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Feds seeking proposals for cleanup at LANL

ABQ Journal

May 27, 2016

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SANTA FE – The federal government on Thursday issued its draft request for proposals for a new contract for environmental cleanup at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

It's the first time there will be competition for a separate cleanup contract. In 2014, the Department of Energy decided to separate environmental remediation of decades worth of radioactive and other hazardous materials from the overall LANL operating contract, held since 2006 by private consortium Los Alamos National Security LLC.

That move was part of a shake-up that came after a drum of radioactive waste packed improperly with a combustible mix at Los Alamos breached in February 2014 at the underground Waste Isolation Pilot Plant at Carlsbad, resulting in a shutdown of the nation's nuclear waste storage facility that continues to this day.

LANS – which includes Bechtel and the University of California – was subsequently granted a “bridge contract” for the cleanup work, but a new long-term contract under DOE's Office of Environmental Management will likely take effect in October 2017 when the bridge contract, with all options exercised, will expire.

The total estimated value of the new cleanup contract is approximately \$1.7 billion over a prospective 10-year period, including option extensions.

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Third Annual
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September 2016

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Save the Date: ECA Peer
Exchange
Contact Ivana Brancaccio at
ivana@energyca.org
for more information

September 2016

“The Draft RFP provides for full and open competition, and the Draft RFP includes requirements for meaningful work to be performed by small business concerns,” DOE said in a news release. The purpose of issuing the draft RFP is “to solicit input from interested parties to assist DOE in developing a Final RFP for this procurement.”

LANS’s overall operating contract has been worth about \$2 billion annually. That contract is also expiring, as LANS has failed to earn adequate performance reviews to extend it beyond September 2018. RFPs will be issued at some point for a new contract to take effect after that.

In another LANL development, the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday voted down a budget bill amendment that would have curtailed plans to ramp up production of plutonium nuclear weapons triggers known as “pits” at Los Alamos.

The proposal by Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.) was rejected by voice vote, according to a report in the Exchange Monitor, which covers the nation’s nuclear weapons complex. LANL is under a federal mandate to produce 50 to 80 pits a year by 2030.

MOX hearing scheduled for June 30; Feds seek delay

The Post and Courier

May 27, 2016

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A June 30 hearing has been scheduled in South Carolina’s lawsuit against the Department of Energy involving missed deadlines at the Savannah River Site’s plutonium recycling plant.

But the Energy Department says the hearing should be delayed because U.S. District Judge J. Michelle Childs, who scheduled the proceeding, has not yet ruled on the department’s attempt to throw out the case altogether.

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2016 National Cleanup
Workshop
Hilton Alexandria Mark
Center
Alexandria, VA
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November 2016

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Intergovernmental Meeting
New Orleans, LA

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The project — the mixed oxide fuel fabrication facility, or MOX — would meet an agreement with Russia by converting 34 metric tons of plutonium into commercial nuclear fuel. But the facility is still under construction and the federal government missed a Jan. 1 deadline to either process a ton of the plutonium through the SRS facility or remove a ton from the state.

The Energy Department's failure to meet either goal was expected to result in the payment of \$1 million per day, beginning Jan. 1, with a \$100 million cap, a stipulation outlined in a 2003 agreement between the federal agency and the state. After a month without any payment, the state sued on Feb. 9.

The hearing is scheduled for next month, but the Energy Department filed papers Wednesday stating that the issue is being rushed and that the court has not yet acknowledged its April 25 request to dismiss the case.

"South Carolina has never asserted any urgency as to its two actual claims: for removal and for money," the department wrote. "Accordingly, defendants respectfully request that the court stay all proceedings on South Carolina's motion for summary judgment until after the court has ruled on defendants' motion to dismiss." Prior to Wednesday's request, the Energy Department said that the 2003 agreement listed goals for plutonium disposal, rather than mandates that are protected by federal law.

But U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, who helped author the document during his time in the U.S. House of Representatives, said last month that the Energy Department should honor the agreement.

"We put the statute there for a purpose. If the MOX program does not get back on track, the statute helps ensure we protect the state," the South Carolina Republican said.

Graham and his fellow South Carolina congressmen are attempting to save MOX as President Barack Obama's fiscal year 2016 budget request attempts to terminate the project.

The federal government believes MOX will cost \$51 billion over its lifetime, including the \$5 billion already spent on the project. That amount is three times the initial estimate.

Instead, the federal government wants to pursue an alternative method that would dilute the plutonium and ship it to a New Mexico repository. The government says the dilution option is cheaper and more efficient. That claim has been disputed multiple times by South Carolina's congressmen.

Radioactivity at Oak Ridge sewage treatment plant reduced

Local 8 Now

May 30, 2016

[LINK](#)

A U.S. Department of Energy contractor says radioactivity levels have dropped at an Oak Ridge sewage treatment plant in the past two years.

Levels of radioactivity at Rarity Ridge Wastewater Treatment Plant have gone down by 90 percent.

90,000 gallons of radioactive sludge have been taken out of the facility.

Spokeswoman Anne Smith of URS-CH2M Oak Ridge says the contractor recently completed its 18th shipment of radioactive sludge to the Washington state facility.

A dose of reality

Op Ed: Idaho State Journal

May 28, 2016

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The Snake River Alliance and the group I represent, the Partnership for Science and Technology, view nuclear energy from very different perspectives.

SRA has long opposed nuclear energy research conducted at Idaho National Laboratory even when the goal is to reduce risk and improve safety. PST, on the other hand sees nuclear energy as an accepted technology that generates 24-7 baseload power without contributing greenhouse gasses.

Nuclear energy is not without its issues, but that is what science, engineering and research are for, to advance and improve technologies.

Conflicting perspectives can often lead to discussion and debate allowing informed people to draw their own conclusions from different information sources. The problem comes when one side irresponsibly engages in exaggeration, misinformation and distortion. And that brings me to the guest opinion written by SRA's interim executive director, Wendy Wilson.

Wilson argues that Attorney General Lawrence Wasden was right to block 200 pounds of commercial nuclear fuel slated for research due to DOE's penchant for missing unrelated cleanup deadlines. "The DOE has failed to meet countless deadlines to clean up the nuclear contamination that is already here."

Wilson is clearly citing the DOE of 20 years ago. Idahoans born since 1995 can count DOE's missed deadlines on one hand. According to a 2013 Leadership in Nuclear Energy (LINE) Commission report, DOE met 959 of 964 deadlines (99.5%) since 1995 and has shipped tons of waste out of Idaho.

Wilson next claimed that if the nation's lead research lab is allowed to do its job doing science on used nuclear fuel, "deadlines surely will be missed." Huh? Research and cleanup are handled on separate contracts by different contractors.

Wasden's decision to block research shipments will not affect DOE's efforts to resolve the chemistry issues related to treating liquid waste.

Wilson further states that "Our land and water will continue to be at risk until our political leaders put the health and safety of Idahoans ahead of DOE's broken

promises.” While this is great rhetoric for fundraisers in California and on the Oregon coast, Idahoans should know better. Contamination at the site is from past practices that ended decades ago with the Cold War.

Since that time, Gov. Andrus and Batt and every governor since, has insisted on adequate cleanup funding. DOE cleanup has been funded at roughly \$500 million each year since 1995 and significantly more during the stimulus act. The result of this funding is that metric tons of waste have been steadily leaving the state every year since 1995 . The Settlement Agreement has been enormously successful cleaning up legacy contamination. DOE’s ongoing research complies with modern environmental laws and is not a contributor to environmental contamination.

Our land and water is not at risk from INL research. That’s why the Settlement Agreement allows waivers, to ensure the lab can fulfill its vital clean energy and national security missions separately from ongoing cleanup of legacy waste. By the way, that shipment of 200 pounds of research material proposed under this waiver would come from a nuclear power plant in Illinois, not Indiana, as Wilson wrote (twice) in her piece. And yes, the small details do count when one purports to offer “expert” advice to policymakers and the public.

Perhaps most egregiously, Wilson cites specious data implying hundreds of cancer deaths related to operations during the Cold War. Certainly there is a program to justly compensate workers exposed to radiation and related hazards during Cold War.

Sens. Jim Risch and Mike Crapo are strong supporters of this compensation program. How can they be supportive of INL research if it is the direct cause of hundreds of deaths?

Let’s peel back how Wilson does her math. If a Cold War worker sought compensation for radiation-related injury of any kind and later died, the McClatchy report she cites counts that death as Cold War exposure related. There is a significant problem with this method — it over-counts the cause of death.

Let's take the late Warren Nyer as an example. Mr. Nyer worked at INL and during his career he was absolutely exposed to radiation as part of his job, including his duties at INL. In 1942 he worked with Fermi and Compton pressing uranium bricks and making graphite blocks for the Chicago Pile as part of the Manhattan project. Later, he was measuring neutron counts 10,000 yards from the first atomic blast at the Trinity site. Later still, he worked at several reactors at INL, including reactors that were intentionally subjected to core damage to scientifically understand the results.

Mr. Nyer retired in Idaho. If he put his name in for compensation for injuries related to radiation exposure (which certainly seems justified given his career) he would be one of the "almost 400 deaths" INL work-related deaths. Mr. Nyer recently died of natural causes at the age of 96. When the full story is told, the outcomes are a little different. I hope that the SRA interim director will take a little more time analyzing the data before providing future "facts."

Richard Holman is a retired manager from the Idaho National Laboratory with advanced degrees in technology management and applied nuclear energy. He is the current President of the Board of Directors for the Partnership for Science and Technology and CEO of a technology-based consulting practice.

Hazard removal crucial to deactivation project

Paducah Sun

May 30, 2016

[LINK](#)

DOE photo A maintenance mechanic removes a filter from the lubricating oil strainer in the C-333 Building at the U.S. Department of Energy's Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant site. More than 265,000 gallons of oil have been removed from the site's uranium enrichment process buildings.

A maintenance mechanic removes a filter from the lubricating oil strainer in the C-333 Building at the U.S. Department of Energy's Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant

site. More than 265,000 gallons of oil have been removed from the site's uranium enrichment process buildings.

Deactivation workers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant site recently removed hundreds of thousands of gallons of lubricating oil from the site's uranium enrichment process buildings, a significant step in preparing key facilities for future demolition.

More than 265,000 gallons of the oil that had been used primarily in the large buildings and supporting equipment have been pumped from large tanks and thousands of miles of pipes inside the buildings.

"By completing this project we not only have removed a potential fire hazard that existed in the process buildings, but we also took a necessary step toward preparing the facilities for future work," said Fluor Paducah Deactivation Project Program Manager Bob Smith. "Our team did a great job and finished the project safely."

To pump the more than a quarter-million gallons of lubricating oil, filters had to be removed from thousands of strainers located throughout the enrichment buildings. Each filter was removed, cleaned, and disposed of manually, which required particular employee safety controls and adherence to written instructions in the field. Once filters were removed, lubricating oil flowed more efficiently and was pumped into waste containers called "totes" for storage before disposal.

Almost half of the 265,000 gallons of the drained oil was reused as a rinsing agent for more than 60 electrical distribution transformers that contained oil with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). Reusing the lubricating oil to rinse the transformers, rather than purchasing another rinsing agent such as kerosene or diesel fuel, resulted in a \$500,000 savings to the project.

Finally, the oil was shipped to Texas in 53 tanker truckloads for disposition.

Removing hazards has been an emphasis of deactivation at the site since DOE received the plant in 2014, according to Paducah Site Lead Jennifer Woodard.

"Creative ideas like the one implemented on this project are important for reducing cost while maintaining worker safety," Woodard said.

SRS, nonprofit receive sustainability award

Augusta Chronicle

May 29, 2016

[LINK](#)

The SRS Community Reuse Organization and Savannah River Site management team have jointly received a prestigious Department of Energy recognition.

The two received the 2016 Energy Sustainability Award for spearheading projects that have saved taxpayer money while promoting efficiency and "smart use" of department resources, according to the Energy Department. SRS and the nonprofit made available thousands of pieces of equipment that were no longer needed and other excess government-owned items for use to local governments, nonprofits and private businesses.

"To give you an idea of the range of items that have been donated and put to good use over the years, we're talking about piping, a waste debris pelletizer, electronics, furniture, copper wire, motor generators, air conditioners and even an air boat and locomotive engine," said Parodio Maith, the community assistance manager for the Energy Department's Savannah River operations office, in a news release. "If items are not needed somewhere within the DOE complex or at another U.S. government agency, these excess items are made available to the SRSCRO."

Items not selected are sold for profit that could be used to promote local business development and the Energy Department's mission. In 2014, the reuse organization disbursed about \$1 million for infrastructure improvement projects in its region.

In 2015, the Energy Department and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions initiated an agreement with the nonprofit on new projects to remove difficult to manage excess and surplus items.

Through the program, the nonprofit disassembled 12 large transformers and four oil-filled circuit breakers from a now-closed power plant at SRS, recovering 678,000 pounds of copper and other metals and 56,921 gallons of transformer oil. It also is removing 38 excess office trailers and 653 excess refrigerant units including ice-makers, heating and ventilating components, refrigerators and water coolers, and fire retardant.

The SRS Community Reuse Organization is a nonprofit that supports job creation in five area counties.

SRNL technology plays role in nuclear nonproliferation

Aiken Standard

May 27, 2016

[LINK](#)

Technology plays a vital role in political decisions around the world, and developments connected to the Savannah River Site are certainly no exception.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed its version of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, last week, including an amendment that could include the use of technology developed by Savannah River National Laboratory.

Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., cosponsored an amendment that would require the sitting president to notify Congress when any Iranian activity involving ballistic missiles is uncovered or detected. The amendment comes less than a year after President Barack Obama's administration struck a deal with Iran, lifting economic sanctions in exchange for transparent and limiting nuclear activity by the Iranians.

In a news release from his office, Wilson said, “Since the dangerous Iran Deal went into effect, the regime in Tehran has been increasingly aggressive and conducting frequent intercontinental ballistic missile tests – without facing repercussions. This bipartisan amendment will hold the Administration accountable and require a timely and thorough report on our response to Iran’s hostile actions.”

Iran has test fired ballistic missiles as recently as March. According to Iranian Fars News Agency, those missiles were marked with a Hebrew phrase which translated into “Israel must be wiped off the Earth.” Israel, about one-third the size of South Carolina, is a key strategic ally for the United States and is reportedly within reach of Iranian missiles.

While the deal aims to keep Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, officials said it doesn’t remove the threat of what is commonly referred to as a dirty bomb.

Mike Johnson, executive director of Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness, said, “A dirty bomb is constructed differently than a nuclear weapon. The nuclear material can be placed around the conventional explosive and the goal is to spread radiation.”

The radiation can quickly make its way into food or water sources, creating dangerous scenarios. According to Johnson, just about any nuclear material can be used in a dirty weapon, even some used nuclear medicine sources.

Technology developed at SRS plays an international role in detecting nuclear materials.

SRNL recently developed a tamper-proof detection device, called TRI-ACE, that detects radioactive particles in the atmosphere, and its research and development is working with national agencies to advance and operate other detection capabilities.

The national laboratory at SRS also is working on underwater detection, according to a statement from the NNSA’s Office of Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation.

The statement also says the technology provides information about dispersal of radioactive materials that could reveal key information about upstream facilities.

Another key strategic technology for nonproliferation provides enhanced abilities to find and observe clandestine, small-scale nuclear processing facilities or identify the improper use of declared full-scale nuclear processing facilities – technology that could be used in Iran.

Johnson said while Iran’s ability to deliver a nuclear or “dirty” weapons payload to Israel depends on the booster capacity of a missile, he agreed with Wilson that the Iran Deal is potentially dangerous.

“Billions of dollars were freed up by the lifting of sanctions,” he said. “There is free money for Iran to buy technology and billions of dollars can buy a whole lot of technology.”

Iran is complying with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It said the deal has increased the agency’s abilities to monitor Iranian nuclear activities and ensure the nation is operating nuclear sites with peaceful intentions.

Rep. Dina Titus critical of congressional effort to push Yucca Mountain project forward

Las Vegas Review-Journal

May 28, 2016

[LINK](#)

CARSON CITY — It is a riddle for the ages: What is dead but never dies? The answer in Nevada is the proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain.

As a state legislative panel overseeing the moribund Yucca Mountain high-level nuclear waste repository gets ready to meet later this week, Rep. Dina Titus has criticized a new effort in Congress to move the project forward.

In a news release last week, Titus, D-Nev., spoke out about a plan to fund the project in the Fiscal 2017 Energy-Water Appropriations bill, HR 5055.

The provision would allot the U.S. Department of Energy \$150 million to continue an application process to license the project as a nuclear storage facility. The legislation also prohibits any funds from being used to close Yucca Mountain as a future storage option.

Titus noted that congressional supporters of Yucca Mountain made the same attempt last year but failed to see it become law.

Titus has sponsored the Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act, which would require projects such as Yucca Mountain to receive approval from local governments in affected areas.

“Yucca Mountain is not a secure depository that would seal dangerous waste safely for a million years,” Titus said.

“It is instead a proposal based on bad science and faulty assumptions. Specifically, the NRC confirmed that it is not secure, that it will leak, and that radiation will travel miles through underground water sources to farming communities in the Amargosa Valley on its way to Death Valley National Park.”

The waste will also have to be transported across the U.S. to the site, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The Obama administration in 2010 shelved the controversial project, which faced opposition from many Nevada political leaders and citizens, but efforts to revive it continue.

U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., sent a letter to the House Appropriations subcommittee members on April 12 asking that the provision, and another \$20 million for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to advance the Yucca Mountain license application, be removed from the legislation.

“I would urge the subcommittee to prioritize funding for the Department of Energy’s efforts to advance alternative long-term storage options for our nation’s spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste,” he said.

“While I understand that many of my colleagues disagree with me on the issue of Yucca Mountain, Nevadans have a right to be safe in their own backyards.”

Nevada’s Committee on High-Level Radioactive Waste will meet for the first time this year on Friday to get an overview of the status of the project from various officials, including Bob Halstead, executive director of the state Agency for Nuclear Projects.

While some house members may want to move the project forward, the Senate version of an appropriations bill contains no such funding.

Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada has repeatedly said the project is dead.

But presumptive GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump has not made it clear where he stands on the issue.
