

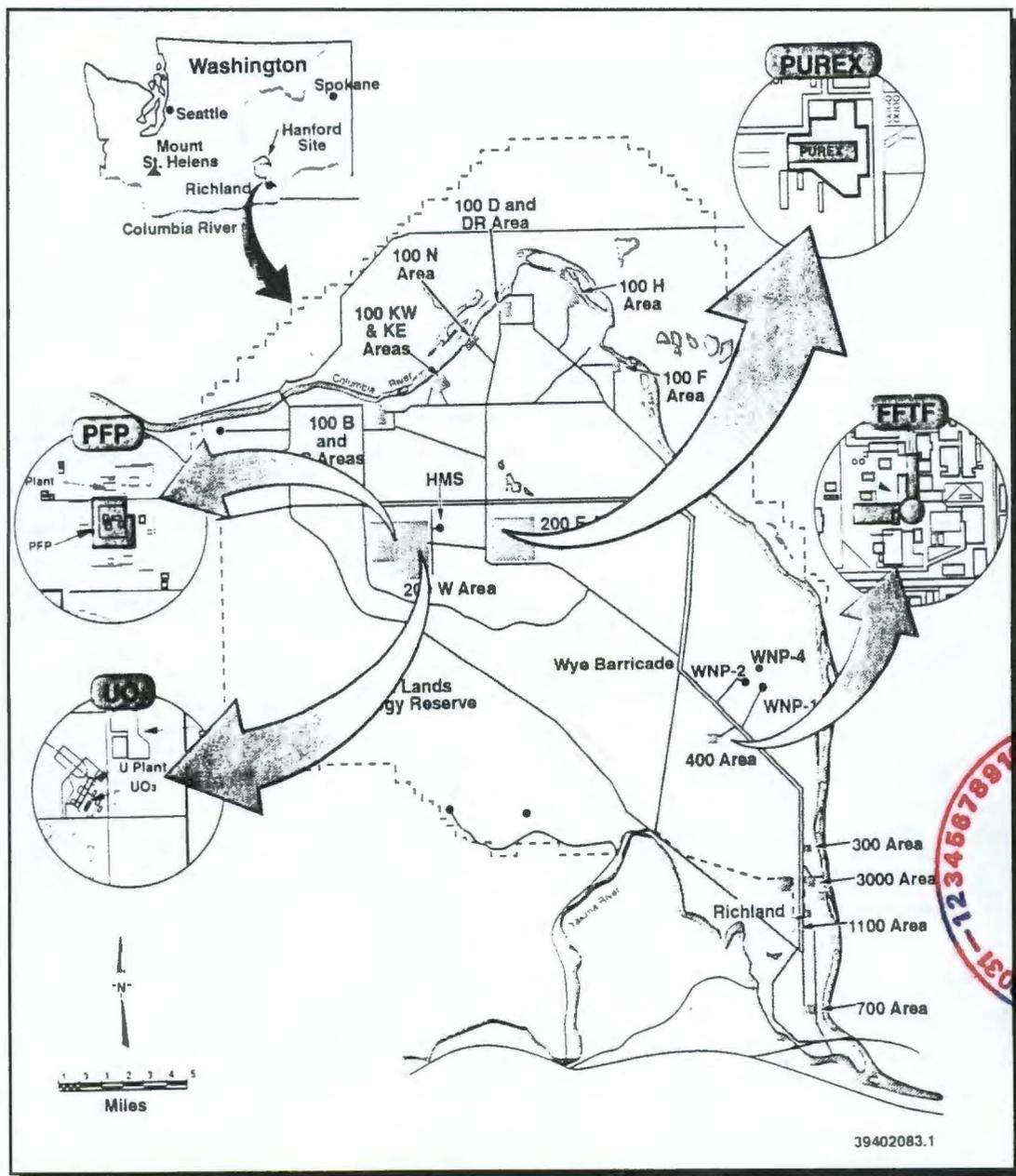


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# Facility Transition

Tri-Party Agreement

The Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, or Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) was signed in 1989 by the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) to provide a framework for environmental cleanup at the Hanford Site. It has been amended several times since then. The latest proposed amendment is the **Tentative Agreement on Facility Transition**. A 45-day public comment period on the tentative agreement begins **February 13** and ends **March 30, 1995**. All comments will be considered by the agencies before it is signed.



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## Background

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For the past 50 years, the USDOE's Hanford Site was part of the nation's defense program producing nuclear material. This is no longer happening, but the upkeep of facilities that supported that effort costs taxpayers millions of dollars each year.

For example, when a typical commercial factory is no longer needed, it is simply shut down, the gates are locked and it is either maintained for future restart, modified, or demolished. It rarely costs much money to not operate a factory except when environmental or safety concerns must be addressed.

Hanford is such an exception. Not only are there sites around each facility polluted with process wastes, but the radioactive nature of the products, wastes, equipment and feed stocks within the facilities means that shutting them down is no simple matter, either. Even after a major Hanford facility is shut down, many workers and a lot of energy are required simply to safely maintain it.

Until recently, the Tri-Party Agreement primarily addressed the cleanup of contaminated waste sites. USDOE agreed in January 1994 to include in the TPA the disposition of key production and other large Hanford facilities. The Tri-Party agencies began negotiations in July 1994 to set schedules and milestones for cleanup at the Plutonium Uranium Extraction/Uranium Trioxide plants (PUREX/UO<sub>3</sub>) and the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF). The negotiations also addressed the clean out of the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) and the 324 Building radiochemical engineering cells and vault tanks.

A tentative agreement between USDOE, EPA and Ecology to proceed with facility transition and cleanup actions under the TPA was reached January 15 for all facilities except the 324 Building radiochemical cells and vault tanks, which are still being negotiated.

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## What is Facility Transition?

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When a facility will no longer be used for its original purpose, it will be brought into a safe and secure condition which will minimize maintenance and surveillance expenses. This is facility transition.

Transition is the first phase of a three step process called Facility Decommissioning. Phase I, Transition, will include the deactivation and stabilization of plant equipment and systems. Phase II, Surveillance and Maintenance, will be the bridge period. Phase III, Disposition, will be final closure and disposal of a facility. Any time prior to disposition, a facility may be transferred to another useful purpose.

This agreement establishes actions and schedules for transition activities or clean out at the following facilities:

- **Plutonium Uranium Extraction (PUREX) and Uranium Trioxide (UO<sub>3</sub>) plants**

The PUREX plant was built in 1955 to recover plutonium and uranium from reactor fuels. It extracted uranium and plutonium from irradiated uranium fuel rods. The facility, located in Hanford's 200 East Area about 20 miles northwest of Richland, operated from 1956 to 1972 and from 1983 to 1990. A decision to shut down was made in 1992.

The UO<sub>3</sub> plant, located in Hanford's 200 West Area, includes two primary processing buildings as well as several secondary buildings. The plant turned uranyl nitrate hexahydrate into uranium trioxide powder. It began operations in 1952 and operated intermittently until May 1989.

The PUREX plant transition (milestone M-80-00) will involve removing waste liquids and spent fuel, reducing utilities to the building and consolidating ventilation systems by July 1998. The target date for completing transition at UO<sub>3</sub> and beginning Surveillance and Maintenance is June 1995.

#### ■ **Fast Flux Test Facility**

Located in Hanford's 400 Area about 10 miles northwest of Richland, the Fast Flux Test Facility began operating in 1982 to test fuels, materials and components as part of the national breeder reactor research program. The decision to shutdown the 400 megawatt liquid sodium-cooled reactor was made in December 1993.

Milestone M-81-00 calls for transition at FFTF to be completed by December 2001. Activities include defueling the reactor, dry cask storage of irradiated fuels, transfer of unirradiated fuel to the Plutonium Finishing Plant, transfer of sodium-bonded irradiated metals and carbide fuel pins to the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, construction of a sodium storage facility, draining the liquid sodium from the reactor and deactivation of auxiliary systems.

#### ■ **Plutonium Finishing Plant**

PFP, located in the 200 West Area about 25 miles from Richland, first began operating in 1951. The plant processed plutonium-bearing chemical solutions, converting them to metals and oxides. PFP production ceased in 1989. Reactive scrap

materials, including plutonium-laden sludges, process solutions and other hazardous materials, remain in processing areas.

A milestone date for PFP clean out will not be set until after a National Environmental Policy Act environmental impact statement and record of decision is issued in June 1996.

Transition planning and cleanup actions are already underway at each of these units. Some other large Hanford facilities will be handled under the Facility Transition process in the future.

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### **Other Modifications to the TPA**

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Milestone changes in the M-20 series are proposed to support Facility Transition activities. Language is added in section 10.0 of the TPA Action Plan which pledges USDOE to submit key documents to the involved tribes at the same time as they are submitted to Ecology and EPA. New language is proposed in sections 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 of the Action Plan to support integration of closure, past practice and facility decommissioning activities. A number of terms are added and other definitions modified under Appendix A, Definition of Terms.

A new section, 14, is added to the Action Plan, detailing the Facility Decommissioning process. It includes planning and action paths for all three decommissioning phases and provides for regulatory integration.

# How can you be involved?

Only after all public comments have been considered by the Tri-Party agencies will a final **Facility Transition** agreement be prepared and signed. Submit your written comments during the formal comment period, **February 13 through March 30, 1995**. Or, attend and comment at a public meeting. All who comment will receive responses explaining how and why their comments were, or were not, used.

## Send written comments to:

**Annette Carlson**  
**P. O. Box 1970 B3-35**  
**Richland, WA 99352**

**Phone: (509) 376-6032**  
**fax: (509) 376-5928**

## Public Meetings

All 7 - 9 p.m.

### The Dalles, Oregon

Tuesday, February 21  
Shilo Inn  
The Ball Room  
Exit 87 off I-84

### Seattle

Thursday, March 2  
Seattle Center House  
Conference Center Room H

### Pasco

Thursday, March 9  
Columbia Basin College  
Hawk Union Building  
West Dining Room

## More information on Facility Transition is available for review at the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement Information Repositories:

### Seattle

University of Washington  
Suzzallo Library  
Government Publications Room  
Attn: Eleanor Chase (206) 543-4664

### Portland

Portland State University  
Branford Price Millar Library  
Science and Engineering Floor  
SW Harrison and Park  
Attn: Michael Bowman or Susan Thomas (503) 725-3690

### Spokane

Gonzaga University  
Foley Center  
E. 502 Boone  
Attn: Tim Fuhrman (509) 328-4220 EXT 3844

### Richland

USDOE Public Reading Room  
Washington State University, Tri-Cities  
100 Sprout Road, Room 130 West  
Attn: Terri Traub (509) 376-8583