

## Hanford Advisory Board

### National Liaison Report – December 2019

#### **DOE-HQ**

The Senate confirmed Dan Brouillette to be Deputy Secretary of Energy on a bipartisan basis on August 3, 2017. The President nominated Brouillette to be Secretary of Energy on November 7, 2019, and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported his nomination to the full Senate by a vote of 16-4 on November 19, 2019.

Brouillette spent two years, from 2001 to 2003 as DOE's Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs during the George W Bush administration. In 2003 he became staff director of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. He subsequently held executive posts with the Ford Motor Co. and the United Services Automobile Association.

In response to a question from Senator Cantwell in the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, he said he is fully committed to fight hard for Energy Department funding within the Trump Administration. He is quoted as saying that Hanford ranks right at the top of my priority list, and should I be confirmed as secretary, I will be there quite often.

#### **Idaho**

Due to a 1995 agreement between DOE and the State of Idaho, no nuclear fuel can be shipped to Idaho. A new agreement requires that 25 spent fuel rods from the Byron power plant in Illinois can only be shipped to INL when one canister of waste is safely processed at their Steam Reforming facility. It is designed to ultimately process 900,000 gallons of sodium bearing liquid waste into a more stable form. The agreement goes on to say that 55% of shipments to WIPP must be from Idaho. Most of the TRU waste at Idaho was sent there from other sites.

Idaho's Site's Manager for the past 5 years, Jack Zimmerman has been appoint to head the DOE, Cincinnati-based EM Consolidated Business Center. Connie Flohr, the deputy manager will serve as acting manager.

#### **Portsmouth**

Citizens who live 7 miles from the former Gaseous Diffusion plant have filed 2 federal lawsuits accusing former contractors of failure to contain radioactive contamination. Some evidence of trace amounts of radiation was found at a school last year. They are asking for \$10 million in damages and remediation of any contamination at their homes, medical monitoring and a fund for medical bills. Contractors who have run the facility contend that there is no assertion that any nuclear released from Portsmouth exceeded the radiation dose limits established by the NRC.

## **Oak Ridge**

DOE is continuing to evaluate a D & D approach for the Molten Salt Reactor experiment at Oak Ridge that could involve removing above-ground structures and encasing contaminated structures below ground in a concrete-like grout. The reactor operated from June 1965 to December 1969 to test reactor fuels for use in breeder reactors,

The Oak Ridge field office is beginning planning that could be part of a 2 phase feasibility study that will consider entombment and other options. Other options would include taking no action and removing residual fuel salts at the reactor site. The study could take 3 years.

Isotek, the contractor responsible for EM's Uranium-233 disposal project, is extracting thorium from the U-233 inventory at Oak Ridge before it is processed into a disposal-ready form. TerraPower will then use the extracted material to support cancer treatment research.

## **Savannah River Site**

SRS and other sites are struggling with the rate of employee retirement, they hired 250 new employees in fiscal 2019 to replace retirees. They are also ramping up for the startup of the Salt Waste Processing Facility.

Salt Waste Disposal Unit 7 a 32 million gallon mega volume concrete structure will permanently house radioactive salt waste once it is processed at the Salt Waste Processing Facility. The \$2.3 billion facility is due to begin waste treatment in the first quarter of 2020.

## **National Academies Panel**

The panel studying the supplemental treatment of low-activity waste at Hanford extended its comment deadline till November 20<sup>th</sup>. This study was required by the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act as a parallel to a SRNL study.

The SRNL report concluded that vitrification, grouting and steam reforming all provide viable options for treatment and disposal of supplemental low-activity waste. Vit is the most expensive of the 3 to build and operate while the other options could allow for shipping the treated waste out of state. The National Academies review suggests improvements are needed in the final research from SRNL.