

ERC Team continues Columbia River corridor work

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Last month, two outfall structures that once released water from B and C Reactors' cooling retention basins into the Columbia River were demolished and removed by Bechtel Hanford and its subcontractor RCI Environmental. The third and final outfall structure will be removed later this month.

The soil, steel and concrete material cleaned up in July near the Columbia River shore were part of a larger project by the Environmental Restoration Contractor to remove nearly 25,000 feet of contaminated effluent pipeline in the 100 B/C Area. The remediation work begun in January at the river's edge will eventually take crews to B and C Reactors. The project is scheduled for completion in 2005.

"There is an immense amount of contaminated material that must be safely transported and permanently disposed of," said Jeff James, Bechtel's project task lead. "Work this close to the Columbia River takes people and equipment that are going to get the job done safely and efficiently to maintain our focus of protecting the river."

Removing the contaminated pipeline and soil is one of the last legs of the ERC team's challenge of restoring a 22-square-mile portion of the Columbia River corridor from the Vernita Bridge to just beyond the 100 B/C Area. Once the pipelines are removed and some future burial ground remediation is completed, the land will be evaluated for alternative use.

Radiological and hazardous-chemical monitoring determined the 58-year-old outfall structures were contaminated and met the waste acceptance criteria for permanent disposal at the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. The concrete was contaminated from transporting cooling water for reactor operations, and water that leaked through cracks and mechanical joints contaminated the surrounding soil.

Along with radiological and hazardous chemical monitoring, crews also take daily air samples while constantly hosing down the soil to ensure the working environment meets required air-quality standards. "Our dust-control methods are important for environmental reasons," said Mike Quattro, RCI Environmental's project safety manager. "The measures we take are to prevent potentially contaminated dust from traveling downwind toward the Columbia River or reaching our crews."

With the protection of the Columbia River in mind, silt fences were constructed at the edge of each outfall structure work site to stop runoff soil and water from reaching the river. The two-foot-high silt fences made of plastic netting were reinforced by hay bales to stop any potential runoff in heavy rainfall.

While the three outfall structures are being demolished, their final lengths of steel and concrete piping that extend well into the Columbia River will remain until an appropriate method of removal is developed.

"This project is important because it's what the Environmental Restoration Project is aimed at," said Glenn Goldberg, DOE Environmental Restoration Division project manager. "Remediating waste sites close to the Columbia River is crucial in restoring the site and eliminating the possibility of contamination continuing to harm the river and its resources." ♦



Employees of the Environmental Restoration Contractor team work to remove the last of three contaminated 58-year-old outfall structures in the 100 B/C Area near the Columbia River shore. The three outfall structures released cooling water from B and C Reactors' effluent retention basins into the river.