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TOWN OF CONCORD

Scobey Hill Dam is focus of session

By Elmer Ploetz NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Updated: 09/26/07 7:30 AM

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct an information session on the Scobey Hill Dam at 7 p. m. Thursday in Concord Town Hall.

The corps is preparing to do a study on the feasibility of modifying the dam, which currently blocks passage of fish and acts as a barrier for sea lamprey into the upper reaches of Cattaraugus Creek.

Laura Ortiz, the project manager, said the meeting is being held to let people know “where we are in the study process.”

The cost of implementing a fish passage system and a sea lamprey assessment trap at the dam has been estimated at \$4.1 million, but Ortiz said that’s a “conceptual costlevel estimate.”

She said a specific estimate has not been prepared yet. That, and considering other alternatives, is the purpose of the studies.

The 40-foot high, 338-foot-long dam was originally a power generating facility.

The corps is seeking to provide background studies on the economic and environmental effects associated with development of a fish passage system at the dam.

In particular, allowing steelhead trout to pass into the upper stretches of Cattaraugus Creek has been identified as a potential benefit.

The dam also acts as a barrier to lamprey eels, though.

Ortiz said if a project is approved, it would receive 65 percent of its funding from the federal government. The rest would have to come from local sources.

The dam is owned by Erie County, which now operates the property as a park. The state Department of Environmental Conservation would be another possibility.

For information about the study or the meeting, call 879-4407.

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Find this article at:

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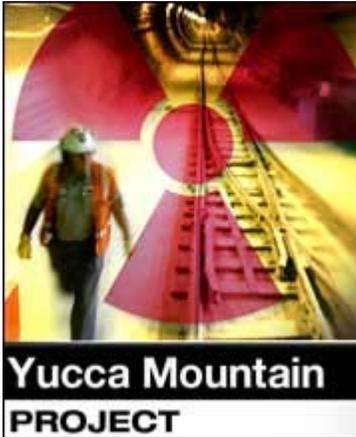
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Tedd Florendo, Reporter

Earthquake Fault Possible Beneath Yucca Mountain Site

Sep 24, 2007 09:59 PM EDT



Drilling operations at the Yucca Mountain project, north of Las Vegas, have unearthed a big surprise that could create concern about the project.

New rock samples show preliminary evidence of an earthquake fault right underneath where Yucca Mountain project planners want to handle highly radioactive waste.

U.S. Geological Survey maps show the fault beneath where officials hope to build concrete pads to store spent radioactive fuel canisters.

The possible discovery of a fault doesn't surprise environmental science professor Barry Perlmutter who says Nevada ranks third in the nation, behind California and Alaska, for active fault lines.

[View recent earthquake activity in Nevada and California](#)

The head of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects calls the finding an example of technical work being done after-the-fact. Executive Director Bob Loux says this is one of the reasons the project should be stopped.

"If you had a bunch of spent fuel on this concrete pad and some sort of event that triggered the fault, the dry canisters could fall and come apart and release some of the contents," he said.

The Department of Energy released a statement saying safety is their number one concern and the purpose of the drilling is to find specific places to put the concrete facilities. They say they will not build on spots that are seismically active.

Congress picked Yucca Mountain in 2002 to become the nation's nuclear waste dump.



MONITOR

WEAPONS COMPLEX

Waste Management ♦ Clean Up

Volume 18 No. 42

September 24, 2007

DOE KICKS OFF NEW 'WAY AHEAD' FOR CLEANUP OF WEST VALLEY

Questions Remain About Cost, Impact on Recently Awarded Contract

The Department of Energy, along with federal and state regulators, formally kicked off last week the new "Way Ahead" plan for the cleanup of the West Valley Demonstration Project in New York state that adds cleanup projects in the short-term while pushing back more contentious decisions for future years. DOE has heralded the new plan as a significant step forward for the cleanup of the site, though significant questions remain about the effort, most notably how much the added scope will cost and whether it will align with the recently awarded interim end state cleanup contract. DOE officials declined to provide details last week.

Plan Launched at Sept. 18 Event

The effort was officially launched at a Sept. 18 event at West Valley attended by Assistant Energy Secretary for Environmental Management James Rispoli and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Alan Steinberg. The event also marked the near-completion of an effort to ship approximately 20,000 canisters of low-level waste at West Valley off-site for disposal. "The Way Ahead plan outlines scientifically sound steps we can take now, as we continue to develop solutions for the long-term environmental challenges at the West Valley Demonstration Project," Steinberg said in a press release. "EPA is pleased to collaborate with our partners in developing a plan that will lead to significant progress toward final decommissioning of West Valley." State officials, though, remain a little more cautious, saying they are pleased with the prospect of added cleanup work, but emphasizing that they are still awaiting details about cost and schedule. "There is some uncertainty in the timeline for that work, but DOE seems intent on completing that work and we support it, 100 percent," said Tom Attridge, a spokesman for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. "We're just waiting to see how they're going to lay that whole thing out, as far as paying for it, as far as the schedule for it, as far as what kind of workforce they need."

An 'Enhanced' Interim End-State

The 'Way Ahead' plan was developed over the past year through what DOE has deemed the "Core Team" process, involving meetings of Department officials; federal regulators at West Valley, such as the EPA and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and state officials. "We're supportive of [the Way Ahead]," Attridge said. "It appears to us that we're going to get more cleanup work done sooner, which is always a good thing. We've been pushing for that for a long time. It doesn't necessarily mean all the issues are ironed out at this point, but it certainly allows a focus on getting work done while we continue to try to work those issues out." The plan envisions an "enhanced interim end-state" at West Valley, the first phase of which consists of

efforts to prevent water infiltration into the NRC-licensed Disposal Area (NDA); drying remaining liquid in the site's underground high-level waste tanks, containment of the North Plateau groundwater contamination plume and relocation of 275 canisters of vitrified high-level waste from the site's Main Process Building to interim storage pending final disposal. Already, the Dept. of Energy has begun efforts to design an infiltration cap and barrier wall for the NDA and to award a contract for the work. According to DOE spokeswoman Anne Wickham, most of the enhanced interim end-state is set to be completed over the next four years, with the relocation of the vitrified high-level waste canisters to take several years.

Cost Impacts Unclear

It remains to be seen, though, how much more the new projects planned as part of the 'enhanced interim endstate' will add to the overall cost of the West Valley cleanup. In June, DOE awarded a four-year cleanup contract worth approximately \$160 million to West Valley Environmental Services, LLC—consisting of site incumbent Washington Group, along with Jacobs Engineering, ECC and Parallax (*WC Monitor*, Vol. 18 No. 40). The workscope for that contract, however, does not entail many of the projects included in the enhanced interim endstate plan. "We haven't seen anything to suggest there's additional funds or additional scope being laid out, though I do believe that DOE is going in that direction," Attridge said. "DOE has told us that they're going to work on getting that in place so the work that was laid out at the event so specifically can get done in a timely manner. At this point, we're waiting to see if all the Is are dotted and the Ts are crossed." While acknowledging that DOE has obtained independent cost estimates of the new projects, Wickham declined to provide additional information.

"While we can't discuss the independent cost estimates developed by the government because we are hoping to obtain the best bids possible during the procurement process, there are indeed cost estimates," she said in a written response to *WC Monitor*.

Decommissioning EIS to be Completed in 2010

The second phase of the enhanced interim end-state would involve removal of the Main Process Building and source area of the North Plateau groundwater contamination plume, as well as ancillary structures. To that end, DOE and federal and state regulators have been working for years on a Decommissioning Environmental Impact Statement to develop a preferred alternative for removing the process building. Wickham said last week that the Department now envisions completing a Record of Decision on the preferred alternative in the spring of 2010. With the EIS being one of the key sources of disagreement between the Dept. of Energy and New York state officials concerning the West Valley cleanup, though, it remains to be seen if such a schedule is obtainable. Describing the 2010 completion date as "aggressive," Attridge said, "We haven't seen the schedule. We would like to see the information that supports that schedule, which is how all of the back-and-forth and technical analyses get done and how you can incorporate comments from all the different agencies and get to that spring of 2010 and release the document." Concerning the time taken so far to develop the EIS—a process that began in the 1980s—Attridge said, "I know the public has been frustrated. We've been frustrated for many years on this. ... Hopefully, this is the beginning of the end."

Way Ahead Defers Decision on Tanks

The third phase of the Way Ahead involves pushing back final cleanup decisions on some of the most contentious areas of the West Valley remediation project—the final fate of the NDA and the site's underground waste tanks—into the indefinite future while continuing monitoring efforts. Concerning the tanks, both state officials and EPA have expressed support for their excavation and removal, while the Dept.

of Energy supports closing the tanks in place, as it plans to do for underground waste tanks at other cleanup sites, such as Hanford and the Savannah River Site. Such issues are set to be further worked on through the Core Team process, according to DOE. “As the Core Team process progress, a collaborative environment that is protective of employee, public and environmental health is emerging,” says a Departmental release. “DOE and the Core Team participants continue to meet to discuss the direction at the WVDP and are committed to developing an implementable strategy for completing the work at the WVDP.” ■

—*Mike Nartker*

Plan set for West Valley nuclear waste cleanup

By CAROLYN THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

4:54 PM EDT, September 19, 2007

WEST VALLEY, N.Y.

The next phase of cleanup at the former site of the nation's only commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing operation will focus on several short-term projects while federal and state officials work out thornier long-term issues.

With the last of about 20,000 drums of low-level radioactive waste expected to be shipped to a Nevada disposal site in the next few weeks, federal officials this week outlined a plan called the "Way Ahead" that will chart the cleanup's future.

"We have some very finite things established," said James Rispoli, the U.S. Department of Energy's assistant secretary of energy for environmental management.

"Just as important," he said during a visit to the Cattaraugus County site Tuesday, "we have a framework ... to address the remaining issues and we have all of the agencies participating."

Work over the next four years will concentrate on drying out underground tanks that once held high-level waste, capping a landfill and containing a contaminated groundwater plume that environmentalists fear could eventually seep into Lake Erie, the region's source of drinking water.

Plans also include transferring 275 canisters of solidified high-level waste out of what was the main processing plant so that the 41-year-old facility _ the source of the groundwater plume _ can be demolished. The canisters would be stored inside another structure on site until the proposed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada, or another federal disposal site, opens.

Meanwhile, a "core team" of representatives from several state and federal agencies will try to achieve a consensus on how to complete the cleanup and who will be responsible for future monitoring of the site 35 miles south of Buffalo.

Over a 20-year period beginning in the early 1980s, a partnership between the DOE and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority achieved significant milestones in the cleanup, including solidifying more than 600,000 gallons of high-level liquid radioactive waste into glass and knocking down numerous buildings.

In recent years, however, the state and federal agencies have been at odds over what the site's end state will be and its long-term stewardship. A lawsuit filed by the state against the federal government last December remains pending in U.S. District Court.

The Way Ahead represents a new spirit of cooperation, said Alan Steinberg, the Environmental Protection Agency's regional administrator.

The plan has the support of NYSERDA, said Tom Attridge, a senior project manager, though he cautioned there is still

much that needs to be worked out.

"There are still some difficult issues out there but we're encouraged by it," he said. "We have four years of work that can be planned out and done."

The core team _ including representatives of DOE, EPA, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, NYSERDA and the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation _ was established a year ago and has been meeting monthly. Members are expected to outline a preferred closing alternative in a draft environmental impact statement in 2009.

From 1966 to 1972, spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear power plants and Energy Department sites was chopped, dissolved and its uranium and plutonium extracted at West Valley. The commercial operation shut down for upgrades in 1972 but remained closed after stricter regulatory requirements that were passed during the closure made the prospect of reopening too expensive.

NYSERDA now holds title to the 3,300-acre site, while the DOE leads the cleanup. The 1980 West Valley Demonstration Project Act passed by Congress directed DOE to use the site to demonstrate a method for solidifying high-level liquid waste, and to decontaminate and decommission facilities used in the effort. The law made the state responsible for 10 percent of the costs, and the DOE responsible for the rest.

Steinberg said the success of West Valley could be "a model for the nation."

As nuclear power remains an energy source, he said, "the issue of nuclear waste is going to be there."

On the Net: www.wv.doe.gov

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Officials discuss shipping of waste from West Valley

By Olean Times Herald

WEST VALLEY — State and federal officials met Tuesday at the West Valley Demonstration Project to mark the success in shipping low-level radioactive wastes off-site and cooperation on future steps to clean up the site.

Jim Rispoli, U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) assistant secretary for environmental management, and Alan Steinberg, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Region 2 administrator, toured the site following a meeting with state, federal and local officials.

More than 20,000 drums of concrete containing low-level radioactive waste has been shipped from the site this year — much of it by rail — in a stepped-up campaign to ship as much low-level waste as possible to a DOE nuclear test site in the Nevada desert.

Officials from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, and New York State Departments of Health and Environmental Conservation joined Mr. Rispoli and Mr. Steinberg for the tour.

Later, he joined Al Konetzni, president of West Valley Environmental Services, and Department of Energy Project Director Bryan Bower in addressing more than 200 West Valley Demonstration Project employees, elected officials, and community members, according to

John Chamberlain, a spokesman for West Valley Environmental Services, the new site contractor.

Assistant Secretary Rispoli recognized the success of the recent shipping campaign that removed approximately 20,000 drums of cemented low-level waste from the site to a disposal facility, with a small number of remaining drums planned for shipment within the month.

Assistant Secretary Rispoli also highlighted the teamwork among the DOE, its site contractor and state and federal partners in assisting DOE to meet remaining challenges.

Mr. Rispoli also announced DOE's goals in the next four years to accelerate liquid waste and facility removals in radioactive underground storage tanks, which are to be completed prior to West Valley Demonstration Project's longer-term state goals.

Mr. Steinberg emphasized the progress DOE has made in the last year in working with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the New York state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health, the EPA and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to define a plan for moving forward with cleanup at the West Valley site.

Last year, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority sued the Department of Energy over the pace and extent of

the cleanup at West Valley. No action is being taken on that lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Buffalo while the two sides continue to talk about future cleanup activities and how the cost will be divided between the federal and state government.

In June 2006, the EPA proposed a project-ending overview to move the cleanup forward. In response, the DOE invited the involved state and federal agencies to form a core team of key state and federal agency representatives to meet and focus on resolving the technical issues that were impeding progress on the Environmental Impact Statement.

Since initiated in November 2006, the core team has developed an approach to moving forward with cleanup and

maintenance work over the next several years that includes accelerating removal of unneeded structures and eliminating residual liquid wastes in the underground radioactive waste storage tanks. In addition, a preferred alternative for longer-term site management is being developed for evaluation in the ongoing Decommissioning Environmental Impact Statement.

The West Valley Demonstration Project is the environmental cleanup of the former Nuclear Fuels Services (NFS) facility, the country's first and only commercial plant that processed spent nuclear fuel rods from 1966 to 1972. The plant reclaimed usable radioactive material, including plutonium.

Officials to review shipping waste from West Valley

By RICK MILLER
OLEAN TIMES HERALD

Federal and state officials will meet next week at the West Valley Demonstration Project site to review progress in shipping low-level nuclear waste and discuss how to move forward with the cleanup.

Alan Steinberg, Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2 director, and James Rispoli, Department of Energy's (DOE) assistant secretary for environmental management, are scheduled to attend. The announcement was made by a spokesman for West Valley Environmental Services, which last month was awarded the DOE contract for site cleanup.

John Chamberlain, communications advisor for West Valley Nuclear Services Co., said state and federal officials will make remarks at 1 p.m. Tuesday following a lunchtime meeting with site employees, community members and visiting officials.

Project officials will explain "the progress federal and state agencies are making in resolving issues to allow site cleanup and stabilization work to move for-

ward." Mr. Chamberlain said.

Bryan Bower, Department of Energy's director of the West Valley cleanup, is expected to recognize the safe shipment over the past 12 months of more than 20,000 steel drums filled with low-level radioactive waste for off-site disposal. The pace of shipment was stepped up when the drums were loaded into rail cars for transport to a DOE test site in Nevada instead of relying on trucks.

Albert Konezni, president of West Valley Environmental Services, also will make remarks.

At 2 p.m. there will be tour of the drum storage facility and drum packaging and shipping area.

Mr. Steinberg is expected to talk about the work EPA sees going forward at West Valley, Mr. Chamberlain indicated. There is no word whether Mr. Steinberg has changed his mind about the removal of underground tanks that once held high-level liquid radioactive wastes.

Department of Energy officials are proposing to dry out the remaining liquid in the bottom of the twin carbon steel 600,000-gallon tanks. The DOE has backed away from an earlier proposal to fill the

tanks with cement, and instead is considering a review of the tanks' status every five years.

The inside of the tanks contain a residue that remains highly radioactive and is presumed to contain some plutonium.

The plant operated from 1966 to 1972, taking spent nuclear fuel rods from the federal government and private power companies, cutting up the rods and leaching out radioactive elements — including plutonium — for reuse. After the company, Nuclear Fuel Services, had closed, the state and federal government joined in a cleanup under the West Valley Demonstration Project Act of 1980.

Last year, the New York State Energy and Research Development Agency (NYSERDA) filed suit against the Department of Energy over the pace and scope of the cleanup.

Now being proposed, along with drying liquids in the high-level tanks, is containing a radioactive groundwater plume, stopping water infiltration at the National Disposal Area, and relocating the high-level waste canisters from the main process plant building so it can be dismantled.

West Valley radioactive leakage a concern to WVCTF

This opinion piece is sent by the West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) in response to the article that appeared in the August 16 edition of the *Springville Journal* entitled "Radioactive Plume at WVDP not a Health or Safety Threat." The CTF has significant concerns about the federal government's inaction regarding the constantly spreading radioactive North Plateau ground-water plume.

As was reported, a leak of radio-nuclides, mostly Strontium 90 (Sr 90), occurred in the main process building of the West Valley nuclear reprocessing facility around 1969. It was not recognized for many years, and has never received any effective remediation. It is advancing steadily toward Cattaraugus Creek. Already seepage has been documented into a drainage ditch, which flows into Frank's Creek, one of the tributaries of the Cattaraugus.

The concentration of radioactivity in these seeps is steadily increasing. Once it enters the Cattaraugus, it will then go to Lake Erie, where it will mix with the water that flows toward the drinking water intakes of Buffalo, Rochester, Toronto, and other communities that use Lake Erie or Ontario as a source of drinking water. Left unaddressed, and depending on dilution, this plume may eventually pose a health and safety risk to people and animals exposed downstream of the site.

One of the claims of the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is that the total amount of

radioactive substances released, when diluted by the large volume of water in the Great Lakes, will not expose individual downstream citizens to any dangerous levels of radiation, and therefore that the plume does not pose a health or safety threat. We of the CTF

believe however, that Sr 90 from the West Valley site should not be permitted to contaminate the Great Lakes in any amount. Dilution is not the solution. Pollution should be stopped at its source.

In December of 2006 the CTF sent a letter to the

chairman of the NRC expressing our dismay at the DOE's years of inaction in preventing the spread of the plume. We also questioned the NRC's bystander role in allowing the DOE to merely monitor the continual spread of the plume rather than requiring a plan to address the source of the contamination. The fact is, their two attempts to install mitigation treatment systems (i.e. the 1995 pump and treat well, and the 1999 permeable treatment wall) were not effective in capturing the plume or retarding its spread. As a result the plume has now contaminated an even greater volume of previously clean soils. Every day that mitigation is delayed, cleanup costs escalate ever higher. DOE has known about the plume for over 15 years. Back then the plume was a fraction of the size it is today.

The CTF has requested that the NRC require that DOE take immediate and effective action to control the source of the radioactive plume and to prevent the seepage of Sr 90 into the Great Lakes



WVDP announces 'The Way Ahead'

By LAURA MAGEE
Journal Editor

Although still a contentious issue for some stakeholders, federal and state agency leaders gathered in Ashford Tuesday to announce their support of "The Way Ahead."

The plan, which was developed by all the cooperating federal and state agencies, is meant to move the West Valley Demonstration Project forward in carrying out a comprehensive, practical and environmentally responsible action plan for cleaning up the former nuclear fuel reprocessing site.

In town for the announcement were U.S. Department of Energy Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Jim Rispoli and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 Administrator Alan Steinberg. They first toured the project site and then joined site contractor, West Valley Environmental Services President Al Konetzni, and state Department of Energy Project Director Bryan Bower in addressing over 200 project employees, elected officials and community members.

"It went from a noble experiment to a predicament," Steinberg said about the plant's past, explaining that the site was meant to be a place where spent nuclear fuel could be reprocessed but closed six years after it opened.

Since then, state and federal agencies have been struggling to decide on and move forward with plans to clean up the site.

"The Way Ahead" addresses what



PACKED FOR SHIPPING — WVDP operators place drums of solid low-level waste in shipping containers to be sent to Nevada. The drum cell at WVDP will be empty by Friday.

the contractor can do in the interim to reach an enhanced interim end state, while the details regarding bigger obstacles are decided upon.

Rispoli, calling Steinberg the "catalyst" of the plan, said through the focused deliberation of the core team, they were able to agree on several goals.

Part one of "The Way Ahead" involves stopping water from entering the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensed disposal area, drying liquids remaining in the high level waste tanks, containing the North Plateau groundwater plume and relocating

the high level waste canisters to allow the main processing plant building removal.

Part two of "The Way Ahead" involves removing the main process plant building (source area for the North Plateau groundwater plume) and remaining nearby facilities and deferring final decisions on disposition of the state-licensed disposal area, NRC-licensed disposal area and the high level waste tanks.

"The final end state will be environmentally responsible," Steinberg said. "I feel confident we will be able

(Continued on Page 2)

WVDP announces 'way ahead'...

(Continued from Page 1)

to reach that state.”

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority Senior Project Manager at WVDP Thomas Attridge said after the event that NYSERDA continues to raise its concerns. He added that NYSERDA is in agreement with the short-term goals but the long-term decisions need to be “ironed out.”

“We’re very positive,” he said, adding that the plan is a way to keep

cleanup occurring until the long-term goals are addressed.

The Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Waste, however, and differing thoughts.

“What we heard today were positive baby steps,” said Judy Einach, director of the coalition. “There is still significant radioactivity on site, much of it in a precarious state. What we did not hear today were plans for the giant leaps that will have to be taken to address this situation. Decisions really do have to be made soon and with dedicated commitment to the people of western New York. We’ve been at this for 30 years and we’re still a long way from the end of the project.”

Cindy Cook, facilitator of the West Valley Citizens Task Force, said the CTF did not have time to develop comments regarding the event before the Journal’s deadline.

The final end state will be decided upon by the core team, which continues to meet regularly.

The event also recognized an important milestone at West Valley, the safe shipment, in just over one year, of nearly 20,000 drums filled with low-level radioactive waste for off-site disposal.



Plan set for West Valley nuclear waste cleanup

Associated Press - September 20, 2007 3:15 AM ET

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. (AP) - The next phase of cleanup at the former site of the nation's only commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing operation will focus on several short-term projects while federal and state officials work out long-term issues.

The last of about 20,000 drums of low-level radioactive waste are expected to be shipped to a Nevada disposal site in the next few weeks. Federal officials this week outlined a plan called the "Way Ahead" that will chart the cleanup's future.

Work over the next four years will concentrate on drying out underground tanks that once held high-level waste, capping a landfill and containing a contaminated groundwater plume that environmentalists fear could eventually seep into Lake Erie.

Plans also include transferring 275 canisters of solidified high-level waste out of what was the main processing plant so that the 41-year-old facility can be demolished. The canisters would be stored inside another structure on site until the proposed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada opens.

West Valley is 35 miles south of Buffalo.

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Feds Endorse West Valley 'Way Ahead' Plan

By Sharon Turano sturano@post-journal.com

WEST VALLEY — Federal officials want to prove they can deal with past issues involving nuclear fuel before tackling a future that could involve its use.

They visited the West Valley Demonstration Project on Tuesday to endorse a “way ahead” plan for the site’s clean-up. It only tackles some of the issues that need to be addressed to allow for the former nuclear fuel reprocessing plant’s closure, however.

During his visit to the plant Tuesday, Alan Steinberg of the Environmental Protection Agency said that in 1966, federal officials and private entrepreneurs envisioned a place where spent nuclear fuel could be reprocessed and reformed. The site in Ashford, where that was being done, however, needed unaffordable safety upgrades six years after it opened, resulting in the plant’s closure.

“It went from a noble experiment to a predicament,” Steinberg said Tuesday. The federal and state governments have since been working to clean up the facility, not being able to agree on how to do that.

They marked an end to one part of that clean-up Tuesday, noting 20,000 drums containing low-level radioactive waste mixed with cement are expected to be shipped off-site by week’s end.

The federal officials also endorsed a plan on what else they can do to clean the site up ... at least in the near future.

“The Way Ahead plan outlines scientifically-sound steps we can take now, as we continue to develop solutions for the long-term environmental challenges at the West Valley Demonstration Project,” said Steinberg.

Issues remain: a federal repository for some of the waste is not yet available; legal sticking points are not yet resolved and long-term management of the site and its water need discussing, but, the federal officials remain optimistic they and their state counterparts can work together on the rest. After all, they weren’t even speaking about the issues in the recent past, looking to lawsuits or federal legislation as ways to proceed. A core team made up of state and federal agencies have since agreed to discuss the long-term issues, meeting monthly, and agreeing to what can be done now.

“We’re demonstrating we can do this. We can get the job done,” said James Rispoli of the federal Department of Energy Tuesday. “We have a consensus,” he said.

“It’s a way to keep clean-up (occurring), while long-term issues are addressed,” said Tom Attridge, spokesman for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

“With government resolve and some sound science, we can achieve,” added Steinberg. That must be proven, he said, as nuclear fuel could once again be thought of in the future for a country, he said, is already to dependent on crude oil.

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WEST VALLEY

Radioactive waste shipped to Nevada

Cleanup continues over next 4 years

By Kathy Kellogg CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

Updated: 09/19/07 7:04 AM

ASHFORD — Federal officials were on hand at the West Valley Demonstration Project site Tuesday to mark one of many milestones in the cleanup of the 41-year-old former nuclear fuel reprocessing facility.

The occasion: shipment to the Nevada Test Site of some of the last of 20,000 drums, each containing 1,000 pounds of cemented low-level radioactive wastes, created in a process ending in 2002.

The event served as a thank-you to West Valley Environmental Services workers who helped remove or prepare high-level wastes and other wastes for off-site disposal.

A trimmed-down work force of fewer than 200, under a \$159.3 million contract, will spend the next four years decontaminating, dismantling and securing portions of the site, guided by tasks outlined in the twopart “Way Ahead” plan. The plan was developed with cooperation of federal and state agencies and incorporates the DOE’s accelerated goal of securing the less-contaminated portions of the site into an “interim end state.”

It also will result in a preferred closing alternative in the final environmental impact study targeted for public release in 2009.

James Rispoli, the DOE’s assistant secretary of energy for environmental management, described stabilization efforts contained in the “Way Forward” plan.

A new interim cap and underground barrier wall will prevent more water from entering the five-acre

radioactive waste-disposal area on the North Plateau. Other tasks include drying the liquids remaining in underground high-level radioactive waste tanks, while containing and eventually eliminating a plume of groundwater contaminated with Strontium 90 leaking from the Main Plant Process Building and relocating about 275 high-level waste canisters stored there and demolition of the building.

Rispoli said Alan Steinberg, the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2 administrator, was a catalyst in finding the "Way Ahead."

Steinberg said nuclear power will continue to be an energy source of the future.

"We need to show we can handle the challenge of nuclear power," he said. "We can do something here in West Valley that can be the model for the nation."

The plan's second goal of setting a "preferred alternative" for the final environmental impact study, and working out some cleanup policy issues, has fallen to a group known as the "Core Team," made up of representatives from the EPA, DOE, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation.

Negotiations on the preferred closing method were halted several years ago when the DOE and NYSERDA deadlocked on responsibilities for disposal costs, long-term site management and other issues.

But Steinberg said Tuesday the team has reached a consensus and is committed to moving forward despite unresolved issues.

Find this article at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/otherwny/story/165972.html>

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MONITOR

WEAPONS COMPLEX

Waste Management ♦ Clean Up

Volume 18 No. 41

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TOP-LEVEL CHANGES UNDERWAY IN DOE CLEANUP PROGRAM

Number Two Official to Retire

A number of senior-level shakeups are underway within the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, prompted by the impending retirement of the cleanup program's number two official. Principal Deputy Assistant Energy Secretary for Environmental Management Charlie Anderson last week submitted his intent to retire from federal service by the end of the year—and likely by Oct. 1—to pursue a job in the private sector. In the meantime, Anderson plans to focus on “closing out material management issues related primarily to Special Nuclear Materials,” according to an internal message obtained by *WC Monitor*. Anderson was named to the number two spot in the DOE cleanup program in 2005, and has served in the Department, primarily at the Savannah River Site, since 1990. Prior to joining the Dept. of Energy, Anderson served for 10 years at the Tennessee Valley Authority. To replace Anderson, effective Oct. 1., cleanup chief James Rispoli has tapped EM's current Chief Operating Officer, Ines Triay. Triay was named as EM's Chief Operating Officer in mid-2005. Prior to that, she served as deputy chief operating officer; and from 1999-2004 as head of the DOE Carlsbad Field Office. Replacing Triay as COO will be Jim Owendoff, who currently heads EM's Office of Project Recovery, which was created as part of an office-wide reorganization carried out by Rispoli in 2005 and has focused on the long-troubled Hanford Waste Treatment Plant Project. Owendoff will continue to oversee the Office of Project Recovery while serving as COO, according to a Dept. of Energy spokesman. ■

—Mike Nartker

ECA Special Bulletin: Charlie Anderson and EM Senior Management Changes, 09-13-2007

On Monday Charlie Anderson indicated that he will be retiring from federal service. Ines Triay will assume the role as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Jim Owendoff will become the Chief Operating Officer.

The following is an excerpt from an e-mail from the EM Assistant Secretary regarding changes at EM:

Charlie has been invaluable the past 2-1/2 years at Headquarters first as the Acting Assistant Secretary before my arrival and then as the senior-most career Federal executive in EM, in addition to leading the DOE Nuclear Materials Disposition and Consolidation Coordinating Committee. I believe the major announcement the Department made last week regarding the start of plutonium consolidation to Savannah River would not have happened without Charlie's significant leadership and involvement, and is a fitting capstone to his public service.

Details of his retirement are still being finalized. However, I am pleased to announce that Ines Triay will assume the role as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Jim Owendoff will become the Chief Operating Officer. I will be getting back with you as to the effective date of these changes.

NEW WEST VALLEY CONTRACTOR SEEKS TO INSTALL 'CLOSURE' MINDSET

West Valley Environmental Services Formally Took Over Cleanup Sept. 1 From WVNSCO

West Valley Environmental Services (WVES), the new cleanup contractor at the West Valley Demonstration Project, plans to instill a “closure” mindset at the site as it moves forward with the work, President Al Konetzni told *WC Monitor* last week. WVES officially took over as the cleanup contractor for the upstate New York site Sept. 1, replacing West Valley Nuclear Services Company (WVNSCO), which had been at West Valley for more than two decades. It was a transition in name only, however, as Washington Group International has been, and will continue to remain, the lead contractor at the site. “For 25 years, basically this was an M&O contract. It was a management and operation contract. And that established a mindset, and it was very good mindset up here. And now we are going to closure, and this will be a closure site, Konetzni said. “I believe that will be one of the challenges here—how do you get a wonderfully experienced and very, very bright workforce to start understanding that you are going to closure? Part of it is just changing the culture from the 25 years to now we’re going to go closure.” To achieve such a change, Konetzni said he plans to move most personnel and functions, other than those involved in actual cleanup work, off-site. “I intended to do that as quickly as I can because if you don’t, you get into that mode of everyone thinking, ‘Well this is going to go on another 25 years,’” he said. “That’s not fair to the government of the United States, the taxpayers and certainly western New York.”

New York state officials said last week, though, that it may be premature to label West Valley a “closure” site, given that a number of key decisions on addressing areas such as remaining underground tanks and disposal areas are not set to be made for years into the future. “It’s important to realize at the end of this four years, this site won’t be closed. This site will still need a fairly significant amount of work to be done to get you that final end-state,” said Tom Attridge of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. “Our whole perspective on the cleanup here is get as much done as you possibly can sooner than later.” Attridge added, “If we’re going to call it a closure site, let’s start closing things.”

DOE Awards New Contractor Four-Year Contract

In late June, the Department of Energy awarded WVES a four-year contract running through June 30, 2011, and worth approximately \$160 million, to move forward with the West Valley cleanup (*WC Monitor*, Vol. 18 No. 30). WVES, consisting of Washington Group International, Jacobs Engineering, ECC and Parallax, beat out two other teams for the contract in a competition that dragged on for more than two years—a team consisting of CH2M HILL, Fluor, AREVA and EnergySolutions; and a team led by small business S.M. Stoller. Notably, Washington Group also served as the incumbent contractor prior to WVES through its ownership of West Valley Nuclear Services Company, which was also headed by Konetzni at the end. “DOE is very encouraged at West Valley’s recent progress. We look forward to working with West Valley Environmental Services during the next phase of the project and anticipate building on this recent momentum,” DOE spokeswoman Anne Wickham said last week. Attridge praised DOE for finally awarding the new cleanup contract after plans to recompetite the project were first announced in 2005, noting the negative impact caused by the set of short-term contract extensions the Dept. of Energy provided to WVNSCO as the procurement was carried out. “It’s a positive thing and we’ve been trying to push for that for a long time and now we have it. The proof is in the pudding now. We’re going to see how WVES comes in here and gets work done. We’re looking forward to seeing a lot of work done, but we’re kind of in a wait-and-see mode now,” Attridge said. One of the major advantages of the new team at West Valley, according

to Konetzni, is the expertise the additional companies will bring to Washington Group's presence there. "One of the problems that you have up here ... 25 years with one contractor, up in western New York where you have many, many stakeholders ... you wind up getting rather isolated," he said. "There are things ... that you don't even know what you don't know. It's not your people's fault. They suffer from the same malady." Konetzni added, "When you take a group like this West Valley Environmental Services, and you take Washington Group International, Jacobs Engineering, the Environmental Chemical Corporation and Parallax, that's a powerful group [and] I can call on all of their resources."

Transition Involved Workforce Restructuring

Konetzni praised the smooth transition period carried out over the past several weeks as WVNSCO shifted to WVES. "We've even crossed the Ts and dotted the Is in that we've got the right letterhead [and] the right signs up," he said. "I think we're starting off on the right way. I feel very comfortable that we have provided the government of the United States a very smooth transitional period. As best we could, I believe that we have acted in real good faith as far as old company going away and new company coming in." As part of the transition, the West Valley workforce of approximately 300 employees was reduced by 49 through a mixture of voluntary separations, involuntary layoffs and the outsourcing of radiation and safety technician services (*WC Monitor*, Vol. 18 Nos. 37&38). "I think with very, very good assistance from the Department of Energy and assistance from my own organization up here and the companies that make up the team, we were able to do that decrementing of people, which is never, ever, easy because you're dealing with people's lives, in such a way that basically we were able to achieve the number that I felt I needed to get there to get me maximum flexibility in the future, but to achieve that number in a sensitive way as possible," Konetzni said. He indicated that the site's workforce could increase in future years, depending on the scope of work. "I think it depends on the rapidity that we can turn western New York into a pristine place," Konetzni said. "When you look at the full-time employees that I have, and you look at the number of shifts, and you look at what could happen and you put all of that stuff together, I feel comfortable that I'm flexible to grow or shrink and even to take on a little bit more additional work."

Workscope Focuses on Enhanced Interim End-State

WVES will now be responsible for moving the West Valley site closer to what the Dept. of Energy has described as an "enhanced interim end state"—part of a "way ahead" proposal developed earlier this year to allow near-term cleanup progress to be made while more complicated decisions are put off for additional years. The "enhanced interim end state" includes addressing a groundwater contamination plume located at the site's North Plateau, placing a cover and barrier wall at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission-licensed Disposal Area (NDA), evaluating the options for moving approximately 275 canisters of vitrified high-level waste from the Main Process Plant to new storage pending disposal at Yucca Mountain and decommissioning the site's Main Process Plant.

Of the actions included in the enhanced interim end-state, WVES's "biggest focus" will be on getting the Main Process Plant demolition-ready, Konetzni said. "It will entail moving some source [material]. It will entail ensuring there is no loose contamination, It will entail ensuring that vessels and pipes and the like that can be readily and safely removed, and that really gets into the source contamination, are removed," he said. "It will be to ensure that the main process plant is isolated and ready to be demolished." The actual demolition of the building, however, is not part of WVES's current workscope. "If I do my job right, the government of the United States will have a free pass to remove that building," Konetzni said.

Other Issues Loom Over Long-Term

Konetzni said that by the time WVES's current contract ends, he planned to have the West Valley site in a state where focus could then be shifted to addressing some of the more challenging issues, including demolition of the Main Process Building, which is to be covered in an environmental impact statement in development; and, more long-term, the final fate of the four underground tanks, the NDA and the State-licensed Disposal Area (SDA). As part of the "Way Ahead" proposal, decisions on those three areas have been pushed off to the future due to the level of disagreement between the Dept. of Energy and the state of

New York on how to address them. Until final approaches are determined, the three areas will be subject to continued monitoring (*WC Monitor*, Vol. 18 No. 15). “In four years time, we’ll have the plant demolition ready, begging to be demolished. f I have a dream, we will have collectively figured out what we’re going to do on a temporary basis regarding those high-level canisters. We signed a contract the other day to put a cap on the NRC regulated disposal area. And all the buildings will be ready to go away,” Konetzni said. “If I have a real dream, I guess the final period would be the government, the state, all the local agencies, all the stakeholders will have agreed on an environmental impact statement and a preferred alternative and we will have set western New York up with a success story.”■

—*Mike Nartker*

Reader suggests research of WVDP needs to be done

Editor:

Having been involved with the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear waste in preventing the dumping of more radioactive waste at West Valley, I always read with interest articles about the West Valley Nuclear Dump.

I don't want to take anything away from the folks at the dump site as they have made some tremendous in roads in dealing with the radioactive waste that was left behind when W.R. Grace walked away from their radioactive mess.

After reading several of your articles I would suggest that you do some research: first, how did the dump got started, second, why was it allowed to continue and third,

why W.R. Grace was allowed to leave a 3 billion dollar mess for the tax payers to clean up?

There are quite a few "facts" from the operators of the dump in the files of the *Journal*, *Courier Express* and *The Buffalo News*. And I am sure you will see plenty of "facts" to support their claims of safety and no environmental impact. (At the ECC South campus library there is a file that has most of the articles about the beginning of the dump and the "facts" surrounding it.)

In past editions of the *Journal* there are "facts" of why we needed to dump more radioactive waste at West Valley. Hospitals, colleges and research centers were going to have to close because of no place to

dump more waste. These facilities are still open and no more waste had to come to West Valley. "Darn facts" I guess you can't always believe what you're being told when it comes to radioactive waste.

Oh by the way, I checked the hen house and the fox says "there will be no environmental impact and not to worry." I didn't bother to check with the chickens.

Tim Mayerat
Asheville, NC
Former residence of
East Concord, West Valley
and Springville

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-yucca5sep05,1,5612340.story?coll=la-headlines-nation&ctrack=1&cset=true>

From the Los Angeles Times

No Nevada water for nuclear dump

A federal judge rules against Energy officials, who say they need 8 million gallons to continue work on the Yucca Mountain site.

By Ralph Vartabedian

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

September 5, 2007

The Energy Department's controversial plan to build a nuclear waste dump in Nevada was trumped by Western water law Tuesday, when a federal judge rejected the agency's demand for 8 million gallons of water that state officials have refused to release.

Energy officials said they needed the water to drill test holes at Yucca Mountain, the site about 90 miles north of Las Vegas where the government wants to store about 70,000 metric tons of high-level nuclear waste from across the nation.

President Bush and Congress approved the site in 2002, but a series of legal and political setbacks has stalled the project -- and raised questions about when and if the dump will open.

In a stinging rebuke Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Roger L. Hunt denied an injunction sought by the Energy Department against Nevada, saying the department had made contradictory arguments that had no merit and were not supported by federal law.

"The validity of Western states' groundwater rights and the right to regulate water in the public interest is not a right to be taken lightly, nor is it a right that can cavalierly be ignored or violated by a federal agency," Hunt said in his 24-page opinion.

Hunt said Energy officials had acted with "arrogance" and possibly misled Bush when they said Yucca Mountain was suitable to store radioactive waste.

Energy spokesman Allen Benson said the department had just received the ruling and would have no immediate comment.

"It was a very strongly worded opinion," said Joseph R. Egan, a nuclear energy attorney representing Nevada. "The judge has very strongly telegraphed that DOE has no case whatsoever."

Without access to millions of gallons of state-controlled water, the Energy Department's only option may be to truck in water over long distances, placing another burden on the project and starting another activity that state officials could block.

The water fight between federal and state officials has been raging since the project's outset, when the state engineer first denied water permits to build at Yucca Mountain. The engineer recently denied permits for significantly more water as the federal government increased the number of holes it said it needed from about 15 to more than 80.

Hunt said agency officials had waffled on why they needed to drill so many holes.

Nevada officials contend the government's increased drilling was part of the "site characterization" -- a step crucial to assessing whether radioactive waste can be stored safely there.

If so, the federal government is in trouble. All site characterization was supposed to have been completed in 2002, when Energy officials said Yucca had met its criteria as a suitable site.

If the drilling program is essential to understanding the site and eventually getting a license, then "it would appear that the DOE misled Congress and the president," Hunt said.

Energy officials deny that the drilling is part of site characterization, but Hunt wrote: "Its own documents contradict that argument."

Robert R. Loux, executive director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, said the ruling was important because it prevented federal officials from collecting data that would be crucial to any future license application to build the dump.

Loux said the Energy Department ultimately would need sweeping exemptions from federal environmental, health, water and transportation laws to move forward with the dump.

Energy officials said they would file an application to build the dump next year.

ralph.vartabedian@ latimes.com

ECA BULLETIN

“NON-DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP. —Committee recommendation 195,437,000”

“For the Non-Defense Environmental Cleanup program, the Committee recommends \$195,437,000, a net increase of \$14,500,000 above the President’s request (this increase reflects an offset of \$10,000,000 to prior year funds located at the Consolidated Business Center for which the program has no identified need). The Committee realizes that the Department’s effort to complete cleanup in the future will be challenged by the failure to request sufficient funding. The Committee reminds the Department that it is not enough to simply fund projects that have the greatest perceived reduction to public risk; the Department committed to the public that it would meet regulatory agreements too. The Committee expects future funding requests to include sufficient funding to meet that commitment.”

“*Control Levels.*—In fiscal year 2006, the Environmental Management Program’s budget was restructured to better display site information, which paralleled its management of the program. However, Congress increased the number of congressional reprogramming control points from approximately 25 line items in fiscal year 2005 to nearly 100 in fiscal year 2006. This Committee understands and continues to support the need for site managers to have the flexibility to meet the changing requirements at the sites and recommends the following reprogramming control points for fiscal year 2008:

—**West Valley Demonstration Project;**

—Gaseous Diffusion Plants;

—Fast Flux Test Reactor Facility Decontamination and Decommissioning;

—Small Sites;

—All construction line items.”

“*Internal Reprogramming Authority.*—In fiscal year 2008, Environmental Management may transfer up to \$2,000,000, one time, between accounts listed below to reduce health and safety risks, gain cost savings, or complete projects, as long as a program or project is not increased or decreased by more than \$2,000,000 in total during the fiscal year.

This reprogramming authority may not be used to initiate new programs or to change funding levels for programs specifically denied, limited, or increased by Congress in the act or report. The Committee on Appropriations in the House and Senate must be notified within 30 days after the use of this internal reprogramming authority. The following is a list of account control points for internal reprogramming purposes:

—**West Valley Demonstration Project**

—Gaseous Diffusion Plants;

—Fast Flux Test Reactor Facility Decontamination and Decommissioning;

—Small Sites;

—Transfers between construction line item(s) and operating projects within the same site, as applicable.”

“*West Valley Demonstration Project.*—The Committee includes \$78,895,000 for West Valley, \$24,500,000 above the budget request. The Committee notes that this budget request is significantly lower than that enacted fiscal year 2006 or the program’s own preferred funding level displayed in their fiscal year 2007 Operating Plan submitted to Congress in March 2007. The fiscal year 2008 reduction is puzzling considering the amount of waste, decontamination and decommissioning, and remediation of contaminated groundwater that still must be accomplished. The Committee therefore provides an additional \$18,000,000 for decontamination and decommissioning of excess ancillary facilities, per the State agreement, as well as \$6,500,000 for additional low-level waste shipments for disposal from the ongoing decontamination and decommissioning.” “*Gaseous Diffusion Plants.*—The Committee recommends \$38,120,000 for operation of gaseous diffusion plant uranium conversion and stabilization activities, the same as the President’s request.”

27 employees laid off at West Valley

WEST VALLEY — West Valley Nuclear Services Co. (WVNSCO) has laid off 27 employees as it prepares to complete its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy.

The layoffs were conducted as part of contract transition to West Valley Environmental Services (WVES), the incoming West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) management and operating contractor. WVES will assume management and operations of WVDP on Sept. 1.

Affected employees will receive 30 days pay in addition to full separation benefits, including severance pay based on years of service, extended health-care coverage, retraining support and outplacement services.

Matching work force size and employee skill sets to the

tasks ahead has been a key consideration during the transition from WVNSCO to WVES, officials said.

Because the WVES contract identifies a smaller work force, WVNSCO acted last week to minimize the impact of the necessary work force reductions by offering a self-select program to its employees.

As a continuation of the strategy to mitigate the impact of the work force reduction, WVNSCO decided to outsource the function of the Radiation Protection and Safety Technicians. This affects 14 employees, who will have an opportunity to interview for positions with Cabrera Services. An additional 13 employees were involuntarily separated, for a total of 27.

Al Konetzni, president of both the incumbent WVNSCO

and the new contractor WVES, said, "As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we take seriously our responsibility to manage the work at West Valley using sound fiscal principles."

WVNSCO has been managing and operating contractor at the WVDP since 1981.

In the 1980s and 1990s, WVNSCO employees designed, constructed and operated a number of remote radioactive waste processing facilities.

In 2002, WVNSCO completed processing the nearly 600,000 gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste, immobilizing it into solid glass. Since then, the project has gone through a series of work force adjustments to respond to project changes.

The WVDP is a U.S. Department of Energy radioactive cleanup and nuclear

waste management project located about 35 miles south of Buffalo. It was the site of the country's first — and only — commercial spent nuclear fuel recycling facility and operated from 1966 to 1972.

The project is conducted in cooperation with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. WVNSCO will continue to manage and operate the WVDP through Friday. WVES will assume management of the WVDP effective Saturday.

The WVES team is comprised of Washington Group International, Jacobs Engineering, Environmental Chemical Corporation (ECC), and Parallax.

Both WVNSCO and WVES are part of Washington Group International.

WVNS plume may be dangerous to future generations

Editor:

A recent article (8/16/07) stated that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission did an independent review of the radioactive plume on the West Valley nuclear site and determined it is not a threat to the health and safety of the workforce or the general public. At this moment, that statement might be true, but is very misleading.

According to the article, the dose of the strontium was calculated at the boundary. The lowest dose rate would be at the farthest edge,

the point of least concentration. There are 2.1 million cubic feet of cesium/strontium contaminated soil in the plume. .

As many as 61,000 cubic meters of soil would have to be removed if the area of the plume were to meet a 25 mrem/year dose rate, the high-end amount allowable to release the site for unrestricted use by the public.

The plume's threat may not be to those of us living today but radioactive contamination of the ground and groundwater is certainly a

threat to those who follow. If the plume is not dug up, monitoring will be required for at least 300 years, or 15 generations, during which time multiple repairs to any construction designed to curtail migration of the radioactivity will be necessary. "Institutional controls" are predicted to disappear after a few hundred years and erosion will take place on the site, exposing or releasing the radioactivity into the environment. Leaving this waste in place is risky.

Radioactivity from the plume is leaking, albeit in small amounts, into Frank's Creek. We do not know how climate changes, erosion or activities on the site will impact the migration of radioactivity in the future.

The plume might not be a threat now as long as the site is restricted and guarded. That is not the same thing as being "safe" or "no threat to health and safety."

Joanne Hameister
Coalition on West Valley
Nuclear Wastes
Judy Einach
Coalition on West Valley
Nuclear Wastes
Lee Lambert
Buffalo Niagara
League of Women Voters

West Valley Citizens Task Force speaks out in response

Editor:

This letter is sent by the West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) in response to the article that appeared in the August 16 edition of the *Springville Journal* entitled "Radioactive Plume at WVDP not a Health or Safety Threat." The article lacked balance and only included one side of this controversial subject. *Journal* staff only

interviewed the Department of Energy (DOE) and their contractor. No attempt was made to contact either State or CTF representatives, otherwise a very different viewpoint about the concerns and safety of the constantly spreading radioactive North Plateau groundwater plume would have been revealed to your readers.

We invite the *Journal* staff and

interested members of the public to attend our monthly meetings, and encourage *Journal* staff to consult with a number of sources—including the Citizens Task Force—when reporting about the West Valley Demonstration Project.

On Behalf of the CTF,
Dr. Tim Siepel
Mr. Eric Wohlers
West Valley Citizens Task Force

WVNSCO reveals more employee cuts

By LAURA MAGEE
Journal Editor

Additional work force reductions at the West Valley Demonstration Project were announced by West Valley Nuclear Services Company on Friday, August 24.

The company involuntarily separated 27 employees as it prepares to complete its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy. This comes after 21 employees chose to leave earlier in the month through a self-select program.

WVDP, which with the reductions has 255 employees left, now has the fewest number of employees in recent years, according to WVNSCO Senior Communications Administrator Sonja Allen. She added that the size of the workload has been steadily reducing since the completion of vitrification at the site.

Thirteen of the 27 employees were notified of their status on Friday, and told it would be their last day, although they were given 30 days of pay in lieu of notice.

The separations were conducted as part of the contract transition to West Valley Environmental Services (WVES), the incoming management and operating contractor. WVES will assume management and operations of WVDP on September 1.

The employees affected by the involuntary staff reductions, which Allen said were not specific to any department, will receive 30 days pay in addition to full separation benefits, including severance pay based on years of service, extended health care coverage, retraining support and outplacement services. The employees who chose to leave through the self select program were given the same benefits, minus the 30 days pay.

According to a WVNSCO press release, matching work force size and employee skill sets to the tasks ahead has been a key consideration during the transition from WVNSCO to WVES. Because the WVES contract identifies a smaller work force, WVNSCO took proactive actions to minimize the impact of the necessary work force reduc-

tions by offering the self-select program, the release continued. Those employees who participated in the self select program reduced the number of involuntary separations needed.

"As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we take seriously our responsibility to manage the work at West Valley using sound fiscal principles," said Al Konetzni, president of both the incumbent WVNSCO and the new contractor, WVES, in the press release. "At the same time, we are sensitive to the needs of our employees. Knowing we had to reduce the work force, it was important to us to minimize the impact of an involuntary program, so we offered the self-select program first. We have made every effort to balance the work force needs of the project with the needs of employees during this transition."

Allen also explained that as a continuation of the strategy to mitigate the impact of the work force reduction, WVNSCO decided to outsource the function of the radiation protection and safety technicians. This action affects 14 employees, who will have an opportunity to interview for positions with Cabrera Services, a business that specializes in providing full-service radiological assessment and remediation services.

The last day of work for employees participating in the self select program and those retiring will be Thursday, August 30.

Allen added that the company has been downsizing for a number of years through attrition, meaning it has not been replacing employees who resign or retire, therefore reducing its personnel. With the scope of the new contract, Allen said she does not know if any decisions have been made to hire new employees to fill changing positions.

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Press Release

Source: Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.

Jacobs Receives Contract to Support the Department of Energy

Tuesday August 28, 7:45 am ET

PASADENA, Calif., Aug. 28 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Jacobs Engineering Group Inc. (NYSE: [JEC](#) - [News](#)) announced today that it is part of a team receiving a Department of Energy (DOE) contract for waste disposition, facility decommissioning and demolition, and other landlord activities for the West Valley site in western New York.

The contract is anticipated to run through mid-2011 and site annual funding is projected to be approximately \$75 million.

The team is led by the Washington Group, the incumbent contractor at West Valley for several years. Jacobs' effort will focus on regulatory compliance and site infrastructure.

In making the announcement, Jacobs President and CEO Craig Martin stated, "This award furthers our 20-year relationship with the DOE as a pre-eminent provider of site management and closure services. We are delighted to be on the Washington Group team and look forward to another successful project."

Jacobs, with over 48,000 employees and revenues exceeding \$8.0 billion, provides technical, professional, and construction services globally.

Any statements made in this release that are not based on historical fact are forward-looking statements. Although such statements are based on management's current estimates and expectations, and currently available competitive, financial, and economic data, forward-looking statements are inherently uncertain. We, therefore, caution the reader that there are a variety of factors that could cause business conditions and results to differ materially from what is contained in our forward-looking statements. For a description of some of the factors which may occur that could cause actual results to differ from our forward-looking statements please refer to our 2006 Form 10-K, and in particular the discussions contained under Items 1 - Business, 1A - Risk Factors, 3 - Legal Proceedings, and 7 - Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations. We also caution the readers of this release that we do not undertake to update any forward-looking statements made herein.

For additional information contact:

Mary Bloom
626.578.6992

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20051021/LAJACOBSEGLGO>)



AT WEST VALLEY RAD TECH SERVICES TO BE OUTSOURCED

Radiation and safety technician services at the West Valley Demonstration Project are set to be outsourced to Cabrera Services as part of the transition to a new cleanup contractor at the site, a spokeswoman for incumbent cleanup contractor West Valley Nuclear Services Company said last week. WVNSCO spokeswoman Sonja Allen said site employees were notified last week about the outsourcing plans, which are part of efforts to reduce the site’s workforce of approximately 300 employees by 49 prior to new cleanup contractor West Valley Environmental Services taking over at the site beginning Sept. 1 (*WC Monitor*, Vol. 18 No. 33). Those employees affected by the outsourcing will receive severance pay and other benefits and will also be given an opportunity to interview with Cabrera, according to Allen. “We did have to do a reduction, we did have to get to some reduced number of employees, and what we’re hoping is that that minimizes the impact and gives these people, who have a very specialized skill, an opportunity to interview with a company that specializes in their skills,” she said, adding that those affected could eventually return to West Valley as Cabrera employees.

Meanwhile, 21 WVNSCO employees have taken part in a voluntary separation program offered by the company last month. Those employees who took part in the program are set to receive severance pay, extended healthcare coverage and other benefits. WVNSCO is still considering further workforce restructuring efforts to reduce its staff by a total of 49, including involuntary layoffs, according to Allen. “That’s still definitely under consideration,” she said.■



Saturday, August 25, 2007 - 12:00 AM

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Hanford eyed for additional nuclear storage

By Scott Learn

Newhouse News Service

The Hanford nuclear reservation is on the federal government's short list of sites for storing radioactive waste that could include contaminated metal from more than 100 U.S. nuclear plants.

The waste, classified as low-level, also includes radioactive detritus from medical procedures and research projects. But by far the most radioactive components would be waste from decommissioned nuclear plants and from the West Valley Demonstration Project near Buffalo, N.Y., where the government is cleaning up a former nuclear fuel-reprocessing center.

The amount of radiation in the inventory of current and projected waste is 140 million curies, equal to the contamination estimated from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown, or about three-quarters of the radiation already contained in 177 leak-prone tanks at Hanford.

Regulators and environmental groups are sounding alarms in advance of a public meeting on the proposal Monday in Troutdale, Ore.

Ken Niles, assistant director of the Oregon Department of Energy, calls Hanford's inclusion "ludicrous" given widespread contamination at Hanford, its proximity to the Columbia River and a cleanup at the former plutonium production site that is expected to cost \$50 billion or more.

Under orders from Congress, the U.S. Department of Energy is trying to find a place for a projected 200,000 cubic feet of waste to fill a hole in the nation's controversy-ridden disposal system.

The waste is the most radioactive in the low-level category. Federal officials concede that some of it is as radioactive as high-level waste, which includes spent nuclear fuel. The inventory also contains "transuranic waste," often contaminated with plutonium and likely to remain radioactive for thousands of years.

Seven other sites are in the running, including the Yucca Mountain Repository in Nevada, not yet open, and the Idaho National Lab, a research site undergoing its own cleanup.

Christine Gelles, the DOE's leader on the project, said the waste could be split among several sites. The department is gathering information for an environmental-impact statement and is not leaning toward one site or another, she said. Public comments are due by Sept. 21. Congress will have to approve a final plan.

The federal government created Hanford in the 1940s as part of the top-secret Manhattan Project to build the first atomic bomb. The reservation ultimately housed nine reactors to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons.

Hanford and five other sites are candidates for burying the waste in trenches, vaults or boreholes, according to the DOE proposal. Two sites, including Yucca Mountain, are candidates for deep burial.

Oregon Energy Department officials say shipping to Hanford would be a big mistake. In 2005, the agency urged the feds not to consider near-surface burial or disposing waste at sites undergoing cleanup.

"Both of those recommendations were ignored," Niles said. The federal government isn't safely managing the waste already on the site, Niles said in an e-mail alert this week.

New waste coming into Hanford, including reactor compartments from nuclear submarines, is a relative trickle now, he said. "Adding more waste — especially waste that is highly radioactive and long-lived — is contradictory to the cleanup effort that we all support."

Washington's Department of Ecology, which successfully fought to prevent the import of another category of low-level waste three years ago, is studying the latest proposal, spokeswoman Sharon Braswell said. But the state is "concerned about any activity that would distract from or delay the cleanup at Hanford."

Watchdog groups, including Heart of America Northwest and Columbia Riverkeeper, issued warnings about the plan.

Greg deBruler, Riverkeeper's Hanford technical consultant, called the proposal "the most ill-conceived I have seen in 20 years working on Hanford cleanup issues."

Gerry Pollet, executive director of Heart of America Northwest, said it appears the government is targeting Hanford or the Nevada Test Site north of Las Vegas for the disposal, given obstacles at other sites on DOE's list.

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WEST VALLEY

27 workers lose jobs as N-cleanup winds down

Updated: 08/25/07 6:25 AM

West Valley Nuclear Services Co. announced it dismissed 27 employees Friday as it winds up its contract with the Energy Department and transitions to new management.

The workers will receive 30 days' pay, as well as full separation benefits that include severance pay based on years of service, extended health care coverage, retraining support and outplacement services.

Fourteen of the dismissed workers will have a chance to interview for positions with another businesses that specialize in providing full-service radiological assessment and remediation services.

Matching work force size and employee skill has been a key consideration during the transition from West Valley Nuclear Services Co. to West Valley Environmental Services, which will assume management and operations next Saturday.

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