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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOI Designates B Reactor at DOE's Hanford Site as a National Historic Landmark
DOE to offer regular public tours in 2009

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Acting Deputy Secretary Jeffrey F. Kupfer today announced the designation of DOE's B Reactor as a National Historic Landmark and unveiled DOE's plan for a new public access program to enable American citizens to visit B Reactor during the 2009 tourist season. The B Reactor at DOE's Hanford Site in southeast Washington State was the world's first industrial-scale nuclear reactor and produced plutonium for the atomic weapon that was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan to end World War II (WWII).

"B Reactor has a special feeling and association – as a landmark should. For its role in the events that ended World War II, the B Reactor holds a powerful historic significance," DOI Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett said. "Scientists, engineers, and skilled workers showed the power of human ingenuity and enterprise in serving at this significant point in U.S. history."

"The men and women who worked on the B Reactor made their mark on history with an extraordinary technological and human achievement," said DOE Acting Deputy Secretary Jeffrey F. Kupfer. "Preservation of the B Reactor will ensure their groundbreaking role in American history remains visible for future generations to see. Their accomplishments will serve as inspiration to others as we continue to apply science and technology to address today's most pressing global challenges."

The designation of the B Reactor as a National Historic Landmark, which was formally signed by Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne on August 19, 2008, signifies the site as one of national historic significance. National Historic Landmarks can be nationally significant districts, sites, buildings, structures, and/or objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction. The National Historic Landmark program is administered by the National Park Service. Four other Manhattan Project sites have already gained recognition that comes with a National Historic Landmark designation – the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, the X-10 Graphite Reactor at Oak Ridge, the Trinity Site, and the Chicago Pile I.

DOE, in response to growing public interest in B Reactor and the history of the Manhattan Project, will also increase public access to the B Reactor, which is currently limited to about 50 tours annually. Beginning in March 2009, individuals and families will be able to tour B Reactor at least three days a week through October 2009 by presenting identification at the Hanford Site. In order to expand access to this site, DOE must first make a number of infrastructure improvements: transportation will be provided from a site access point directly accessible to State Highway 240 to Yakima, gating will be constructed, temporary restroom facilities will be installed, and minor road repair and preparation will be performed. DOE's plan also sets a timetable for more permanent decisions about the future preservation of B Reactor.

Five of Hanford's nine plutonium production reactors have been dismantled and "cocooned" as part of a closure contract covering cleanup of Hanford's 210-square-mile Columbia River Corridor and B Reactor could have undergone this process as early as 2009. In March 2008, DOE announced a policy directive to support preservation of the B Reactor that required the reactor to be maintained in a state that preserves its historical significance. Part of that preservation was the installation of a new roof completed just this month.

The B Reactor, built between 1943 and 1944, was an original Manhattan Project facility that made the plutonium for one of the atomic bombs that ended WWII and provides a physical link to both the end of WWII and the start of the Cold War. Its plutonium was also used in the first atomic device ever exploded near Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945. B Reactor produced fissionable material from 1944 to 1968, and its water-cooled, graphite-moderated design served as the model for all U.S. nuclear reactors until 1952.

Video of today's ceremony will be available at approximately 2:00 P.M. PDT at the following website: <http://www.hanford.gov/communication/video/?video=archives>. For more information on DOE's efforts to reduce risk and cleanup the environmental legacy of the Nation's nuclear weapons program, visit www.em.doe.gov.

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