



Future at Stake: Comments Needed on Hanford Cleanup Plan

The Proposal

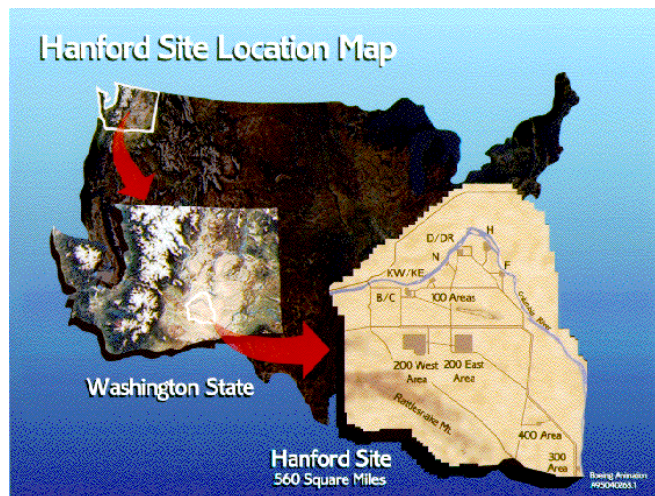
Since 1943, the Hanford Nuclear Site has dominated the landscape of southeastern Washington State, hosting the federal government's program to manufacture plutonium for our nation's nuclear arsenal.

Until 1989, Hanford operated nine separate plutonium production reactors, five reprocessing facilities, experimental reactors and laboratories, and a plethora of support facilities – in the process creating the nation's most contaminated industrial complex.

The federal government has proposed some cleanup plans for Hanford which are out for public comment until March 19, 2010. Of great concern is the plan to abandon a vast amount of radioactive and chemical wastes on site.

The proposals include:

- Disposing of radioactive and chemical wastes from other sites around the nation at Hanford, starting in the year 2022
- Leaving as much as one million gallons or more of high-level nuclear waste in the soil and groundwater beneath Hanford's underground waste storage tanks
- Entombing the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) reactor, which would remove the visible structures but leave behind the radiological and hazardous materials encased in grout.



These alternatives are studied in detail within the 6,000 page monster *draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* which, when finalized, will decide a path forward for cleanup at Hanford.

The US Department of Energy, (DOE) is directing this study under a law that requires every major federal action involving a significant environmental impact to produce an assessment of its possible impacts. You couldn't find a better example of "significant environmental impact" than the Hanford Nuclear Site.

Hanford Cleanup is a Big Job

Hanford is our country's most contaminated nuclear facility, storing two-thirds of our nation's radioactive inventory of high-level nuclear waste, most of the low-level waste, and chemical wastes including carbon tetrachloride, hexavalent chromium, mercury, and a host of others. We need a strong cleanup plan to aggressively contain and treat this waste using advanced technology and expertise.

Because of this, the environmental remediation planned for Hanford is enormous. Addressing Hanford's nuclear legacy will cost a minimum of \$65 billion taxpayer dollars. About \$30 billion has been spent since 1989. Costs could reach the \$120 billion mark. The remediation may take until the year 2090 to complete and because of the long-lived nature of nuclear waste and its dangerous decay process, Hanford may need government control for thousands of years.

Even with this huge investment of time, talent and money, the best we can hope for is that *a portion* of Hanford's massive inventory of radioactive and chemical hazards will be retrieved and treated. Some of the waste will go to an off-site geological repository (deep hole in the ground), and most of the rest will be stored at Hanford (shallow hole in the ground).