

## **ECA Update May 16, 2016**

*In this update:*

**GAO Report: Nuclear Security: Status of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Effort to Develop a Security Infrastructure Plan.**

GAO

**Senate passes \$37.5B energy and water bill after ending Iran fight**

The Hill

**Y-12 completes disposal of radioactive and hazardous waste ahead of schedule, says government**

Knoxville News Sentinel

**SRS Celebrates Two Milestones in Post-Cold War Safety Clean-up**

WJBF

**Senate funds D&D at \$40 million more than last year**

Portsmouth Daily News

**TVA submits application for smaller nuclear reactor in Oak Ridge**

## **Upcoming Events**

**May 2016**

**17**

Full House Energy & Commerce Committee Markup of [H.R. 4979, the Advanced Nuclear Technology Development Act of 2016](#)  
10 AM EST

**May 2016**

**18**

EM SSAB, Nevada

**May 2016**

**23-24**

EM SSAB, Savannah River Site

**June 2016**

**08**

House Nuclear Cleanup Caucus

WBIR

**Learn about secrecy, security, spies during Manhattan Project on Friday**

Oak Ridge Today

**A mercury research facility at Creekside**

KnoxBlogs

**DOE sticks with Battelle to operate PNNL in Richland**

Tri-City Herald

**GAO Report: Nuclear Security: Status of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Effort to Develop a Security Infrastructure Plan.**

GAO

May 13, 2016

In a recent report, GAO found that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has yet to complete a Security Infrastructure Plan as required by a 2008 law. NNSA recently began including information on potential physical security infrastructure improvements, including in the FY17 budget request, projecting that it may need more than \$2 billion dollars over the next 15 years to address repairs and replacement of essential security infrastructure at enterprise sites. Find the full [report here](#).

**Senate passes \$37.5B energy and water bill after ending Iran fight**

The Hill

May 13, 2016

[LINK](#)

August 2016

11

Third Annual Intermountain Energy Summit  
Idaho Falls, ID  
[Visit website.](#)

September 2016

14-15

2016 National Cleanup Workshop  
Hilton Alexandria Mark Center  
Alexandria, VA  
Visit [cleanupworkshop.com](http://cleanupworkshop.com)

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*Bulletin* [here.](#)

The Senate on Thursday passed a \$37.5 billion package to fund energy and water programs in 2017.

Senators approved the bill in a 90-8 vote after weeks of work that included a protracted fight over an amendment related to Iran.

With Thursday's vote, the energy and water funding becomes the first 2017 appropriations measure approved this year.

"We know that this bill is the result of a great deal of effort, research and collaboration across the aisle," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said.

"The energy security and water infrastructure bill is important for our country," he said. "We know it will support public safety, waterways infrastructure, energy innovation [and] our nuclear deterrence posture."

Much of the legislation is uncontroversial. It increases funding \$355 million over 2016 levels, with a \$1.163 billion increase for the Department of Energy's defense-related programs and an \$808 million decrease for the nondefense portions of the bill, including other DOE programs and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Senators went out of their way to leave out the policy riders lawmakers included in the House version of the bill, and the Appropriations Committee in April approved it unanimously.

But debate over an amendment dealing with the Iran nuclear deal had held up action on the legislation.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) had hoped to use the bill to block future American purchases of heavy water — a component of some nuclear reactors — from Iran. Democrats opposed the provision, saying that because its inclusion would draw a veto from President Obama, it shouldn't even get close to the final bill. They voted three times against ending debate on the spending bill before finally voting down the Iran measure on Wednesday.

That action cleared the way for Thursday's approval.

Despite the bill's popular support in the Senate, the White House has threatened to veto it, saying the measure doesn't provide enough research funding for advanced energy projects or renewable energy sources.

"At this funding level, the number of research, development, and demonstration projects supported in cooperation with industry, universities, and the national labs would be reduced, limiting innovation and technological advancement," the White House said in an April statement.

Despite that, members said Thursday they were happy just to begin the appropriations process. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), the bill's sponsor, noted that the bill was the earliest appropriations measure to pass the Senate in 40 years.

"We give and we take. We have a process by which we stick to our principles, but we do our best to come to a result, which we have done," Alexander said in a floor speech.

### **Y-12 completes disposal of radioactive and hazardous waste ahead of schedule, says government**

Knoxville News Sentinel

May 9, 2016

[LINK](#)

The government announced Monday that the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge had completed the disposal of 2,247 containers of so-called mixed waste — containing both radioactive materials and hazardous chemicals — more than two years ahead of schedule.

The federal plant was required to get rid of the stored wastes by September 2018 under terms of a commissioner's order from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. The mandate is part of an agreed-upon Site

Treatment Plan for dealing with legacy wastes generated decades ago by facilities on the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge reservation.

According to the announcement by the National Nuclear Security Administration, most of the wastes were shipped to EnergySolutions' disposal facility near Clive, Utah. The other containers were sent to the Nevada National Security Site for burial.

Geoff Beausoleil, manager of the NNSA's Production Office, said removal of the old wastes was a "key priority" for the federal agency.

"Completing this removal project two years ahead of schedule is a significant achievement," Beausoleil said in a statement.

The project took place over the past five years. The NNSA did not have a cost estimate on the waste-disposal effort.

The "vast majority" of the waste inventory consisted of solid materials and did not require any special treatment. However, many of the waste containers had to be repackaged to meet federal transportation requirements for shipping uranium.

A smaller portion of Y-12's waste inventory required a series of treatment and processing activities to prepare the materials for permanent disposal.

"These wastes were split among containers to reduce the uranium content and then 'rocked up' for disposal, meaning a small container of the waste was placed inside a larger container that was then filled with concrete," the NNSA said in the announcement.

The most challenging work involved organic solutions stored in bottles, the agency said.

"These required processing and several splits to sufficiently reduce the uranium content to meet shipping requirements and stabilization/solidification to meet disposal requirements," the NNSA release stated. "In total, the waste left Y-12 in 193 shipments."

## **SRS Celebrates Two Milestones in Post-Cold War Safety Clean-up**

WJBF

May 12, 2016

[LINK](#)

Savannah River Site celebrated two milestones Thursday, moving one step closer to completing a mission left behind from more than 60 years ago.

The excitement at SRS stretches back to the Cold War. And now, the mission is to keep everyone safe from 36 million gallons of high level, radioactive waste.

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States subsequently dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Russians beefed up their weaponry.

Back in the 50s, Russia began testing nuclear weapons. So, the United States decided it needed a bigger stockpile of nuclear weapons.

There was byproduct from those weapons. So SRS, created by the government from farmland, became the nuclear waste site.

Speakers during one of three private ceremonies at the site boasted it was the first in the world to close high level waste tanks.

It's hard to see because the radioactive waste at SRS sits underground.

U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Manager Jack Craig explained why the job needed to be done.

"It's radioactive waste. It's materials left over from the Cold War we're processing through other facilities on site. The mission here in the early 50s was producing plutonium. This is a byproduct of that, a liquid waste material that has products in it," he said.

Plant workers kicked off the day with a small ceremony to recognize the closure of Tank 12, which was built in 1953. It is one of eight tanks closed since 1997 at the site. Tank 12 is the second to close on the H Farm. Six tanks have been closed on the F Farm, no longer putting the hazardous waste at risk for leaking into ground water.

“In the future those tanks could leak as they get older and older, so our goal is to remove the material from the tank,” Craig explained.

A total of 51 tanks need materials removed and safely closed with the help of SRR workers who protect themselves in fully covered, bright yellow suits.

“The process is we empty them, verify they are clean, put a grout in the tanks so the tanks remain stable and don’t collapse on themselves. A grout is really just a stable form to keep the tanks in place, but they are clean once the grout goes in them,” Craig told News Channel 6.

Once the tank is closed, the material changes.

Craig added, “Facilities like DWPF (Defense Waste Processing Facility) turn it into glass and make it safer to store here on site.”

A Shielded Canister Transporter takes the new glass material to a temporary storage and it’s too placed underground.

“We still have a lot more work to do and we celebrate all our achievements, but we do not forget that there are still more tanks,” said Monica Regalbutto, DOE Assistant Secretary.

There are more than 4,000 canisters of glassified material temporarily stored on site until the government names a final home.

“We’ve done lots of studies on how durable and how strong it is. It keeps all the radio-nuclides strongly bound up. We have glass samples from long ago, ancient

Egypt and places like that to show how durable glass is,” said Mark Schmitz, SRR Deputy Project Manager and COO.

“Each and every tank we close is progress towards closing all the tanks here at Savannah River Site, reducing the risk of any type of environmental risk here in South Carolina,” he added.

The canisters stay at SRS until the government decides where it will go for good.

More than 8,000 canisters are expected to be poured after all 51 tanks are closed. That expected end date is 2042.

### **Senate funds D&D at \$40 million more than last year**

Portsmouth Daily News

May 13, 2016

[LINK](#)

The decontamination and decommissioning work at the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant has again been funded to the tune of \$40 million more than last year, in appropriations found in Thursday’s Energy and Water Appropriations legislation.

U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) said the Senate has passed new funding for the cleanup project. The funding will help maintain current employment levels for the decontamination and decommissioning work at the Portsmouth Plant.

The funding for the project had originally been set up for revenue to come from uranium sales and appropriations, but when the bottom seemingly fell out of the uranium market and appropriations were cut, officials were sent scrambling to try to get the Department of Energy to completely fund the entire project.

“I’m committed to ensuring there are adequate resources for the cleanup work at Portsmouth, and I’m pleased the Senate passed this funding today,” Portman said.

“The cleanup project in Portsmouth is an important component of economic development in southern Ohio. I will continue to monitor the administration’s barter

of uranium to ensure full funding is delivered for cleanup at Portsmouth, but the Senate's action today is a positive step forward. I will continue to urge the Obama Administration and Secretary Moniz to keep their promises to the Piketon community."

Portman secured funding needed to maintain current employment levels for the decontamination and decommissioning work at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in last year's Omnibus bill, and has repeatedly called on the Obama administration to uphold their promises to the Piketon community and to provide adequate funding to avoid layoffs.

Reach Frank Lewis at 740-353-3101, ext. 1928, or on Twitter @franklewis.

### **TVA submits application for smaller nuclear reactor in Oak Ridge**

WBIR

May 13, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Tennessee Valley Authority has taken the next step toward deciding whether to build a new, smaller nuclear reactor in Oak Ridge.

TVA wants to build the small modular reactor (SMR) in an area on the Clinch River near the southwest edge of Oak Ridge. This is the same site where TVA proposed to build the breeder reactor in the 1980s that was scrapped due to budget cuts and safety concerns.

It's a design that's never been approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the United States.

TVA said its submitted the Early Site Permit Application to the NRC to assess the project's construction and operation potential.

The NRC will now use the application to review site safety, environmental and emergency preparedness requirements for the 1,200-acre location.

It could be several years before the design and the site are approved, said Dan Stout, TVA senior manager for small modular reactors.

“However, the application process helps pave the way for TVA to expand on its mission of environmental stewardship through clean energy development and for DOE to support licensing and siting requirements for U.S.-based SMR projects,” he said.

### **Learn about secrecy, security, spies during Manhattan Project on Friday**

Oak Ridge Today

May 15, 2016

[LINK](#)

A program in west Oak Ridge on Friday, May 20, will give visitors some insight into what life was like in the city during the Manhattan Project with all the security, the need for secrecy, and the concern for spies, a press release said.

The program will be presented by the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. It starts at 3 p.m. May 20 at the Turnpike Gatehouse, which is located at 2900 Oak Ridge Turnpike in Oak Ridge.

Visitors that are taking the U.S. Department of Energy public tour are encouraged to attend the program after the tour, the press release said.

This program is free and open to the public. Parking is limited, so please try to carpool if possible.

The gatehouse is also at a trail head for the North Boundary Greenway, and visitors can go for a self-guided hike after the program.

Visitors can access the Turnpike Gatehouse from Oak Ridge by following the Oak Ridge Turnpike west as if you are leaving town. Parking will be next to the Gatehouse on the north side of the road. Maps are available at the National Park desk in the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge.

“Join Manhattan Project National Historical Park and help us celebrate our centennial by finding your park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” the press release said. “This year is the National Park Service’s 100th birthday; join us as we create activities which provide you with opportunities to create priceless memories when discovering national parks.”

The Manhattan Project was a top-secret federal program to build the world’s first atomic weapons during World War II. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park includes Oak Ridge; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Hanford, Washington.

Find more information on the park at

<https://www.nps.gov/mapr/index.htm> or call the park at (865) 576-6767.

More information will be added as it becomes available.

### **A mercury research facility at Creekside**

KnoxBlogs

May 14, 2016

[LINK](#)

A Field Research Station where Oak Ridge scientists can study mercury in East Fork Poplar Creek is still in the works, even though the Department of Energy recently pulled back its proposal to construct the facility at a natural area in Horizon Center.

“We are currently in the process of identifying alternatives that will meet the needs of the Department of Energy and the City of Oak Ridge,” Mike Koentop, the executive officer of DOE’s Office of Environmental Management, said.

The research facility will be relatively small and cost in the range of \$1 million, according to estimates. But it's important that it be located adjacent to the lower stretches of East Fork — the creek that was historically polluted with tons of mercury discharged during Cold War operations at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant.

Mark Peterson, an environmental scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, said methylmercury concentrations in water and fish are higher downstream than in the creek's upper stretches near Y-12, where East Fork originates.

Methylmercury is the most toxic form of mercury and of most concern about bioaccumulation in fish and other critters in the food chain.

The East Fork winds through much of Oak Ridge's west side after leaving Y-12, eventually joining Poplar Creek and downstream reservoirs, and Peterson said scientists want to evaluate ways to stop the formation of methylmercury or keep it from migrating downstream.

"The work we're proposing is for a technology development program," Peterson said.

He said researchers may evaluate ways to remove mercury from the water.

The Oak Ridge lab has conducted major studies of mercury in the environment, especially what causes elemental mercury to convert to more toxic forms.

"We want to look at potential water chemistry changes," Peterson said.

According to Peterson, scientists know that the form of mercury can be altered by many factors, such as nutrients in the water or the amount of algae. Peterson said experiments at the creek could help scientists assess techniques to spur those ecological changes. As an example, native mussels could be introduced at the site to reduce the mercury risks, he said.

Koentop said the research facility is part of DOE's comprehensive plan for addressing mercury contamination in Oak Ridge.

The proposed Field Research Station is a planned collaboration between DOE's Office of Environmental Management and Office of Science. It would be constructed by EM, but it would be staffed by environmental scientists at ORNL.

"We're excited about it," Peterson said, "and what we might be able to do to make a positive difference."

What's learned could be beneficial in future cleanup projects at Y-12.

DOE also is developing a new \$148 million treatment facility at Y-12 to remove mercury from the creek's headwaters.

### **DOE sticks with Battelle to operate PNNL in Richland**

Tri-City Herald

May 13, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Department of Energy plans to keep Battelle operating its national laboratory in Richland for another five years, making 57 straight years for the contractor.

On Friday the DOE Pacific Northwest Site Office announced its decision not to open the contract to competition. It expires in September 2017.

"Battelle and DOE are already well-aligned with common interest in advancing PNNL's pursuits and assuring the continuity of PNNL for the benefit of the local community, the region and the nation," said Roger Snyder, manager of the Pacific Northwest Site Office.

Battelle is the partner that DOE wants to work with for another five years, he said.

DOE and Battelle Memorial Institute still need to negotiate the five-year contract extension.

Steven Ashby, PNNL director, said in a message to staff that he is confident negotiations will conclude and staff will be celebrating the extension before the end of the year.

“Battelle ... appreciates the department’s confidence in our stewardship of the laboratory,” he said.

“When one looks at our sustained performance, I believe that we have earned and positioned ourselves for a contract extension,” Ashby told staff.

Battelle has consistently earned high grades in its annual evaluation by DOE. In most of the last eight years, it has ranked highest or tied for the highest overall performance among the 10 DOE Office of Science laboratories.

It has scored particularly well in categories in which its science and technology work is rated, including “mission performance.” But it has been consistently strong in all eight categories that are rated, Snyder said.

“Under Battelle’s stewardship, PNNL is increasingly contributing to the resolution of challenges facing our nation, our environment and the world in which we live,” Snyder said.

Extending the contract will give continuity to PNNL’s workforce. The national lab employs 4,350 people, with 3,900 of those based in Richland. Its annual budget is close to \$1 billion.

Battelle, a nonprofit research and development corporation based in Columbus, Ohio, has developed a reputation for giving back to the Tri-City-area community, supporting science and math education, health and human services, and the arts. It has donated more than \$26 million.

Its donations have include more than \$4 million to help create the Reach museum and Delta High School. It also has been an important supporter of Washington State University Tri-Cities, helping establish it and creating the Bioproducts, Sciences and Engineering Laboratory on the Richland campus.

Negotiations to establish the contract extension will include work to modernize the contract, Snyder said. The description of work, for example, has not been updated for more than a decade to reflect current technology.

Ashby told employees that he does not see any insurmountable obstacles in negotiations for the new contract, “just a lot of hard work to nail down a formal agreement.”

Issues that will need to be addressed “center on the future of Battelle’s facilities, but also include our plans for increased academic engagement and greater diversity in our workforce,” he told staff.

DOE labs across the nation have moved toward increased collaboration with universities.

“Increasingly the types of research and work they do can’t be solved by one player,” Snyder said.

Both Battelle and DOE are interested in continuing to promote greater academic engagement with universities and colleges, such as WSU and the University of Washington, he said. The collaboration can strengthen all the institutions involved.

Unlike at most other national laboratories, DOE does not own all the buildings on the PNNL campus. Battelle will be looking at what facilities it owns that it wants to jointly manage, as both parties look to the future of the campus, Snyder said.

Both parties also are interested in diversity, which Snyder said encompasses not just demographic diversity, but diversity in education and background to provide a wide range of ideas and diversity of thought to solve the nation’s pressing problems.

