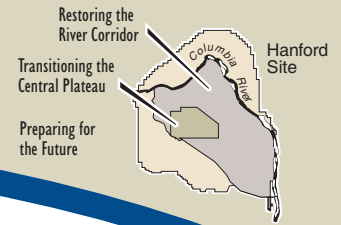




U.S. Department of Energy  
 Richland Operations Office  
 and Office of River Protection

# Hanford Site



## Strategic Initiative 5:

# Accelerate Central Plateau Cleanup

The Central Plateau consists of approximately 75 square miles near the middle of the Hanford Site. It contains approximately 900 excess facilities formerly used in the plutonium production process, including five massive chemical processing facilities, or "canyons," as well as roughly 800 individual non-tankfarm waste sites, including both buried solid waste and contaminated soil. It is also home to ongoing waste management operations (including the low-level waste burial grounds, liquid waste facilities, the Waste Receiving and Processing Facility, high-level waste tanks, and, eventually, the Waste Treatment Plant) and infrastructure services (such as power, water, and telecommunication lines), whose continued use or start up are needed to support the cleanup mission. This collection of facilities, waste sites, canyons, and ongoing waste management operations is spread across the Plateau.



*200 East and 200 West Areas of the Central Plateau*



Statement Record of Decision, and the Hanford Advisory Board Exposure Scenarios Task Force.

This initiative is aimed at accelerating cleanup by grouping the work in order to make best use of resources, increase efficiency, and in some cases, get to higher-priority work sooner. To begin, in 2003 we will develop an initial plan to optimize the sequencing of waste site and facility cleanup, infrastructure alignment, and tank farm closures. We will prioritize activities to focus first on those areas that pose the highest potential threat to human health or the

environment (including the groundwater) and will look for opportunities to increase our efficiency through logically grouping cleanup sites. We will refine this plan as new data becomes available, and in the 2008 timeframe, will issue a comprehensive plan to ensure that TRU waste retrieval, waste management operations, tank farm waste retrieval and closures, vadose zone and groundwater remedies, and infrastructure needs are fully integrated with the remediation of waste sites and the disposition of facilities.

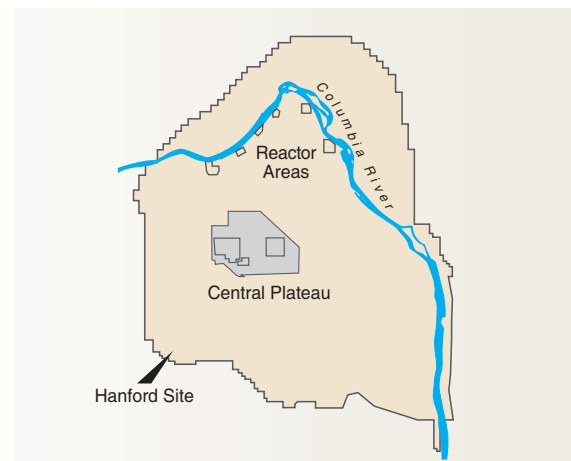


*Exterior view of U Plant, one of five massive fuel separation facilities, also known as canyons, on the Hanford Site.*

To successfully complete the Hanford cleanup, we must reduce the environmental risks posed by the Central Plateau's large and diverse facilities, disposition them as soon as possible, and clean up the surrounding waste sites. This work must

be integrated as part of an overarching strategy that protects the groundwater beneath the Hanford Site and eventually makes the Plateau's core zone available for industrial use -- the consensus end-state "vision" articulated by the Hanford Site Future Uses Working Group, the Hanford Comprehensive Land Use Plan Environmental Impact

## HIGHLIGHTS





*Interior view of the operating deck of U Plant. The feasibility study evaluates the potential for using the canyon buildings as disposal sites for Hanford Site remediation waste.*

We will also demonstrate an innovative approach to dealing with Hanford's canyon facilities by beginning the "U Plant Regional Closure" project in 2003. It will integrate disposition of the canyon itself with cleanup of its ancillary facilities and nearby waste sites, some of which have high uranium/technetium inventories and are potential contributors to groundwater contamination.

Using U Plant as a pilot, we will demonstrate the benefits of using the five canyons' robust lower-level structures (with walls up to 9 feet (2.7 meters) thick) to dispose of appropriate debris and wastes from nearby facilities and waste sites, rather than completely demolishing them and disposing of the resulting waste in the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. Once filled with waste and stabilized, the outer walls of the canyon facilities would be partially collapsed to reduce the elevation profile, and

the structure would be covered with a protective environmental cap. We will maintain the accepted standards for protecting human health and the environment (including long-term groundwater protection) by identifying and bounding the types of wastes that can be disposed of in this manner.

This initial work will give us experience in defining and implementing a disposition strategy for a significant contiguous block of the Central Plateau, and what we learn will guide our planning for subsequent, more difficult remediation of facilities and land areas on the Plateau. In particular, it will improve our approach to work at the remaining four canyons, where the contamination levels are significantly higher. We will provide a plan for their disposition, including scope, schedule, budget and recommendations on potential waste disposition opportunities, by September 2003.

Not every Central Plateau facility or waste site will be part of this grouping approach. We will include disposition of the remaining facilities (including Arid Lands Ecology Reserve facilities and Plutonium Finishing Plant's below-grade footprint) and waste sites in our 2003 sequencing plan and prioritize them to focus on reducing the source-term and minimizing the threat to human health and the environment, especially groundwater. In 2003, as part of Hanford's fiscal year 2005 budget request, we will expand this initiative to accelerate the completion of these remaining facilities and waste sites.

Optimizing facility disposition and waste site remediation on the Central Plateau has clear benefits, including more efficient cleanup and closure operations, the ability to optimize infrastructure and resources (including highly skilled labor and raw materials), and an opportunity to prioritize facilities and waste sites having the highest risk to public health and the environment (including groundwater) to provide greater risk reduction earlier.