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DOE to Compete Contracts at New "Idaho National Laboratory"

Focus On New Lab Mission & Accelerating Environmental Cleanup

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham announced today that the Department of Energy will compete and award separate contracts to implement the Department's plan to revitalize the nuclear energy mission at its Idaho laboratory complex and to accelerate the environmental cleanup of the site.

The laboratory, which will be renamed the Idaho National Laboratory, will specialize in developing advanced nuclear energy technologies and other ways of responding to the Nation's future energy and national security requirements. The Department's Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology will manage the lab.

"Our goal, within this decade, is to have this lab emerge as one of the premier applied research and nuclear engineering institutions in the world, without losing focus on the cleanup work that needs to be completed," said Energy Secretary Abraham. "By separately contracting for cleanup under a new contractual framework, the lab can develop and mature without distraction from other, equally vital, priorities."

Last year, Secretary Abraham announced plans to return the Idaho complex to its historic mission of nuclear technology development in order to support the Nation's expanding nuclear energy initiatives. Since then, the Department has been engaged in comprehensive planning for the site's future. These plans place Idaho at the center of the Department's efforts to develop advanced Generation IV nuclear energy systems, nuclear hydrogen production technology, advanced fuel cycle technologies, as well as to assist NASA in the development and testing of space power systems.

The detailed scope of the laboratory contract is in development. As currently envisioned, the laboratory will be composed of the current Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and Argonne National Laboratory-West, and its work will include:

- Assembling the capabilities to deliver the research and advance the design for a prototype Generation IV nuclear energy system,
- Establishing a strong science and technology leadership team that will partner with the Department to pursue its nuclear technology and security vision for the laboratory,
- Integrating Idaho's current nuclear energy capabilities under a single, future-focused, management structure.

The successful bidder is expected to manage the laboratory's research and development programs,

operate its nuclear facilities and general infrastructure, and provide services and required support to other users of the site.

The environmental cleanup scope, under the direction of the Department's Office of Environmental Management, presently is expected to include the remediation of legacy wastes and disposition of surplus facilities at the site. Work is expected to be managed on a project basis, focused on prioritizing risk reduction.

"Accelerating and completing the clean-up work in Idaho is an essential step in building the capability and infrastructure of the lab," Secretary Abraham noted.

One of the Department's key objectives will be to reduce the footprint and legacy cleanup costs at the site to maximize productive use of resources. The new contracts will be carefully coordinated to assure that the environmental work proceeds efficiently and does not interfere with research and development at the site.

The decision to compete new contracts reflects the very different approach to the conduct of work at the Idaho site, including changes in contract scope and structure. All qualified parties, including the incumbent contractors, are encouraged to consider submitting proposals on the new contracts. Competitions are expected to be completed coincident with the expiration of the current INEEL contract in September 2004.

The Department is currently completing its site and acquisition-planning activities, after which it will conduct one or more pre-solicitation conferences to outline its contracting approach and schedule, and solicit the views of interested parties. Among the planning considerations directed by Secretary Abraham, is the identification of opportunities for small businesses to participate in both the clean up work and the long-term operation of the new laboratory.

Once the procurements are initiated, additional information on these procurements and the Department's nuclear energy and environmental management initiatives may be found on the Department's nuclear program web site, www.nuclear.gov and the Environmental Management program home page at www.em.doe.gov.

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