

Originating Subcommittee: Executive Steering Committee

Issue Manager Team & Authors: Chris Sutton, Ed Parsons, Miya Burke, Tom Sicilia, Rob Davis, Susan Coleman, Charles LoPresti, and Rebecca Holland

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Update the version number and revision date with each iteration.

Letter Heading:

To: Ray Geimer (DOE)
Stephanie Schleif (WA State Dept. of Ecology)
Dr. Laura Buelow (EPA)

Subject: Hanford Cleanup Priorities: Reduce Cleanup Costs and Accelerate Schedule

Background:

The Hanford Advisory Board's (HAB's or Board's) primary mission is to provide informed and actionable advice to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), collectively known as the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) agencies.

Previous Hanford Cleanup Priority Advice has focused on specific work scopes to be accomplished in a given fiscal year. Instead, the HAB is focusing on fiscal year (FY) 2028 and beyond. Effective collaboration among the DOE, the Ecology, the EPA, contractors, and the workforce has helped advance the cleanup objectives to date. However, the HAB is concerned that the cleanup mission could be impacted by the combination of chronic budget shortfalls, impacts from unanticipated events, and a drastically expanding estimate of the lifecycle resources required to complete cleanup.

This advice reflects the HAB's concerns related to the cost and schedule required to clean up the Hanford site as stated in the 2025 Hanford Lifecycle Scope, Schedule, and Cost Report (2025 Lifecycle Report, Reference 1).

The 2025 Lifecycle Report indicates that the active cleanup of the Hanford site will conclude in 2086 with long term stewardship extending for the foreseeable future. The DOE Office of Environmental Management (EM) baseline cost of cleanup is estimated in the 2025 Lifecycle Report at \$353.6 billion with a high range estimate of \$578.6 billion, which incorporates risk, uncertainty, and cost escalation into various cleanup scopes of work.

The report further notes that for about 30 to 35 years the baseline cost of Hanford cleanup will be between \$5 and \$12 billion per year. Based on recent funding levels, the HAB has concerns that such funding will not be available. Without increased funding to meet milestones, cleanup of the Hanford site will cost more and take longer.

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The 2025 Lifecycle Report noted that a majority of Hanford’s funding will be directed toward the tank waste treatment mission. The HAB is concerned that directing such large amounts of funding toward the tank waste treatment mission could reduce the funds available for cleaning up the rest of the Hanford site.

Lastly, this advice reflects one of the six priorities specified by Tim Walsh, Assistant Secretary for EM, in his report on EM 2025 Year End Highlights. That priority is to renew the mission to accelerate schedules and reduce costs (Reference 3).

Advice:

Given the magnitude of the costs and risks to complete cleanup of the Hanford Site, the HAB believes it is critical to find ways to safely accelerate the schedule thereby reducing long-term costs. Additionally, the Board recognizes the importance of assuring the continued safe, secure, and compliant management of Hanford’s budget and workforce. A healthy workforce and safe and environmentally conscious performance of work are fundamental core values of the Board (Reference 2).

The following advice points are not in order of priority. To support cleanup priorities in FY 2028 and beyond, the HAB advises the TPA agencies to:

- Collaborate to optimize scope, schedule, and cost to complete the cleanup sooner. The HAB requests a briefing on the impacts of these optimizations;
- Incorporate public input to the extent possible ahead of major decisions, with transparency and sufficient information to allow for informed feedback;
- Foster an environment of continuous improvement in which optimization, efficiency, and innovation become key elements of work processes along with safety, quality assurance, and conduct of operations;
- Discuss Hanford cleanup metrics with the HAB to identify data gaps. These metrics can be used to communicate the progress made, the work remaining, and updated cost and schedule projections. Such metrics can regularly inform the public, regulators, and elected officials how efficiently funding is being used;
- Improve effective and efficient workflow sequencing in order to significantly reduce the cost and schedule. For example, balancing characterization, soil removal, and building demolition can optimize utilization of the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility (ERDF);
- Conduct outreach along the expected transportation routes for offsite disposal of grouted low activity wastes from 200-West Area tanks specified in the Holistic Agreement. Conducting this outreach as soon as practical gives communities and first responders time to prepare for the 2030 shipping campaign start date. The HAB does not take a position on grouting Hanford tank

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waste, but does support safe transportation, prepared first responders, and informed communities;

- Continue to apply lessons learned from the Low-Activity Waste Facility to the design and construction of the High-Level Waste Facility in order to accelerate design and construction activities. Progress on this facility will reduce cost escalation and the sooner high-level waste can be vitrified, the sooner additional tank farms can be cleaned up and closed;
- Complete the transfer of the cesium and strontium capsules from the Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility to the interim storage pad before the milestone due date of 2029. Successful completion of this scope will show value for dollars invested, continuing commitment to reducing risk to the region, and avoidance of schedule slippage and cost escalation;
- Optimize groundwater treatment to maximize contaminant removal, reducing the long-term footprint and duration of the pump and treat mission; and
- Prioritize transport and off-site disposal of transuranic and/or transuranic mixed waste, providing support to ensure that the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant's (WIPP) acceptance capacity is the limiting factor, not Hanford. Acting early ensures that as much legacy transuranic/transuranic mixed waste from Hanford is emplaced in WIPP while the acceptance window is open.

The HAB requests a response to the advice items above from the TPA agencies. The HAB is open and willing to discuss the content of the response as well as the content of this advice with the TPA agencies to ensure our response expectations are met.

References:

1. US Department of Energy, *2025 Hanford Lifecycle Scope, Schedule, And Cost Report*, March 2025. Link: [HMIS LCR 2025 Compiled 2-27-25 Public.pdf](#)
2. Hanford Advisory Board , *Hanford Advisory Board Values*, November 2, 2012. Link: https://www.hanford.gov/files.cfm/HAB_ValuesWhitePaper_Attach.pdf
3. US Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management, *Delivering Nuclear Remediation and Revitalization for American Energy, Security and Innovation*, December 2025. Link: https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-12/FINAL_EM%202025%20Accomplishments%20Year%20End%20Project%20%28Final%20Package%29.pdf

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CC/BCC:

Mark all applicable names/organizations to be included as advice recipients (in addition to the addressees).

TPA Agency Representatives

- Tim Walsh, DOE-EM
- Ray Geimer, DOE
- Stephanie Schleif, ECY
- Dr. Laura Buelow, EPA
- Meegan Tripp, DOE
- Ryan Miller, ECY
- Roberto Armijo, EPA
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Site-Specific Advisory Boards

- Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
- Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board
- Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board
- Paducah Citizens Advisory Board
- Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
- Idaho Cleanup Board
- Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board
- Kelly Snyder, DFO

OR/WA Congressional Delegations (to Chief of Staff)

- Sen. Patty Murray, WA
- Senator Maria Cantwell, WA
- Rep. Suzan DelBene, WA-01
- Rep. Rick Larsen, WA-02
- Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, WA-03
- Rep. Dan Newhouse, WA-04
- Rep. Michael Baumgartner, WA-05
- Rep. Emily Randall, WA-06
- Rep. Pramila Jayapal, WA-07
- Rep. Kim Schrier, WA-08

- Rep. Adam Smith, WA-09
- Rep. Marilyn Strickland, WA-10
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- Rep. Maxine Dexter, OR-03
- Rep. Val Hoyle, OR-04
- Rep. Janelle Bynum, OR-05
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Requests to Receive Advice

- Jessica Keys, Staff to Sen. Merkley