

First Phase of Hanford Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility nears Completion Ahead of Schedule and Under Budget

Initial excavation is nearing completion on the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility (ERDF), a cornerstone of the Hanford cleanup.

"The ERDF project is a shining example of the faster, smarter and more cost efficient work taking place today at Hanford," said Linda McClain, Department of Energy's (DOE) Assistant Manager for Environmental Restoration. "Few environmental restoration projects provide as dramatic an example of the actual cleanup work taking place."

Development of the ERDF project has been on a fast track since it was approved as the selected remedy for a centralized environmental restoration facility at Hanford by the parties to the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement. The Tri-Party Agreement agencies, which include the Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Washington State Department of Ecology, reached a Record of Decision on January 20, 1995 that cleared the way for the ERDF construction.

Construction work at ERDF is being managed for DOE by the Bechtel Hanford, Inc.-led Environmental Restoration Contract (ERC) team.

Right now, the ERDF project is one gigantic hole that is 80-feet deep and measures 750-feet by 1,000-feet at the bottom. To put it in perspective, approximately 10 buildings the size of the Tri-Cities Coliseum could be placed in this initial phase of the ERDF.

The ERDF has been redesigned from original plans to become more like a commercial landfill operation. By redesigning ERDF, DOE and ERC team personnel saved \$80 million and shaved nearly four years of work off the original ERDF plans.

"We've worked closely with our Tri-Party Agreement counterparts to expedite this project to meet the Hanford cleanup schedule," McClain said. "Given the commercial operation knowledge brought by Bechtel, we've been able to show significant cost savings in the construction of the ERDF."

The facility is a long, deep trench that will be the central landfill for large quantities of materials generated during Hanford environmental restoration work. Upwards of 12 million cubic yards of contaminated materials may be stored at the facility. Both "hazardous" (chemicals) and "mixed" (combined hazardous chemicals and low-level radioactive substances) will be permanently stored.

The ERDF requires only 1.6 square miles of land, but will be able to safely hold upwards of 12 million cubic yards of material; it would take nearly six Kingdoms to hold a similar amount. The building site, located on the southeast corner of Hanford's 200 West Area, was selected because of a combination of factors including its distance from the Columbia River, its elevation above ground water, and its centralized access to transportation and utilities systems.

Although the ERDF will require less than two square miles of land, construction of the facility will be based on a series of cells. Each cell is approximately 500 feet wide by 500 feet long and 70 feet deep. A cell will hold approximately 600,000 cubic yards of materials. To provide maximum protection to human health and the environment, each cell is double-lined and built with a leachate to collect and remove moisture.

According to the terms of the record of decision, only two cells will initially be built. If additional cells are required, authorization must be received from regulatory agencies, which would require a full public participation process. The facility can be expanded up to 20 cells.

"The design of the ERDF will allow us to minimize land usage on the Hanford Central Plateau," McClain said. "Under terms of the Tri-Party Agreement, it will never be larger than what it has to be to accept Hanford remediated materials."

The ERDF will be built according to regulations contained in the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), and to standards of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

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For more information contact:

Guy Schein, Department of Energy, Office of External Affairs, (509) 373-0413 Rick Dale, Bechtel Hanford Inc., (509) 372-9097

RL-95-088