



Hanford Needs Clean Up, Not New Nuclear



The Columbia River runs along the Hanford Nuclear Site in eastern Washington. Since time immemorial, Tribal people have lived and thrived on the land and water now occupied by Hanford. Tribes were removed from 586 square miles and 50 miles of Columbia River shoreline by the U.S. government in order to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons and other weapons-related experiments. Despite intense pollution, Hanford has some of the most vital shrub-steppe upland habitat and productive salmon spawning habitat in North America. Now, developers are eyeing Hanford for development of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMNRs).

The Problem

Siting new nuclear reactors at Hanford will create long term problems for clean up putting both the Columbia River and region at risk. The region's only nuclear power plant, the Columbia Generating Station (CGS) is located on Hanford, and operated by Energy Northwest. CGS has already interfered with clean up. Additional SMNRs proposed for this area could exacerbate existing pollution problems by complicating and delaying cleanup, while increasing long-lived pollution burdens at Hanford.

CGS and 618-11

The 618-11 burial ground contains highly radioactive waste and is located very close to CGS and its parking lot. Clean up of the source material in 618-11 conflicts with operation of CGS. This conflict has delayed clean up. In order to characterize this waste site, the Department of Energy must engage with Energy Northwest. So far this engagement has been piecemeal and incomplete, meaning the government doesn't know what is in the waste site or how to begin safe remediation. Energy Northwest, Amazon, and X-energy propose to locate new nuclear reactors, which will generate more nuclear waste, in the same area. However, clean up of the burial ground is not scheduled to begin until 2030. How can new developments be permitted in an area where clean up is lagging and difficult?

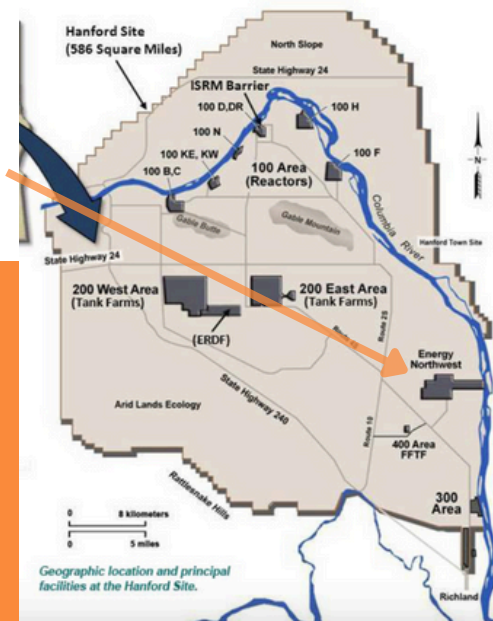


Photo of Hanford, courtesy of Washington Dept. of Ecology



The 618-11 Burial Ground, 2012. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Dept. of Energy

Below the Surface

Taking a snapshot of the groundwater under CGS and 618-11, there are major tritium and nitrate plumes that are extending from the radioactive burial ground. The tritium plume is persistent and very high, over 50 times the drinking water standard. When deciding how to clean up the 300 Area, Energy assumed that the tritium plume would reduce much faster than it has. The persistence of tritium and nitrate in groundwater has caused Energy to expand groundwater monitoring in the area. Monitoring shows continued high levels of contamination, meaning the 618-11 burial ground is an ongoing source of radioactive pollution into Hanford's soil and groundwater.

Tritium plume, showing high concentrations under 618-11



Hanford has a Future Worth Fighting For

Decisions today need to honor the treaties, protect the River, and take into account how people will use Hanford in the future. This future does not include more nuclear, but the safest long-term clean up possible.

