



Sustained Collaborations Drive EM’s Progress in 2021, White Says

Successful collaborations have fueled [EM’s](#) progress over the past 18 months, enabling a series of achievements while emphasizing health and safety protections during the COVID-19 pandemic, Acting Assistant Secretary William “Ike” White told members of the Energy Facility Contractors Group (EFCOG) during its annual meeting earlier this month.

During the virtual gathering, White outlined EM’s accomplishments over the past year, including processing more than [1 million gallons](#) of tank waste at the [Savannah River Site](#) (SRS) in South Carolina, [successful demolition](#) of the Biology Complex at the [Y-12 National Security Complex](#) in [Oak Ridge](#), Tennessee, and significant progress on the tank waste mission at [Hanford](#) in Washington state.

Most impressive, White said, was that the EM program was able to work together with its contractors to accomplish these milestones while protecting the workforce during the pandemic.

To build on momentum, EM has laid out ambitious goals for the upcoming year. White said EM aligns with a number of the new administration’s top priorities, such as protecting the environment, promoting environmental justice, and building a diverse workforce.

White noted that President Biden’s fiscal 2022 budget request for EM emphasizes this alignment.

“This is the largest administration request for Environmental Management that I can recall,” White said. “The budget is a very clear statement by the administration that they prioritize the EM program.”



Acting Assistant Secretary William “Ike” White



Looking ahead, EM plans to make significant headway at sites across the country. The program intends to advance the tank waste mission at Hanford, complete processing of 6 million gallons of tank waste at SRS, and progress toward startup of the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit at the [DOE Idaho National Laboratory Site](#).

The program will also continue to drive deactivation and demolition efforts at various sites, including demolition of the Main Plant Process Building at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) in New York and continued cleanup at the [Oak Ridge National Laboratory](#) and Y-12 in Oak Ridge.

While EM moves forward with demolitions at some sites, it is investing in upgrades at others, according to White. For instance, infrastructure upgrades at the [Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#) in New Mexico will secure the site's ability to support DOE legacy waste cleanup for years to come.

The program continues to employ its end state contracting model with contracts recently awarded at Hanford and the Idaho Cleanup Project, and others expected this year. EM will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the model, which calls for cleanup work to be carried out through a series of negotiated task orders that aim to get projects to completion faster and more efficiently without sacrificing safety.

EM will also consider lessons learned from the telework experience prompted by COVID-19 as the program tackles its goals for the year.

"That sort of out-of-the-box thinking is something we can translate going forward," White said.

West Valley to Resume Waste Shipments by Train Following Upgrades to Rail Line



Workers use an excavator to remove soil that had been excavated for the installation of a unique groundwater treatment system at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) years ago. The soil and a structure used to store the soil will be shipped offsite by rail this month.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – [EM](#) and its cleanup contractor at the [West Valley Demonstration Project \(WVDP\)](#) will resume using a rail line to ship waste offsite starting this month.

“The resumption of rail shipments signals a new beginning for the [WVDP](#) and will bring many benefits to the future cleanup of the site,” WVDP Director Bryan Bower said. “This work today will help accelerate decommissioning and remediation activities in the very near future.”

[WVDP](#) worked with the Buffalo-Pittsburgh Railroad (BPRR) Administration to rehabilitate the [Western New York Nuclear Service Center](#) rail spur and BPRR’s main line.



Shipping the waste by rail enhances safety by removing potential hazards such as vehicle traffic associated with completing the shipments via truck. Train shipments also increase efficiency by allowing more material to be shipped compared to trucking. The train shipments also cost less than truck shipments, saving taxpayer dollars.

“Our employees and subcontractors did an excellent job in getting the rail line ready for shipments,” said Linda Michalczak, CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley (CHBWV) projects manager. “This accomplishment speaks volumes on the importance of solid communication, teamwork, and best practices.”

Among the waste to be shipped by rail is an estimated 108,000 cubic feet of soil that had been removed to make way for a [unique groundwater treatment system](#) constructed years ago. A structure used to store that soil also will be shipped for disposal by train. This project plans to ship approximately 400 intermodal containers of the material from **West Valley**.

The groundwater treatment system, known as a permeable treatment wall, was installed to mitigate a groundwater plume that originated from historical releases at the site’s Main Plant Process Building. The wall, which will remain in place, is an approximately 785-foot-long trench that contains nearly 2,000 metric tons of zeolite, a naturally occurring mineral formed from volcanic ash. The zeolite strips the contaminant strontium-90 from the groundwater passing through the wall.

The rail line will also be used to ship waste generated by the future demolition of the Main Plant Process Building. Beginning demolition of that facility is an [EM priority](#) for 2021.

-Contributor: Joseph Pillittere