next week could be challenging, given technical issues that must be resolved at the vitrification plant and a federal lawsuit about deadlines for emptying certain leak-prone tanks and building and starting operations at the vit plant, Newhouse acknowledged.

However, at a minimum, the budget request should include stable funding for the vitrification plant and money for a pretreatment system that could allow the plant to start treating low-activity radioactive waste by 2022, Newhouse said. All parts of the plant may not be treating waste until 2039, according to a DOE projection.

The tank farm budget should include money for ongoing work to empty leak-prone tanks, make improvements to better protect workers from potentially harmful chemical vapors, and empty waste from a double-shell tank with waste leaking between its shells, Newhouse said.

Newhouse said he is committed to securing adequate budgets not just for Hanford environmental cleanup, but also for cleanup at DOE's other defense sites across the nation.

"While many activities of the federal government are not legally required, cleanup of our nation's defense nuclear waste is not optional," Newhouse said in the letter.

No timetable set for South Carolina suit against Energy Department

Augusta Chronicle

February 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

Despite receiving the green light from Gov. Nikki Haley last week, South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson has not set a timetable for when he will file suit against the U.S. Department of Energy for failing to meet statutory obligations regarding its mixed-oxide project at Savannah River Site.

In a statement last week, Wilson said South Carolina "cannot sit quietly" after the Energy Department didn't remove 1 metric ton of plutonium by the promised Jan. 1 deadline.

According to The Associated Press, the MOX facility is being built to turn the plutonium into nuclear reactor fuel, but the material was supposed to be removed from the state by the deadline if the facility wasn't in operation. The project is several years behind schedule and at least \$3 billion over its original budget, according to the Government Accountability Office.

"We have great concern over the actions displayed by the DOE over the last two years and do not feel they can be trusted to follow the law," Wilson said. "Over the last two years, the DOE had wasted hundreds of millions of dollars

in legal fees as well as billions of dollars in judgments, all at the taxpayers' expense for breaking contracts.

"At this point, we are finalizing the best possible course of action, but will be taking action as we said we would back in September."

Hayley Thrift, a public relations coordinator for the attorney general's office, said Tuesday that no time line has been put forth as to when that action will be taken. Wilson was not available Wednesday to respond to questions about what those courses of action could be.

As part of the agreement with the state, the federal government could be asked to pay \$1 million a day or \$100 million annually until the plutonium is removed or the MOX facility is operational, according to The Associated Press.

Wilson's father, U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson, applauded Haley last week for taking action on the former with the hopes that the latter will follow close behind.

"The administration must complete construction of MOX – the only viable method at this time of disposing of the plutonium," he said. "We cannot allow our state to become a repository of high-level, weapons-grade plutonium."

This isn't the first time South Carolina had to consider legal avenues available to the state, Alan Wilson said.

"In 2011, we fought to ensure completion of the Yucca Mountain nuclear repository and were successful," he said.

Participation needed at Hanford park meeting

Tri-City Herald

February 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

When it was announced in 2014 that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park was finally going to become a reality, there was rejoicing in the Tri-Cities.

But many others around the country — and even in our own state — questioned why a site that helped create a nuclear bomb would be turned into an attraction for visitors.

People have strong and varied opinions about the history and mission of Hanford, as we all know. That's why it will be imperative the park provide a balanced account of what led to the development of the atomic bomb, as well as its horrific consequences.

This Thursday will be the first chance for our community to have its say on the themes that should be presented at the historical park. The Department of Energy and the National Park Service are holding a public open house from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the gallery of the Richland Public Library. The intent is to provide Tri-Citians the chance to provide ideas, suggest stories and comment on what Hanford means to the region.

We hope there will be a good turnout.

The new park will tell the story of the development of the atomic bomb during World War II, but there are so many other topics that could be included. Science and engineering achievements, for example, are a fascinating part of the story. The secrecy surrounding the project, how the workers lived, and the attitudes of that era during the war are also interesting.

And then, of course, the park also must include the terrible loss of life and destruction that was caused when the nuclear bombs were dropped over Japan.

The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reportedly have reservations about the national park and are concerned that some exhibits might possibly support the idea that the bombings were justified. They are providing artifacts and photos for the park to demonstrate the damage the bombings caused on those two cities.

Their perspective is a critical piece to the story, and we are glad that Japanese officials have been contacted to contribute. But the devastating result of the bombings are not the whole story, and that's why our community must be involved in the telling of it.

There are those — who while they acknowledge the awfulness of the bombings to Japan — firmly believe it was necessary to end the war and save American lives. These folks also tend to agree with President Harry Truman's statement that the bomb "was the greatest achievement of organized science in history."

DOE and national park officials have a responsibility to try to tell the story of Hanford as accurately and as thoroughly as possible.

So far, those involved in developing the park have said they will strive to provide a "critical reflection" of the Manhattan Project. That sounds like a good approach, but in order to do that, they will need participation and information from the Tri-Cities.

Tracy Atkins, project manager for the new park, said there will be many opportunities for the public to provide input in the next few years.

But we think it would be great if Tri-Citians got involved in the process right away. That means showing up Thursday to the public session on the issue.

Planning the Manhattan Project Park's future

Knox Blogs

February 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park was officially created on Nov. 10, 2015, when Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz and Secretary of Interior Sally Jewel put their signatures on the memorandum of agreement. The MOA directed how the two agencies would work together to develop the three-site national park.

Even though the park already exists, it's still a long way from being what it will become. Those plans are just getting started, and that was the topic of a public meeting Monday evening and a flurry of activities by park leaders — including Tracy Atkins, who was named the park's interim superintendent earlier this week.

“We're working on our Foundation Document,” Atkins said Monday evening at a public meeting at Oak Ridge High School's Food Court. That document will lay the foundation for the multiple layers of planning — identifying the park's purpose, its significance and what should be included in the multi-site park.

The National Park Service urged those who turned out for the meeting to fill out comment cards and share their thoughts and suggestions about what's important, which may influence the way the Manhattan Project is interpreted at the sites.

“What are the important stories from Oak Ridge that will feed into our interpretive theme?” Atkins asked. “What are those things that are important to protect? And then what experiences would people like to have in the park long-term?”

After spending a couple of days in Oak Ridge, the team planned to visit the other sites — Hanford, Wash., and Los Alamos, N.M.

There was a good turnout at Monday's meeting in Oak Ridge, with some diverse thoughts.

Asked what was particularly important, Lloyd Stokes of the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association said, "The people stories." He said the Oak Ridge park site should share stories that tell visitors about the impact on those people who were evicted from their East Tennessee homes to make way for the project as well as those people who came to Oak Ridge or returned to it to work on the big A-bomb project.

"Those stories are equally fascinating," Stokes said.

Dan Robbins, chairman of Greenways Oak Ridge, said, "There are over 50 miles of greenways and biking trails in Oak Ridge. My suggestion was to incorporate as many of those as possible into the park."

Oak Ridge City Manager Mark Watson said it's going to take a while for a lot of the park plans to come to fruition, but he said Oak Ridge is a town that "likes to see progress" and he urged that near-term projects get some priority.

One possibility would be to accelerate completion of the museum portion of the preservation plans at the former K-25 uranium-enrichment site. "I think if there's any way we can do that we should," Watson said. "You've got support from the powers-that-be in Washington."

The Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management is responsible for some of those activities as part of the deal that was reached between the government's cleanup program and preservation groups that wanted to keep as much of WWII Oak Ridge alive as possible at K-25.

Koentop said he didn't think the History Center was scheduled for completion in 2016, but he said DOE has about \$6 million in funds available this year for preservation and commemoration activities.

That includes money that's being spent on design for the museum, he said. DOE has already put online a virtual museum for K-25.

Ralph Hutchison, coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, said he hopes the Park Service will tell all sides of the Manhattan Project story, including workers who were unwittingly exposed to hazardous materials in the workplace and those who died from the devastating atomic bombs.

"The Manhattan Project changed the world," Hutchison said, adding that creation of the world's first atomic weapon was used "to create incomprehensible human suffering" and led to an arms race that has cost trillions of dollars.

Atkins said developing the park will probably take three to five years, maybe even longer.

"We have all those DOE security issues to deal with (to get access to some of the historical sites, such as those inside the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant)," she said. "But we have a great opportunity to be really thoughtful about how we plan what experiences we want to share with the public. It's going to take a little while to make that happen."

The Park Service has \$340,000 in funding to get things started in 2016. That doesn't sound like a lot of money by government standards, but Atkins said it's more than usual for a new park.

"Usually, new parks get only \$180,000 the first year," she said. "So I think because we have three sites and lots of lobbying from local folks, we were able to get a little more. So we'll put it to good use."

DOE did not receive any money targeted for the park in the FY 2016 budget, but as noted earlier there is money in the EM program that will help with the park's development.

Atkins said the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will probably receive dual funding from the NPS and DOE in the future, with the Department of Energy likely to shoulder the greater funding burden.

“Because DOE will continue to own the properties and be responsible for maintenance on them, and security and access and historic preservation,” she said. “So DOE will always have a responsibility for those buildings. Our responsibility is to interpret them.”

DOE and NPS will work together on how to interpret the World War II Manhattan Project facilities and artifacts.

Atkins said she couldn’t predict what annual costs will be needed to support the three-site park in the future.

“I couldn’t tell you right now. It’s too far down the road, and it’s hard for me to differentiate what the Park Service and DOE will do,” she said.

ICYMI -- ECA January Bulletin Now Available

ECA Staff

The January 2016 Bulletin is now available and can be read online [here](#).

Stories include:

- Consent-Based Siting Meeting Wrap-Up
- WIPP on Track to Reopen in 2016
- Nearly One Ton of Plutonium Could Be Headed to SRS
- South Carolina Begins Fining DOE \$1M Per Day

If there are any stories you'd like featured in next month's issue or important news you'd like to share, please feel free to contact devon@energyca.org.

