



# Focus on: Our Top Priorities at Hanford

## from Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program

*Public meetings offer you a great opportunity to learn about Hanford issues and speak with the people in charge of Hanford's cleanup. Your views and concerns are important to us.*

*Please contact us if you would like more information.*

**Jane Hedges**, Nuclear Waste Program Manager

### **Tri-Party Agreement Milestones**

Contact: Laura Cusack

The Tri-Party Agreement is the legally binding document agreed to by USDOE, US EPA, and the State of Washington. Reestablishing the TPA as a driver for Hanford cleanup is vital to ensuring a cleanup that is protective of both human health and the environment. We are concerned about the number of Tri-Party Agreement milestones that USDOE is out of compliance with. We are now preparing to negotiate new commitments with USDOE for waste treatment and immobilization. We're also concerned about USDOE missing milestones that ensure transuranic wastes are retrieved and treated to meet the acceptable standards for offsite disposal.

### **Waste Treatment Plant** Contact: Laura Cusack

Schedules are slipping and costs are climbing, but the need for the vitrification plant is greater than ever. We have started negotiations with U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) to try to create a new enforceable plan without going to court. Our highest priority is to have a credible path forward that is widely supported and to build the facilities to safely immobilize the tank wastes.

### **Bulk Vitrification / Supplemental Treatment** Contact: Laura Cusack

We have not made a decision on whether bulk vitrification can meet the supplemental treatment needs at Hanford. USDOE has much work to do to determine if bulk vitrification can immobilize the waste safely. We don't expect answers before 2011, which is a long time to wait for a decision that was due last June. Supplemental treatment is vital to allow the waste treatment plant to work at its full capacity. If we find out in 2011 that this technology didn't succeed, we will be building a second Low Activity Waste (LAW) melter facility.

### **Retrieving Wastes from Single-Shell tanks** Contact: Jeff Lyon

Nearly 30 million gallons of waste sit in 142 single-shell tanks built more than 40 years ago. Many of these tanks have leaked to the environment. The released waste has reached the groundwater which is moving towards the Columbia River. We have a milestone to "close" the single-shell tank farms by 2024. To do this, USDOE must first empty those tanks and transfer the wastes to the safer double-shell tanks. USDOE has retrieved the waste from 7 of the old tanks so far. While the work is slow and difficult, USDOE is getting it done safely. We want USDOE to increase momentum and get the wastes out of the old, leaking tanks.

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509-372-7950

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp)

**Hanford Cleanup Line**  
1-800-321-2008

**Closure of the Single-Shell Tank Farms**    *Contact:* Jeff Lyon

As we progress with Tank retrievals our final goal is to close the Tank Farms. Many questions need answers and many actions need to be planned. The soil and equipment in the tank farms are contaminated. Because of contaminated soil sites and past leaks, we see impacts to the groundwater. There is potential for further groundwater contamination from these sources in the near future. Further characterization and remediation of all of the Tank Farm contamination sources needs to be completed and new technology needs to be developed. Prioritizing work and making remedial decisions in these tank farms will be difficult because of the delays in retrievals. Further delays in our decisions may result in missed opportunities to protect the environment. It is critical to make progress in our decision making and cleanup activities in the Tank Farms. We are working on Tank Farm permits and the Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement to help us understand how decisions will be made and help us make better decisions.

**Cleanup of Contaminated Soil Sites and Burial Grounds**    *Contact:* John Price or Ron Skinnarland

Ecology expects continued progress on the active cleanup of contaminated soil sites and burial grounds along the Columbia River in the 100 and 300 Areas. Ecology also wants USDOE to begin active cleanup of the burial grounds and waste discharge sites in the 200 Area, so that risk in this part of Hanford is also reduced.

**Groundwater**    *Contact:* Dib Goswami

Groundwater remains a key priority. Ecology works with USDOE and stakeholders to find and use new and innovative technologies. We continue to monitor for contamination in Hanford's groundwater and increase the monitoring system, itself. This year, we moved forward to test a technology new to the Site called apatite sequestration. It uses apatite, a mineral that binds chemically with strontium, to form an underground barrier. The barrier captures strontium and blocks it from getting to the river. We are eagerly awaiting results to see whether the apatite injection is working.

**Hanford Funding**    *Contact:* Nolan Curtis

Hanford has a large budget and it buys a lot of work, but not enough. Ecology sees FY 2009 funding as continuing a downward trend we noted when we reviewed the last two budget submissions. Despite steady funding for construction, the USDOE's Office of River Protection announced an eight-year delay for the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant and parallel reductions in tank waste retrieval activities. The Richland Operations Office target of \$935 million for FY 2009 is 60% of the \$1.5 billion needed to comply with the Tri-Party Agreement. These cuts and technical problems slow down cleanup efforts and place several milestones in jeopardy.

Hanford must have adequate and sustained funding to meet all of its cleanup obligations and compliance agreements. The current flat-rate of funding for Hanford is not adequate to meet our long-term cleanup obligations.