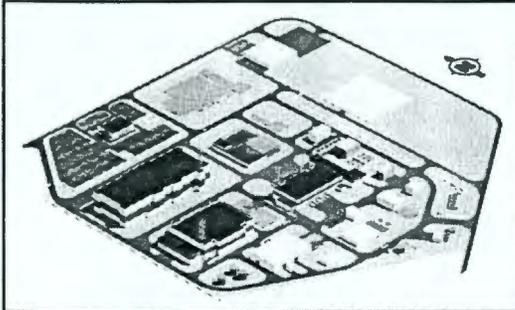




Tri-Party Agreement Changes Proposed to Revise Hanford Tank Waste Treatment Construction Schedule

Public Comment Period Begins March 18, and Ends May 1, 2002

U.S. Department of Energy • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Washington State Department of Ecology



- *Hanford has 53 million gallons of high-level radioactive waste stored in aging underground tanks.*
- *The Tri-Party Agencies want your input on new deadlines for building a tank waste treatment facility.*

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of River Protection (USDOE) have completed negotiations on USDOE's proposed "Recovery Plan." The Plan realigns the Tri-Party Agreement and existing schedules to construct and operate Hanford's tank waste glassification (vitrification) treatment facilities.

Public comment is requested on a new Tri-Party Agreement deadline for starting construction of the tank waste treatment complex, and on additional "construction progress milestones." The milestones set construction requirements prior to initial treatment complex operations in late 2007. The revised dates align the Agreement with a construction schedule currently being implemented by USDOE Office of River Protection and its contractors.

What is the Recovery Plan?

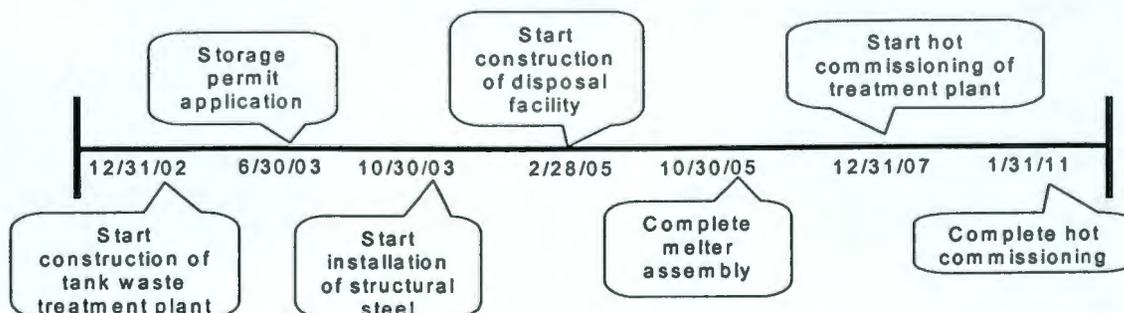
The proposed Recovery Plan, and its associated modification of the Tri-Party Agreement schedules

lay out the detailed work schedules necessary for USDOE to construct the treatment complex in time to meet the 2007 deadline for initial operations. The Parties' tentative agreement, and recent passage by Congress of the project's budget for the 2002 fiscal year resolves schedule and budget concerns that triggered Ecology's requirements for a Recovery Plan and penalties levied on USDOE.

Last summer when USDOE missed the July 31, 2001 start of construction milestone for the tank waste treatment facilities, Ecology began imposing fines of \$10,000 per week. Additionally, the state required the USDOE to develop a Recovery Plan that demonstrated how USDOE proposed to get the tank waste treatment project back on schedule in order to meet the Tri-Party Agreement requirement to begin "hot commissioning" by 2007.

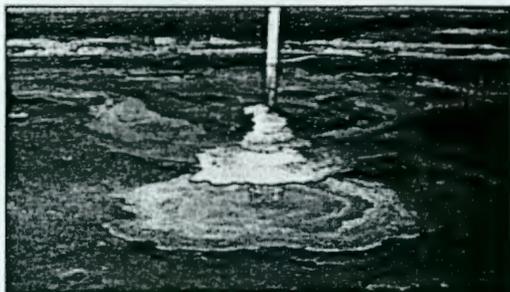
The Department of Energy Recovery Plan documents schedules and technical activities needed to meet the Tri-Party Agreement requirements to begin commissioning the nation's largest

**Proposed Recovery Plan
Tri-Party Agreement Dates**



radioactive waste treatment facility by December 2007. Along with the technical information, the state required budget and cost information to ensure USDOE's commitment to fund the treatment complex in fiscal year 2002.

Background



The Problem - Highly radioactive waste from years of plutonium production was piped to 177 underground tanks at the Department of Energy's Hanford Site. As a result, Hanford has 53 million gallons of chemically complex high-level radioactive waste. The majority of the tanks (149 of the 177) are single-shell tanks, which on average are 50 years old and more than 30 years beyond their design life. Sixty-seven of the single-shell tanks have leaked about one million gallons of waste. The tanks are just seven miles from the Columbia River. Leaked tank waste has reached the groundwater that flows to the River.

How can you get involved and give input?

A 45-day public comment period on the Tri-Party Agreement proposal begins **March 18 and ends May 1, 2002**. The Tri-Party Agencies want your input on the proposed milestones. All public comments will be considered by the Agencies before the proposed changes are finalized.

Information Repositories

Documents are available at the following locations.

Portland

Portland State University
 Branford Price and Millar Library
 934 SW Harrison d
 Attn: Michael Bowman (503) 725-3690

Richland

U.S. Department of Energy Public Reading Room
 Washington State University, Tri-Cities
 Consolidated Information Center, Room 101-L
 2770 University Drive
 Attn: Terri Traub (509) 372-7443

Seattle

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

Spokane

Gonzaga University, Foley Center
 East 502 Boone
 Attn: Sarah Nelson (509) 323-6548

Web Page Addresses

Washington State Department of Ecology
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp/index.html>

U.S. Department of Energy Office of River Protection -
<http://www.hanford.gov/orp/index.html>

Additional Information

For more information, or to submit comments in writing or electronically, please contact either:

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**Or, call the Tri-Party Agreement
 Hanford Hotline: 1-800-321-2008.**