

DOE NEWS

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Colleen French, Richland, (509) 373-5985
Erik Olds, ORP, (509) 372-8656

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HANFORD CLEANUP MANAGERS TO RETIRE

The two top federal managers at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State have announced they will retire from government service. Keith A. Klein, manager of DOE's Richland Operations Office, intends to retire in May after eight years as manager. Roy Schepens, manager of DOE's Office of River Protection since 2002, will retire on February 28, 2007.

Keith Klein's government service began with an Atomic Energy Commission internship and spans 34 years. Prior to being asked to oversee cleanup at the 586-square-mile Hanford Site in 1999, Mr. Klein served as acting manager of DOE's Carlsbad Office, where he overcame the final hurdles to open the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant for disposal of the nation's transuranic waste in 1999, and from 1994-1999 served as deputy manager of the Rocky Flats Field Office, where he was instrumental in implementing plans to dramatically accelerate that site's cleanup and closure. In his prior positions at DOE Headquarters in Washington, D.C., Mr. Klein made significant contributions to advanced reactor programs and a full suite of fuel cycle initiatives – including fuel reprocessing, breeder reactor fuels, new production reactor safety, “at-reactor” spent fuel storage, and deep geologic disposal.

Under his leadership, two of the site's most urgent risks have been tackled and eliminated. Hanford's 2,100 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel – 80% of DOE's inventory -- was safely packaged and moved out of water-filled basins along the Columbia River into secure, dry storage in 2004. And 12 tons of plutonium-bearing materials are now safely stabilized and packaged for ultimate shipment off the Hanford Site. In recognition of his leadership and accomplishments, in 2001 President Bush conferred upon Mr. Klein the Presidential Rank Award – the nation's highest award for a civil servant.

The Department will initiate a nationwide search for a Richland Operations Office Manager to meet Hanford's unique challenges. In an effort to assist with that search, Mr. Klein will continue to serve as site manager until the end of May.

"Keith has served as a true and trusted leader of the Department's environmental cleanup and has demonstrated unsurpassed commitment and success," said James Rispoli, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management. "Keith's strong management, visionary thinking, and ability to get things done have been invaluable to me and to DOE's senior leadership over the years. The many accomplishments at Hanford are a testament to his talent and perseverance."

"These years at Hanford have been the toughest and most rewarding of my life," Klein said. "I was honored to be asked to stay on longer than I had intended, and I will leave DOE filled with pride at all we've accomplished together. Running this place is an awesome responsibility; an awesome trust. But I have accomplished what I intended and it's time to move on, grateful to have had the opportunity to make a difference."

Since 2002, Mr. Schepens has led the Office of River Protection, which is responsible for the cleanup, treatment, and disposal of 53 million gallons of highly radioactive waste and chemicals contained in 177 underground storage tanks. He has overseen the startup of the massive construction effort of the Waste Treatment Plant, the safe management of the tank farm system, and retrieval of waste from a number of single shell tanks. In addition to his work at the Office of River Protection, some of his most significant accomplishments include the closure of two 1.3 million gallon high-level waste tanks – the first closures in the DOE complex - and the startup and operation of the Defense Waste Processing Facility at the Savannah River Site. Prior to his time at Hanford, Mr. Schepens held various positions across the country in nuclear operations including Resident Inspector with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Project Manager for the commercial nuclear industry with General Electric Company.

DOE currently is evaluating candidates for Mr. Schepens position and plans to announce a new manager in the coming months. ORP Deputy Manager Shirley Olinger will assume the position of Acting ORP Manager in March.

"Roy has served as a dedicated manager of the Office of River Protection and he has played a leading role in innovating and advancing the massive construction effort of the Waste Treatment Plant, the safe management of the tank farm system, and retrieval of waste from a number of single shell tanks," Rispoli said. "Under his leadership we have finished independent analyses of the technical design and cost and schedule for the Waste Treatment Plant project, and we now move forward with a validated baseline in a strong position to take great strides in this first-of-its-kind project."

"These past five years have been an incredible journey and I'm extremely proud to have had the opportunity to be the manager and to have served with the dedicated and capable team at ORP. As I prepare to retire from federal service, I have great confidence that this team and ORP will continue to make great strides in tank waste cleanup at Hanford," Schepens said.