Release date: January 15, 2002
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Hanford Completes Key RCRA Cleanup

The Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) is maintaining the momentum of cleanup of the Columbia River Corridor with the partial closure Dec. 3 of the Hanford Waste Acid Treatment System.

The closure, achieved by a joint team from DOE-RL, Fluor Hanford, Bechtel Hanford, Waste Management Northwest, and Dyncorp, caps a multi-year effort to complete this portion of the River Corridor project. The cleanup was completed on schedule.

"Partial closure clearly shows that all the time and effort we've put into protecting the river corridor is paying off, " said Keith Klein, Richland Operations Office Manager. "Because of the ingenuity and initiative demonstrated on this project, we even accomplished more cleanup than the plan required."

The closed facility neutralized and stored acid contaminated by radiation during N Reactor fuel fabrication. It consisted of six buildings and two tank farms located at the 300 Area. Thousands of feet of pipe affixed in concrete trenches once channeled waste between the buildings during treatment.

Using Ecology-defined standards and closure plan, workers safely cleaned or removed 16 holding tanks, and removed 15,400 pounds of pumps, piping and other equipment along with any residue or contaminants found. They used power tools to chip away more than 2,000 square feet of contaminated building and floor surfaces. Workers also removed 65,000 pounds of construction rubble and 111,000 pounds of assorted debris that was disposed of in the Hanford Site's low-level burial grounds.

Worker ingenuity prevailed in many areas of the project. In one instance, a special tool was created to drain acid from pipes because a commercial tool didn't exist. This tool was used in conjunction with safety precautions throughout the project without a single leak occurring. In another, excess High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters and 30?gallon drums were connected to a HEPA-filtered vacuum to create a two-stage filtration system that eliminated the need to handle waste twice. Waste

trapped in the drum was simply sealed for protection and processed as packaged waste.

Research of the facility's historical documents also helped the project finish ahead of schedule and under budget when it was found that at one point in the production era facility workers sandblasted a concrete area and applied protective sealer. With Department of Ecology concurrence, thorough scrubbing of the surface precluded hours of labor-intensive surface removal.

The company awarded the River Corridor contract in July 2002, will complete the cleanup by removing the buildings and treating contaminated soil. Once this is done, the project will be fully closed.

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RL 02-015

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