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Characterization subcontract awarded to North Wind

RICHLAND, Wash.—Washington Closure Hanford has awarded a subcontract worth up to \$4.4 million to North Wind Inc., a woman-owned small business based in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

North Wind will perform nonintrusive characterization at Hanford's 618-10 Burial Ground. Funds for the work come from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to create jobs and accelerate environmental cleanup at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington.

"This is the most complex burial ground we have tackled to date," said Tom Foster, Field Remediation director for Washington Closure. "Like other burial grounds at Hanford, there's a lot we don't know about it. However, what we do know about the hazards involved with this one is prompting us to proceed very cautiously," Foster said.

North Wind's work is to locate precisely 94 vertical pipe units within the burial ground. The vertical pipe units, or VPUs, are bottomless 55-gallon drums welded together into which Hanford workers dumped highly radioactive waste in the mid-1950s and early 1960s.

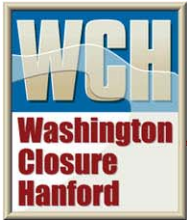
Then, they will install four long steel cylinders, called cone penetrometers, around each of the VPUs and 100 cone penetrometers in a selection of 23 trenches, also located in the burial ground. Instrumentation will be placed in the cone penetrometers to identify the amount and type of radioactive materials, as well as their location within the VPUs and trenches.

"Once we have the North Wind data, we'll use it to help determine if intrusive characterization and sampling is needed, how best to clean up the burial ground and what protective measures to employ during cleanup," said Nelson Little, Washington Closure project manager for the 618-10 Burial Ground characterization work.

"The uncertainties at the site are great enough to require the additional nonintrusive characterization work, which will take about a year to complete," he said.

As for what information is available, Little said it is limited. "We do know the wastes came from research and development activities in Hanford's 300 Area. We expect the burial ground to contain hazardous wastes, as well as radioactive wastes," said Little.

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He added that the available records indicate the buried wastes included radiologically contaminated laboratory instruments, bottles, boxes, filters, aluminum cuttings, irradiated fuel element samples, metallurgical samples, electrical equipment lighting fixtures, barrels, laboratory equipment and hoods and high-dose-rate wastes in shielded drums.

The site is roughly six acres in size and may be covered with about four feet of clean soil. It is located about six miles north of Richland and a few hundred yards from the Hanford Site's main highway. It was operated from March 1954 and accepted waste until its closure in September 1963.

Washington Closure Hanford manages the \$2.2 billion River Corridor Closure Project for DOE. The company is responsible for demolishing 486 buildings, cleaning up 370 contaminated wastes sites and managing the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, an engineered landfill for radioactive and mixed waste generated during Hanford cleanup operations.

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