

Other significant Hanford news of 2001

Shutdown of FFTF ordered, delayed, finalized

On the final day of office for the Clinton administration, outgoing Energy Secretary Bill Richardson ordered the permanent shutdown of the Fast Flux Test Facility, saying the Department of Energy could not justify re-starting it.

When Spencer Abraham succeeded Richardson, he suspended the shutdown order and initiated a review of previous studies and reports on the FFTF. DOE also reviewed a proposal that would have privatized the facility for producing medical, research and industrial isotopes. The final shutdown order was issued Dec. 19 (see page 1). ■

Abraham and Roberson visit

Last January, Spencer Abraham was sworn in as the 10th Secretary of Energy. The former Senator from Michigan served on the Budget, Commerce, Science and Transportation, Judiciary, and Small Business Committees and chaired two subcommittees — Manufacturing and Competitiveness, and Immigration — during his tenure. Secretary Abraham visited the Hanford Site on Nov. 7. During his visit he toured the Fast Flux Test Facility, tank farms and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory facilities.

Last year, Jesse Roberson was appointed the Department of Energy assistant secretary for Environmental Management. Responsible for much of the cleanup work at Hanford, including waste operations, research and development programs and environmental restoration, Roberson visited the site in August. Roberson has been a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and was the manager of DOE's Rocky Flats Field Office in Colorado from 1996 to 1999. ■

Workers compensated by DOE

The Department of Labor opened a resource center in the Tri-Cities in July to help former radiation workers apply for compensation under a law passed during the Clinton administration. Under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, nuclear workers or former workers could receive medical care and \$150,000 in compensation for illnesses caused by workplace exposures. Workers with lung diseases because of exposure to beryllium or silica also are eligible for compensation. ■

Hanford Site commits to reducing energy consumption

On Oct. 1, the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office committed to reducing Hanford Site energy consumption by 10 percent. Last summer, low levels of water in Northwest reservoirs, tight supplies of electrical power and unheard-of wholesale prices for that power affected wholesale rates charged by the Bonneville Power Administration. Faced with a predicted 250 percent increase in wholesale rates for the period 2002-2006, utilities and industries reduced their loads and BPA announced that its rate increase would be cut to 46 percent, effective Oct. 1. In support of the 10-percent reduction goal, across the Hanford Site thermostat settings were changed and the use of lights, computers and printers were monitored. ■

Other significant Hanford news of 2001, cont.

Electrical upgrades at WESF

A significant electrical safety upgrade project at the Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility corrected some long-standing deficiencies that contributed to an electrical arc flash that burned an electrician and resulted in a lost-time injury. The upgrades had been needed but unfunded since 1990.

The upgrades included pulling electrical cables from substations outside into the facility's motor control centers and refurbishing circuit breakers. Ground fault interrupters that fit on the breakers were added to sense small amounts of electricity loss. ■

Sagebrush replanted on ALE

Last year, one of the top stories was the fire that burned a significant portion of the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve. A study of the burned portions of the ALE found that more than 75 percent of the sagebrush vegetation was lost.

This year, volunteers began restoring this important wildlife habitat by planting sagebrush seedlings. Duratek Federal Services of Hanford coordinated the volunteer labor and purchased the plants, which were grown from seed collected from the ALE. ■