

DOE NEWS

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FIRST PHASE OF 300 AREA CLEANUP NEARING COMPLETION

The U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office (RL) and contractor Bechtel Hanford, Inc. are nearly finished with the first phase of the 300 Area cleanup effort.

“The cleanup work included a variety of challenges, all of which were successfully overcome. DOE and EPA worked together well and really focused on cleaning up this stretch of the Hanford Site and returning it to a condition where it can be used to benefit the community,” said Beth Bilson, DOE Assistant Manager for the River Corridor.

In July, a 117-acre parcel along the Columbia River will be “ready for industrial reuse,” following the completion of administrative closeout procedures. This last stage of work, which is evidenced by numerous trucks crossing Stevens Boulevard across from the 300 Area, involves the importation of backfill from a borrow area on the other side of the highway.

About 288,000 cubic yards of loose dirt is required to backfill the waste sites. The trucks will make about 200 trips a day from the borrow site to the former waste sites. Each truck carries a container with a 20-cubic-yard capacity, or about twice what a normal sized dump truck can carry. Workers will regrade the area so it is relatively flat and suitable for future industrial development. “The Hanford Communities appreciate the decision of the Department of Energy to regrade this area,” said Pam Brown, Executive Director of Hanford Communities. “It will significantly enhance future opportunities for reuse.” As other industrial companies show interest in developing the land, DOE and the city will work together on a path forward.

“EPA is pleased that the first phase of cleanup activity is nearing completion in the 300 Area,” said Nick Ceto, EPA’s Hanford Program Manager. “We believe that a significant amount of material that posed an ongoing threat to groundwater quality as well as a future threat to site users has been removed and the area is now on track to be reindustrialized. This is the way the cleanup process is supposed to work.”

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FIRST PHASE OF 300 AREA

-2-

Prior to backfilling the area, workers excavated several process ponds, waste sites, landfills, process trenches and sanitary sewer trenches. The work involved removing contaminated soil, waste materials and other debris, repackaging some of it, treating some of it and transporting all of it to the middle of the Hanford Site for permanent disposal at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility (ERDF).

One of the major challenges during cleanup in this area was the unexpected find of 786 drums containing depleted uranium in the 618-4 burial ground. Excavating, treating and disposing of the drums was a challenge because depleted uranium has the potential to spontaneously ignite, if it isn't handled properly. The drums are being safely treated and will be disposed at ERDF.

The 300 Area is located next to the Columbia River about a mile north of the city of Richland. For the past seven years, cleanup has focused on the remediation of liquid discharge and solid waste disposal sites north of the 300 Area as well as in several facilities in the 300 Area complex. The sites that have been cleaned up were the result of 51 years of untreated liquid waste discharge and 27 years of solid waste disposal north of the 300 Area. The cleanup efforts have resulted in the removal of more than a half million tons of contaminated soil and debris.

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