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Washington Closure Hanford
2620 Fermi Avenue
Richland, WA 99354

Media contact:

Todd A. Nelson, (509) 372-9097
media@wch-rcc.com

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River Corridor cleanup drivers reach 15 million miles

RICHLAND, Wash.—The truck drivers working on the River Corridor Closure Project recently logged 15 million miles transporting waste for disposal at Hanford’s Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. That is the equivalent of more than 600 trips around the Earth.

ERDF is the onsite disposal facility for cleanup wastes at the 586-square-mile Hanford Site in south-central Washington state. Most of the 9.3 million tons of contaminated material disposed at ERDF since it opened in 1996 came from waste sites located near the Columbia River.

“Miles driven and tons disposed are important measures of cleanup at Hanford,” said Frank Farmer, Waste Operations Transportation Manager for Washington Closure Hanford. Washington Closure manages ERDF for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Richland Operations Office.

“Every container of waste that comes into this facility gets us one step closer to meeting DOE’s vision of cleaning up Hanford’s River Corridor by 2015. And, every container of waste is a visible example of Hanford cleanup,” Farmer said.

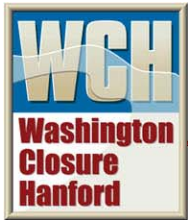
The 210-square-mile River Corridor borders the Columbia River and is where Hanford’s nine plutonium production reactors were located, along with fuel fabrication facilities, research laboratories and hundreds of waste sites.

Most waste disposed of at ERDF is shipped in 25-ton-capacity containers. “A year ago, we disposed of about 150 containers a day. Today, we’re averaging more than 500 containers a day, with the capability to easily handle more than 600 a day,” said Farmer.

“Funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has contributed to much higher volumes of waste being sent to the facility for disposal,” he said. “In addition, ARRA funding was used at ERDF to help upgrade the facility, as well as our equipment, so we could safely handle the increased waste volumes,” said Farmer.

“Our drivers, mechanics and the rest of the team are committed to disposing of Hanford cleanup wastes in the safest manner possible. The drivers have had a perfect record since Washington Closure Hanford took over operations in August 2005 recording over 5 million safe miles traveled,” he said.

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NEWS

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Page 2

ERDF is an engineered landfill built in 1996 to accept Hanford cleanup wastes, primarily from along the Columbia River corridor. However, about one-third of the waste disposed at ERDF today comes from waste sites located in Hanford's central core, most of it the result of work accelerated with ARRA funding. ERDF does not accept waste for disposal from offsite.

The facility was designed to be expanded as needed. It is undergoing its fourth expansion, which also is funded with Recovery Act dollars.

The current expansion will increase the facility size by 50 percent. It is 70 feet deep, and when completed in 2011, the facility will cover the equivalent of 52 football fields and will have a capacity of 16.4 million tons of waste material.

The facility will need to be expanded at least two more times to accommodate all of Hanford's cleanup wastes. It will continue to be available to other Hanford contractors after Washington Closure completes cleanup of the River Corridor by 2015.

Washington Closure Hanford is a limited liability company owned by URS, Bechtel and CH2M Hill. It operates the \$2.4 billion River Corridor Closure Project for DOE and is responsible for cleaning up 370 waste sites, demolishing 486 buildings, placing two reactors and one nuclear facility in interim safe storage, and managing ERDF.

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