

Proposed Tri-Party Agreement Changes to Align Cleanup Work with Near-Term Priorities and Delay Some Cleanup Work Based on Currently Anticipated Funding

The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE), Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) agencies - recently completed negotiations and are proposing changes to the TPA. These proposed changes affect several Hanford cleanup projects managed by the USDOE-Richland Operations Office (USDOE-RL). They align cleanup work with near-term priorities and adjust cleanup schedules to better match currently anticipated near-term funding. These adjustments would delay some projects and accelerate others. The agencies want your input on these proposed milestone changes before they are finalized.

U.S. Department of Energy • Washington State Department of Ecology • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Background

The Hanford Site is located in southeastern Washington State along the Columbia River. This 586-square-mile former plutonium production complex is currently engaged in the world's largest environmental cleanup project overseen by the USDOE. The *Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order* (also known as the TPA), a legal agreement between USDOE, Ecology and EPA, identifies cleanup actions and schedules, called milestones. Changes can be made to the TPA with the approval of the three agencies and the TPA outlines the process for changing, removing or adding milestones.

The TPA agencies recently completed negotiations on several Hanford Site cleanup projects that USDOE-RL (Richland) manages. (These changes do not address schedules for retrieval and treatment of tank waste, which are proceeding on a separate pathway and will be resolved by a different process, not through these draft change packages.) Based on these negotiations the agencies signed a tentative agreement proposing to make a number of changes to the TPA that:

- Reflect the shared priorities of the agencies, tribal nations, stakeholders and the public to protect the Columbia River by cleaning up the soils and groundwater along the River Corridor.
- Coincide with the USDOE-RL's vision to reduce the active area of cleanup to the Central Plateau by 2015.
- Adjust cleanup schedules to focus currently anticipated funds on near-term higher priority work and delay milestones for cleanup work identified by the agencies as lower priority at this time.

Why should you care about these proposed changes to the TPA?



Agencies are proposing to delay some cleanup work in the Central Plateau and accelerate cleanup work along the River Corridor.

What do you think?

Public Comment

The Tri-Party Agreement agencies want your feedback on the proposed Tri-Party Agreement changes. The Public comment period will run from **March 9 through April 23, 2009.**



As work is completed, the area remaining to be cleaned up (active cleanup area) is expected to shrink to an area less than 75 square miles – Hanford’s Central Plateau. In addition to the environmental benefits of completing cleanup of the River Corridor, the reduced need for infrastructure (e.g., utilities, roadways, surveillance of buildings and waste sites) is expected to produce cost savings that could be put toward cleanup of the Central Plateau.

In addition to proposing these draft TPA changes, the agencies agreed to continue discussions on other issues. They signed an Agreement in Principle to discuss a strategy for completing cleanup of the Central Plateau. These discussions could result in other proposed changes to the TPA that may require public input at a later time.

What Changes Are Being Proposed

The overall draft TPA change packages propose to:

- Establish new and accelerated groundwater and Columbia River protection milestones.
- Delay some existing milestones to better align with expected 2009 funding limitations.
- Realign and integrate 100 K Area cleanup.
- Retain some Pacific Northwest National Laboratory facilities in the 300 Area that are necessary for continued laboratory operations.
- Designate groundwater and River Corridor soil operable units as Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) past practice units.

The following provides a more detailed discussion of each draft change package.

New and Accelerated Milestones to Continue Groundwater and Columbia River Protection Cleanup

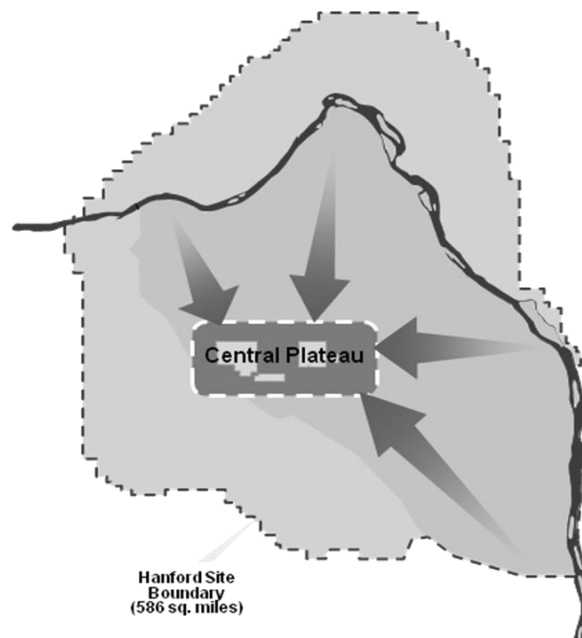


Groundwater well drilling in the River Corridor

Twenty-nine new cleanup interim milestones and target dates are proposed to continue the cleanup of soil and groundwater. They reflect the shared priority among the three agencies to prevent contaminants from reaching the Columbia River, including preventing contaminated groundwater on the Central Plateau from moving toward the river.

This draft change package:

- Requires interim actions that expand and enhance cleanup activities (for example, expand pump-and-treat systems) to contain and clean up groundwater contamination in the River Corridor and Central Plateau (such as hexavalent chromium).
- Establishes dates to complete the cleanup decision-making processes for the River Corridor by December 31, 2012.
- Establishes dates to contain existing groundwater plumes to the Central Plateau.



Hanford Site
Boundary
(586 sq. miles)

The 2015 vision is to clean up River Corridor soil sites to requirements outlined in decision documents and have groundwater systems operational.

Delay Some Existing Milestones to Address 2009 Currently Anticipated Funding Limitations

The agencies are proposing to modify two sets of milestones, which will delay some work and reflect the shifting of resources to higher near-term priority cleanup work in the River Corridor and Central Plateau.

The proposed changes delay some near-term milestones for transuranic waste retrieval, treatment and certification in the Central Plateau. The agencies propose to reduce the amount of waste retrieved and treated for the next 3-5 years. The Parties commit to work to develop new schedules for this work in fall 2009 with USDOE-RL submitting proposed new and/or modified milestones by December 31, 2009.

The proposed changes also delay the submission of several near-term cleanup decision documents. The agencies propose to delete five milestones that identify dates to submit cleanup documents for nine operable units. These changes delay the major milestone currently due December 2011. A new proposed milestone states the agencies would conduct negotiations to develop new proposed milestones by December 31, 2009.

An operable unit is a grouping of waste sites for the purpose of evaluation and cleanup actions. The grouping is based on location, similarity of waste characteristics and/or site type.

Realign and Integrate 100 K Area Cleanup

The proposed milestone changes realign and integrate work to finish cleanup of the 100 K Area. The 100 K Area (about 320 acres) contains the K East and K West Reactors and adjacent fuel storage basins, 79 facilities and 124 soil waste sites that supported reactor operations from the 1950s to the 1970s, as well as K Basin operations through the present.

Some cleanup of the 100 K Area has been delayed due to technical and engineering difficulties in dealing with radioactive sludge in the K Basins and the current milestone to complete sludge treatment by December 2009 will be missed. Over the decades, spent fuel that was stored underwater in the K East and K West Basins corroded. The corrosion elements combined with debris and dirt to form approximately 30 cubic yards of radioactive sludge. The K East Basin sludge was transferred to the K West Basin and the sludge from both basins was placed underwater in engineered containers.



K East Basin substructure demolition

Another significant cleanup issue is the presence of hexavalent chromium in soil and groundwater along the Columbia River, including the 100 K Area, at levels that pose a risk to human health and the environment.

These draft change packages:

- Provide an integrated, comprehensive approach to finish 100 K Area cleanup in three phases.
- Adjust completion of K Area interim actions to reflect delay of the removal of sludge from the K West Basin (proposed date for revised work plans is 2011).
- Change the milestone to complete interim safe storage of K East Reactor from September 30, 2011 to July 31, 2014.

- Establish six new interim milestones, including two that address hexavalent chromium in 100 Area soil and groundwater.
- Create a new major milestone that would:
 - establish dates to complete disposition of the K West Basin sludge;
 - complete removal of the K West Basin;
 - initiate soil cleanup under the K West Basin;

- place the K West Reactor in Interim Safe Storage; and
- complete all cleanup activities identified in the interim decision documents for the 100 K Area.

Retain Some Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) Facilities in the 300 Area

The 300 Area at the Hanford Site was used to fabricate reactor fuel, conduct research and development and provide technical and service support functions. The TPA currently identifies about 220 buildings in the 300 Area as surplus and provides a schedule for deactivating, decontaminating, decommissioning and demolishing these structures by 2015. It also includes dates for completing interim cleanup actions on waste sites in the 300 Area. PNNL still conducts limited research and development work in a few facilities in the 300 Area. The DOE Office of Science has identified the need to retain four major research facilities and utilities in the 300 Area beyond 2015 to support its operations. The draft changes modify existing 300 Area cleanup milestones to reflect the continued use of four PNNL facilities.

The draft changes would:

- Delay cleanup and demolition of the 331 Life Science Laboratory, 318 Dosimeter building, 350 Plant Operations and Maintenance and 325 Radiochemical Processing Laboratory facilities (plus support buildings) until no longer needed (approximately 20 years).
- Delay cleanup of waste sites (i.e., primarily stabilized process sewer lines considered low risk) associated with those buildings and utilities.
- Delay demolition of 324 Chemical and Materials Engineering Laboratory by two years to enable the rerouting of utilities.

Designate Groundwater and River Corridor Soil Operable Units as CERCLA Past-Practice Units

This proposed change would designate all groundwater units as CERCLA past practice units, which is consistent with the decision process used on interim actions. This would also provide an integrated and streamlined framework and methodology to investigate, analyze and decide on River Corridor cleanup actions

How you can become involved

A 45-day public comment period on the *TPA Tentative Agreement on the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order Modifications Regarding Accelerated Groundwater and Soils Milestones/FY2009 Funding/Waste Management/Basins and Other Issue Solutions* will run from **March 9 through April 23, 2009**. The TPA agencies would like your feedback on these tentative change packages and will consider all comments before finalizing them. The agencies are in the process of planning for public meetings. For more information or questions, please contact one of the following agency representatives: Paula Call, DOE-RL, 509-376-2048, Sharon Braswell, Ecology, 509-372-7895 or Dennis Faulk, EPA, 509-376-8631.

Please submit comments by April 23, 2009 to:

Paula Call
 U.S. Department of Energy
 Richland Operations Office
 P.O. Box 550, A7-75
 Richland, WA 99352
 Email: TPACH@rl.gov

The Draft Change Packages can be viewed electronically at <http://www5.hanford.gov/hanford/eventcalendar/> under Events – Public Comment Periods or <http://www.hanford.gov/?page=110&parent=91> under Modifications Currently Undergoing Public Comment.

Or call the Hanford Cleanup Line 1-800-321-2008.

The documents are also available for review at the Public Information Repositories listed below.

HANFORD PUBLIC INFORMATION REPOSITORY LOCATIONS

Portland

Portland State University
Branford Price Millar Library
1875 SW Park Ave
Attn: Don Frank (503) 725-4709
Map: <http://www.pdx.edu/map.html>

Seattle

University of Washington
Suzzallo Library
Government Publications Division
Attn: Eleanor Chase (206) 543-4664
Map: <http://tinyurl.com/m8ebj>

Richland

U.S. Department of Energy Public Reading Room
Washington State University, Tri-Cities
Consolidated Information Center, Room 101-L
2770 University Drive
Attn: Janice Parthree (509) 372-7443
Map: <http://tinyurl.com/2axam2>

Spokane

Gonzaga University
Foley Center
East 502 Boone
Attn: Linda Pierce (509) 313-3834
Map: <http://tinyurl.com/2c6bpm>

Administrative Record and Public Information Repository:

Address: 2440 Stevens Center Place, Room 1101, Richland, WA.

Phone: 509-376-2530

Web site address: <http://www2.hanford.gov/arpir/>

For Your Information – Agreement in Principle

The TPA agencies have made a list of issues requiring additional discussions and negotiations. They signed an Agreement in Principle to guide future discussions that could result in additional proposed changes to the TPA. These discussions will begin by March 1, 2009 and conclude by July 31, 2009. As appropriate, the agencies will consult with tribal nations, and provide briefings to the State of Oregon, the Hanford Advisory Board and other stakeholders.

Issues to be discussed are 1) a Central Plateau cleanup completion strategy and 2) ways to improve the TPA dispute resolution provisions.

1. Central Plateau Cleanup Completion Strategy

USDOE-RL plans to discuss with Ecology and EPA a Central Plateau cleanup completion strategy that would include cleanup of waste sites, excess facilities and groundwater. Although the strategy's focus would be on completion of cleanup work managed by the USDOE-RL, it would include key interfaces with tank waste retrieval and treatment completion work managed by the USDOE-Office of River Protection. The strategy would also address and evaluate:

- Coordinating the closure of canyon facilities with cleaning up waste sites located near those facilities. There is a TPA milestone to cleanup all non-tank farm operable units by September 30, 2024; however, the anticipated schedule for cleaning up the canyons is well beyond the 2024 date.

- Developing a strategy to cleanup deep vadose zone contamination in the Central Plateau. (The vadose zone is the area between the ground surface and the groundwater.) There is a TPA milestone to cleanup all non-tank farm operable units by September 30, 2024, which includes addressing contamination (source term) down to the groundwater. Currently no feasible technology exists to cleanup some of the contaminants in the deep vadose zone that might threaten the groundwater.
- Discussing whether USDOE should be responsible for preparing the Records of Decision instead of the regulatory agencies.

2. TPA Dispute Resolution Process

The agencies plan to review the primary document dispute resolution process to see if there are opportunities to streamline the dispute process.

TPA Change Package Fact Sheet
U.S. Department of Energy
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