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Oak Ridge To Be Part Of Manhattan Project National Historic Park

The Chattanooga

November 9, 2015

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U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz will sign on Tuesday a Memorandum of Agreement to establish the Manhattan Project National Historic Park. The park will have three locations: Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Los Alamos, New Mexico and Hanford, Washington.

National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis will attend the ceremony along with Senators Lamar Alexander, Maria Cantwell and Martin Heinrich, who represent each of the park's locations.

For more than a decade, the Department of Energy and National Park Service, in cooperation with other federal agencies, state and local governments and stakeholders, have worked to create the

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Events of Interest

[Manhattan Project Park MOA Signing](#)

[Ceremony](#)

November 10

Washington, DC

[2015](#)

[Intergovernmental Meeting](#)

November 18-20

New Orleans, LA

Email: ivana@energyca.org for more information

Calendar

[EMSSAB Oak Ridge](#)

Manhattan Project National Historical Park. On Dec. 19, 2014, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, which included provisions authorizing the steps to establish the park.

Once signed, the MOA will officially establish Manhattan Project National Historic Park as a unit of the National Park System. The MOA will formally describe how the National Park Service and the Department of Energy will work together to preserve, protect, and provide access to the historic resources associated with the Manhattan Project.

Concerns raised about delaying Hanford deadlines

Tri-City Herald

November 4, 2015

[LINK](#)

Many of the people who have advocated for cleanup of the Hanford nuclear reservation will be dead by the time work covered in a proposed set of changes to legally binding deadlines for Hanford environmental cleanup is completed, said Susan Leckband at a meeting Wednesday night to discuss the changes.

“That’s disturbing,” she said. Some of the proposed new deadlines for cleanup work would not be set until 2026, with actual cleanup work to be done after that.

The Department of Energy and its regulators — the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington state Department of Ecology — held the first of four meetings to discuss proposed changes Wednesday in Richland. About 50 people attended.

The Richland Operations Office, responsible for all Hanford cleanup other than addressing the 56 million gallons of radioactive waste stored in underground tanks, has spent much of its budget in the last decade on Hanford cleanup close to the Columbia River.

That has caused delays in its cleanup work in central Hanford, which has about 400 buildings and about 1,500 waste sites where contaminated material was disposed of in the ground or liquids spilled or leaked into the ground.

With much of the cleanup completed along the Columbia River, the focus is turning to setting new deadlines that the government agencies believe are realistic and achievable given expected annual budgets of \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion for the Richland Operations

[Reservation Meeting](#)

November 10

[EMSSAB Nevada](#)

[Meeting](#)

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[EMSSAB Savannah](#)

[River Site Meeting](#)

November 16-17

[NNMCAB Meeting](#)

November 18

[EMSSAB Paducah](#)

[Meeting](#)

November 19

Office.

Plans call for completing investigations and screening possible methods for cleanup for many of those buildings and waste sites by 2026. The current deadline is in 2016.

“That’s a very long delay, a decade. People’s commitments change in a decade. The agencies change,” said Leckband, who was on the meeting agenda to give the community’s perspective as a former Hanford worker. She also is the past chairwoman of the Hanford Advisory Board.

Deadlines for three large processing plants — PUREX, REDOX and B Plant —would be considered separately. DOE’s first deadline for them would be to submit dates in 2026 for when they would be required to be cleaned up.

Leckband said she is not as concerned about delaying cleanup of the processing plants because the large concrete buildings are stable and will be stable for many years to come.

She also has some concerns about some changed deadlines for some of the last and most difficult projects left along the Columbia River, including for the 324 Building which sits over a highly radioactive spill. The deadline to clean up the spill and tear down the building would be extended from fall 2018 to fall 2021.

“The 324 Building you could stand in it and spit in the Columbia River,” she said. “If that leaks into the river, it affects thousands of lives. It’s dangerous and I think that really takes priority.”

Earlier in the day the Hanford Advisory Board discussed the proposed deadline changes.

Several board members said they were concerned about leaving some deadlines undetermined. For instance, cleaning up waste sites and most buildings in central Hanford was required to be completed in 2024 and now those dates will be determined after more is known about the sites.

Dennis Faulk, EPA Hanford program manager, said cleanup of Hanford along the Columbia River will take 30 years total, and the coming central Hanford cleanup will require at least as much work.

“Based on history, do I really want to set a date 30 to 40 years in the future to complete this work?” he asked. “Or do I actually want

to have more firm schedules based on all the information I collect over the next 10 years to set it?"

Brown renews effort for Piketon site

Chillicothe Gazette

November 8, 2015

[LINK](#)

PIKETON – While officials and employees involved with the cleanup at the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant site in Piketon continue to await word on where the project will stand after Dec. 11, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown on Monday will launch the next salvo of an effort to push the work forward.

Brown has prepared for Monday delivery the latest in a series of letters that members of the Ohio congressional delegation and others have peppered Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun Donovan with over recent months in an effort to preserve at least current funding levels for the decontamination and decommissioning work in Piketon. The letter, being sent Monday, asks for the Department of Energy to include \$460 million in its Fiscal Year 2017 budget request in order to ensure full funding for site cleanup.

Workers at the site have been on their latest roller coaster ride since WARN notices of possible layoffs of 325 to 500 employees beginning around Oct. 22 were sent out. Those layoffs were averted for the time being with the passage of a continuing resolution that left funding untouched through Dec. 11. As of Friday, Fluor-BWXT, the lead site contractor, indicated it has not heard any new information with regard to that deadline.

In addition to Brown's efforts, U.S. Sen. Rob Portman has challenged Moniz on the Piketon site during an early October hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and U.S. Reps. Brad Wenstrup and Bill Johnson have visited area boards of commissioners to share information and gather input to take back for lobbying efforts in Washington. They and others in Ohio's congressional delegation have been very involved in letter writing campaigns as well.

Brown's latest letter reiterates many of the points the congressional delegation has been arguing all along — that the federal government must live up to a commitment to clean up the former Cold War-era enrichment site, that the jobs involved in the cleanup are in a region still recovering from an economic downturn and

that future redevelopment of what has been called a prime site hinges on a timely cleanup. He does, however, make two additional points.

The first involves the continued reliance on a barter program through which uranium from the site's inventory is sold on the open market to help pay for the cleanup — presently making up about 70 percent of project funding with the remainder from budget appropriations. Part of the current budget concerns with the cleanup involves a DOE secretarial determination earlier this year permitting less uranium to be sold so as to avoid negatively impacting the commercial uranium market. The site also only has a limited inventory of uranium that would be gone — and the sales revenue along with it — long before cleanup work is completed.

"I am concerned that despite undeniable progress at the site, the DOE continues to rely on uranium disposition to fund some cleanup activities and lacks a clear plan for maintaining the current workforce and the pace of site cleanup once the uranium runs out," Brown writes. "Given the significant reliance DOE has placed on uranium disposition to fund cleanup activities, I believe DOE must develop a sustainable, long-term plan for cleanup work. Having a clear funding path — that does not rely on uranium disposition — in the years ahead is essential to ensure that Portsmouth's cleanup timelines are met."

Brown also stresses that funding for construction of an onsite waste disposal site cannot rob from the cleanup work itself.

"As work will soon begin on an onsite disposal cell for demolition materials, it is critical that funds for the disposal cell do not come at the expense of funding for the ongoing deconstruction and decontamination work at the site," Brown said. "Further, it is imperative that we continue this progress by ensuring that the construction of and eventual disposal of materials in the cell is consistent with the recommendations by the Site Specific Advisory Board."

That citizens advisory board has withdrawn prior support of the onsite cell because of several issues it feels DOE has not committed to or addressed.

This isn't the first time employees have entered the holiday season wondering whether layoffs would be the coal in their stocking. Significant job losses were averted last December when Congress came up the necessary funding to keep the cleanup work on its

current track.

Brown's letter does not make mention of the American Centrifuge Plant that is also on the DOE site in Piketon. DOE announced earlier that it was de-funding the Centrifuge, shifting resources for continuing work on the technology to a facility in Tennessee. Layoffs were scheduled to begin around the middle of this month. The Gazette on Friday was unable to get an update on the status of Centrifuge operations.

Editorial: Patience needed with waste cleanup efforts

Aiken Standard

November 8, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Savannah River Site and Aiken are inextricably tied. Issues related to funding, employment and mission opportunities at the Site shape and mold what Aiken and surrounding communities will look like moving forward.

That reality should reinforce the importance of the Site's Salt Waste Processing Facility, a key operation there that is expected to process 90 percent of Cold War waste stored in more than 40 aging waste tanks.

This is a process that warrants patience and due diligence as it unfolds. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, or DHEC, rightfully recognized that needed mentality after it gave the Site a six-week pass on potential fines for failing to meet ongoing construction deadlines. To get to closure, the Site's workers must remove highly radioactive waste from tanks. This is a delicate and time-consuming process.

It's important for the Site to continue these efforts in order to ensure it remains a viable construction mission. The facility did fail to meet "startup milestones," which were set for Oct. 31. However, because of the intricacies involved in the process, officials properly acknowledge that the deadlines should be delayed. DHEC said it will continue to closely monitor construction and may resort to fines if deadlines are not met. While it's important to evaluate and review this process, the agency needs to continually be mindful of these complexities. Construction of the Salt Waste Processing Facility is currently 89 percent complete and is on track to be finished by May 2016. It's set to be operating by December 2018. But the facility has been plagued by cost overruns and delays, including a cost projection that states it is nearly \$1 billion over

budget. The facility was initially expected to cost \$1.4 billion, but is now expected to cost about \$2.3 billion.

While it's important to be mindful of cost overruns, it's also vital for the Site to be in business and work toward continuing its cleanup efforts. Once commissioned, this facility will greatly increase the ability of site personnel to empty and close the Site's high-level radioactive waste tanks. This is of particular value to not only the Site, but also to Aiken County and our region's economic viability.

Continuing to identify the Salt Waste Processing Facility as a critical component of the Site's portfolio will be imperative for future tank closures and risk reduction. Let's hope any threat of future fines takes this fact into account.

High-hazard Hanford jobs expose workers

Tri-City Herald

November 7, 2015

[LINK](#)

Workers continue to be contaminated with small amounts of radioactive material at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant as they conduct what Department of Energy officials say is the most hazardous cleanup work ever done at Hanford.

Two months ago, DOE sent its contractor, CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., a letter outlining concerns, according to a recently released weekly staff report of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

"Over the past several months (CH2M Hill) has experienced numerous radiological issues at PFP," the letter said. "Of particular concern are the intake events and the cut/puncture events that can have significant consequences."

Since then, a worker has had his skin contaminated during work to cut up a glove box, which stands more than 12 feet high and is contaminated with significant amounts of plutonium. The worker was wearing a protective suit that was breached, allowing radioactive material to reach his forehead and hairline.

The suits used for such high-hazard work at the Plutonium Finishing Plant are filled with air and workers are in a congested area. It's possible that the worker may have brushed against something that caused a small breach in the suit, or the suit could

have had a defect.

In addition, three people in a control room watching work on the glove box — where workers once reached their hands through attached gloves into the box to work with radioactive material — had clothing or skin contamination.

An alarm sounded when monitors detected airborne contamination, and the workers immediately left the control room. Two of the workers had contamination on the soles of their boots and the third had contamination on a finger.

Also, since the letter was written, the defense board staff weekly report said that radioactive contamination was spread when a hose from some contaminated equipment being moved was not completely closed off. Workers had no contamination beyond the outside of their protective clothing.

CH2M Hill had issued a “management concern” in August, before DOE sent its letter, according to information from CH2M Hill. The defense board staff report said the company had started an analysis that month to determine actions to better protect workers.

At the time, CH2M Hill was working on three high-hazard jobs that required the use of supplied air respirators, the defense board staff reports noted, and work is continuing on those projects.

Employees are working to clean up the second of two large and highly contaminated glove boxes; to clean up the Americium Recovery Facility, where an explosion within a glove box in 1976 contaminated the facility and worker Harold McCluskey; and to clean up the Plutonium Reclamation Facility, where plutonium was recovered from scrap material that otherwise would have been wasted.

In July and August, there were incidences of workers’ skin becoming contaminated with radiological material. In some cases, seams failed in the puffy, air-filled protective suits worn by workers. In other cases, contamination spread as the suits were removed after workers left areas contaminated with plutonium that can easily become airborne.

In other cases, the suits may have been damaged during work.

In another incident, CH2M Hill said monitoring showed an intake event, in which a worker had inhaled some airborne contaminated

material, in the Plutonium Reclamation Facility. However, the amount was so small that after rounding of numbers, the radiation dose to the worker was considered zero and below the level required to be reported to DOE, CH2M Hill said.

Since August, the contractor has increased management oversight of the work and made changes to how workers take off protective clothing after they exit contaminated areas. It also has improved protective equipment, including adding more padding to make them more difficult to accidentally cut or tear.

CH2M Hill is doing more inspections of the protective suits and has been working with the manufacturer to make sure the suits are robust. CH2M Hill began using the suits at the Plutonium Finishing Plant after seeing the success DOE's Idaho cleanup site has had with them. CH2M Hill has been working with the Idaho site to learn about their practices with the suit.

Work has been stopped for safety stand downs of the crews assigned to the Americium Recovery Facility and the high hazard glove boxes. A joint brainstorming session between the crews also has been held.

More steps are expected to be taken based on the analysis started in August.

7 of 40,000 incidents per entries into highly contaminated areas
About seven incidents of skin or clothing contamination have occurred since summer during about 40,000 entries into spaces contaminated with plutonium. That's a low incident rate, according to CH2M Hill, and the incidents should have no health consequences for the workers.

The Hanford Advisory Board has been pleased with the amount of work completed and how it has been conducted. It sent a letter in September praising workers, saying the project exemplifies "the very best of professional and technically initiated cleanup activities."

By the end of December, CH2M Hill expects work to be completed on the high-hazard glove boxes. The most hazardous work at the Plutonium Reclamation Facility also should be done then. Workers are scraping up contamination from the floor of its tall, central space, called a canyon, where contaminated equipment and spills fell over more than 30 years.

Work on the Americium Recovery Facility and its McCluskey Room is expected to continue until February or March.

Feds tap Idaho National Lab in push for advanced reactors

AP: Washington Times

November 6, 2015

[LINK](#)

BOISE, Idaho (AP) - The U.S. Department of Energy has selected the Idaho National Laboratory to play a key role in a new initiative intended to lead to the building of new or advanced nuclear reactor designs that can be brought to the commercial market.

Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Nuclear Energy John Kotek made the announcement Friday at the White House Summit on Nuclear Energy.

Kotek says the Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear, called GAIN, will offer innovators and entrepreneurs in private industry and public institutions through the Idaho National Laboratory a single point of access to federal experts and facilities.

Idaho National Laboratory Director Mark Peters took part in the announcement and said the program creates what he calls an ecosystem that national labs are excited to support.

“I’m encouraged by the fact that there are so many different concepts and classes of reactors being pursued,” Peters said.

Also on Friday, the Department of Energy said its Loan Programs Office will clarify eligible costs in its Advance Nuclear Energy Projects loan program. The program makes up to \$12.5 billion in loan guarantees for projects such as the building of small modular reactors or upgrades to existing facilities.

Officials said Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear is needed because facilities needed to conduct nuclear research are expensive to build and maintain, making them beyond the financial ability of many innovators.

Also, officials said, companies hoping to access government facilities can face a federal labyrinth that’s difficult to navigate. The Idaho National Laboratory could help solve that problem.

“Labs are open for business,” said Peters, who took over as the

Idaho National Laboratory director last month. “This is the opportunity I’ve been waiting for for a couple of decades.”

The announcements concerning nuclear energy are part of the Obama administration’s goal of reducing carbon emissions.

“Nuclear power is central to President Obama’s all-of-the-above energy strategy and will advance our efforts to reduce carbon emissions,” Energy Department Deputy Secretary Liz Sherwood-Randall said in a statement. “We want to ramp up investment in innovative technologies to ensure that future generations have access to reliable, low-carbon electricity.”

