

Meetings to continue on West Valley project funding

By Rick Miller

Olean Times Herald
ASHFORD HOLLOW —

Members of the West Valley Citizens Task Force will meet next month with U.S. Department of Energy officials to press for a \$60 million yearly commitment to cleanup at the West Valley Demonstration Project.

Bryan Bower, director of the West Valley cleanup site in the town of Ashford, said 45 minutes has been set aside by the Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management for the afternoon of Feb. 5.

The citizens' group, which acts as a watchdog over the cleanup of the former spent nuclear fuel reprocessing project, had signed off two years ago on a two-phase process for moving forward on the nuclear cleanup: Decommission and demolish above-ground facilities while continuing to study the nuclear burial sites and the underground steel tanks, which contain a radioactive sludge.

Mr. Bower said there is a finite amount of money for smaller federal nuclear cleanup sites in the Department of Energy budget. Increasing the funding for any of the sites would decrease funding for the remaining sites, he said. A cut in funding would mean a delay in some work and would end up costing more over time, he added.

Department of Energy staff at West Valley have formulated different options on what type of work might be accomplished at different funding levels — \$85 million and \$20 million, which would be a bare-bones minimum needed just to monitor the project. While federal funding dropped to \$50 million this year, project officials managed to “bank” added funding provided by congressmen Tom Reed and Brian Higgins and U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, DN. Y., in 2011.

Town of Ashford Supervisor Chris Gerwitz, a member of the Citizens Task Force, said, “We went along with the phased approach. That should be cast in stone. Now we’re looking at a big cut. We want to get going with the cleanup.” Mr. Bower said his side’s emphasis is getting the \$60 million a year. “We’re working very hard to fund that contract at the level we planned,” he said.

Paul Bembia, who heads the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority staff at the West Valley site, said it was a good idea for Citizens Task Force members to press the case for sustained funding, since there doesn’t appear to be enough money set aside to meet the Department of Energy’s cleanup agreements.

Dan Coyne, president and general manager of CHBWV, the cleanup contractor, said there is work ongoing in the chemical process cell where 275 10-foot-tall stainless steel canisters hold radioactive glass logs, the end state of more than 600,000 gallons of highly radioactive liquid waste stored in underground tanks after the Nuclear Fuel Services plant closed in 1972.

Mr. Coyne said the canisters will be stored in casks and moved to a concrete pad to await their off-site shipment when a national nuclear waste repository is available. Work has stopped on the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev., and there is no other site proposed.

Task force members John Pfeffer and Joe Patti raised the issue of aesthetics of the more than 50 casks sitting out on a concrete pad. Mr. Patti, who said he could see storing them outside for a year or so, asked how long they would sit there. Mr. Bower replied that the company was told to design the project for a 50-year life. Mr. Pfeffer, also a member of the Ashford Town Board, said fencing or plants could make it more aesthetically pleasing.

Ashford Town Board hears update on Crystal Water Company water offerings

Saturday January 26, 2013 | By: Jessie Owen, Journal editor | News

ASHFORD — Bob Runge of the West Valley Crystal Water Company was joined by some of his associates to update the Ashford Town Board about his company's endeavors in the community, during that board's Jan. 9 meeting.

While the Crystal Water Company has existed in West Valley for decades, the events of Sept. 11, 2001 caused many counties to place new restrictions on water companies. "The water that [West Valley] customers get now is a spring, and it's a very good spring," Town Clerk Patricia Dashnaw said. "But if a terrorist wanted to come in and dump something lethal into that spring, it would affect every resident here."

Cattaraugus County is asking the Crystal Water Company to ensure that new guidelines, such as proper filtration, are met. "The company is trying to update some things that need some attention," Dashnaw said, using some outdated water lines, as one example. She added that Crystal Water has applied for loans from the New York State Public Service Commission, to assist in its updates.

Runge said that his company is currently in talks with the public service commission, as well as the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, regarding a surcharge amount for customers, the release of funding for loan pay-backs, water allotments for meters and more. The company is also deciding whether to update its water provision with a well or with a spring, which it currently has.

"We are looking at different things, like where we would place a water reservoir," Runge said, "but we can't make a move with anything, until we get funds released for money we've already spent."

Although Runge said that using wells and springs costs roughly the same amount of money, "some reports lean toward a spring and some say that a well is safer. I think you can make a case, either way, based on capital expenditure. It's the security of a well, versus guarding a spring. There are benefits to both."

More testing of the local water will be required. Runge said that he hopes to have a decision made soon and have bids go out as early as April. If the water company's updates are started in the spring, Runge said that he anticipates completion by the fall. "The acquisition of property for a well is the only thing that could possibly stall it," he said.

The company has approached the West Valley Central School Board about utilizing the well on school property. "We are checking with our legal council and a decision will be made, one way or another, at the next meeting," said WVCS Board Member Michael Frascella, who was in attendance at the Ashford Board meeting.

"There is no town involvement," Dashnaw clarified. "It's a town issue, only because it affects the residents. But [Crystal Water tries] to keep the board informed, as to what they're doing. They are very good about making sure their customers are informed."

Springville Journal, Saturday, January 26, 2013

More information about this process will be printed in an upcoming issue of the Springville Journal.

In other board news:

– The board heard an update from Phil Moyer about the town’s insurance coverage. The town’s policy, which was renewed Jan. 15, includes \$1 million in liability and a \$3 million umbrella. Accidents incurred by public officials have \$1 million in coverage, through the town, in addition to the individuals’ personal insurance. Every employee also has \$50,000 in theft insurance. The town’s equipment, vehicles and buildings are also covered. After explaining these and various other coverage details, Moyer said, “You are very well insured.”

– The board issued a proclamation acknowledging Bud and Mary Lou Williams for their 30 years of work, with the local food pantry.

– Code Enforcement Officer Gary Perkins announced that AT&T is updating its antennas and adding additional equipment, in the area.

– Highway Superintendent Tim Engels reported that one of his department’s trucks recently experienced an “absolute catastrophic failure,” which ruined its engine block. A brand-new engine cost the town \$29,706. The truck had 67,000 miles on it. Engels said that the new engine came with a two-year warranty. He added that he anticipates getting another four years out of the truck.

– Board Member John Pfeffer asked that the town obtain regular reports from National Grid that show data on power gathered from solar panels in town. “We need to be diligent about these numbers,” he said, asking that Superintendent Chris Gerwitz give the board a monthly report on the issue. “I am interested in having accountability on it,” he said.

– The board discussed a request from the county to transfer approximately 3.4 miles of road to the town. The board is asking that Cattaraugus County accept 4.2 miles of the former Route 219, in return.

– New York State Energy Research and Development Authority West Valley Site Management Program Director Paul Bembia announced that, until President Barack Obama’s 2014 budget is released in February, “we don’t know what level of funding will be requested ... the West Valley Demonstration Project. If we remain at \$50 million [25 percent below the 2012 appropriation of \$66 million], the first phase of decommissioning work will be significantly impacted and probably extend until the year 2030.”

– The WVDP building that housed cement solidification systems for various liquid wastes will be demolished in three phases, beginning with the sheet metal outer structure. The demolition is scheduled to be completed by the end of March.

The next meeting will be held Feb. 13 at 7:30 p.m.



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TOM REED CONTINUES WORK WITH WEST VALLEY CITIZEN TASK FORCE AND DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY FOR NUCLEAR WASTE CLEAN UP

Feb 5, 2013 Issues: [Energy](#)

Congressman Tom Reed welcomed the West Valley Citizen Task Force to Washington and met with them at the Department of Energy Tuesday to discuss the importance of continued clean-up of the West Valley Demonstration Project.

“One of the most important functions of government is to protect public safety,” Reed said. “Seeing this project through to completion will provide long-term economic and environmental benefits to the region while protecting our residents from very real risks. Any delay increases danger and cost.”

Site clean-up will not only protect Western New York, but it will save money over the long-term. “We absolutely must scrutinize every dollar the government spends, especially in the midst of our debt-driven crisis,” Reed continued. “By making the proper investment now in nuclear waste clean-up, we will save our taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in clean-up costs in the coming decades.”

Reed has been closely involved in clean-up efforts, having previously joined with Rep. Higgins to sponsor amendments to ensure continued nuclear waste clean-up.

“Today’s meeting is a continuation of the important communication between the West Valley Task Force and Department of Energy. I will continue to work with these groups to ensure this project receives the support it needs because it is the right thing to do for our residents, our environment, and our economy.”

The West Valley site was established in the 1960s in response to a federal call for efforts to commercialize the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel from power reactors. While the site was in operation, approximately 640 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel was reprocessed. Reprocessing operations were halted between 1972 and 1976 to support facility modifications, but operations never resumed. The U.S. Department of Energy became responsible for the site through the West Valley Demonstration Project Act of 1980, legislation requiring the Department to solidify the high-level waste and dispose of it. #####



Artvoice Weekly Edition » Issue v12n7 (02/14/2013) » Letters to Artvoice

West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project - Old Problems and New Challenges

by Art Klein

Bad science and engineering, entwined with the loony economics of shallow planning and the ever-shifting priorities of government policy, led to the problem that is the West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project, New York's prominent nuclear waste site, and the delays of five decades now allows climate change to intensify its menace.

Were it not so dangerous, West Valley would resemble a comic opera of why superficial treatment of symptoms does not lower the threat of fatal disease.

In the 1960s, dissolving radioactive fuel rods in acid to extract valuable plutonium and other materials seemed so simple, but the little bit of thought given the matter soon became obvious and the activity halted when everyone realized they did not know what they were doing. It was yet another lesson that diluting the dangers from radioactive waste did not work any better than reducing any other pollution by dilution.

But that early activity created conditions that were not manageable through three decades of trying. It was not until 2002, after a chain of failed attempts, that much of the terrifying radioactive sludge in huge tanks was converted to gigantic glass modules, a lot of buried nuclear waste identified, and the extent of some seeping spills measured. But very little true remediation has been done and large threats lurk.

Most of what is present on the site is the result of deep trenches, in which was buried nuclear waste in fiber drums and cardboard boxes, leaking into the surrounding subsurface areas. Also, there lurks a large and serious subsurface strontium plume from spilled material, creeping toward surrounding bodies of water. The site and contents are monitored but with very little correction.

Both the US Department of Energy and New York Energy and Research Development Authority supervise the West Valley site. Competent scientists and engineers seek to reduce the danger of spreading radioactivity. Erosion control of surface waterways is active, and they continue to develop a scientific framework to guide decisions about the extent and character of the cleanup. But money is scarce and progress is slow, inviting outside forces like weather to provide an increased, unpredictable role.

West Valley is testimony to the failure of technology and engineering to assess and manage most toxics and radioactive waste. Mostly we mostly rely on the next generation to discover how to tame the monster we bequeath to them.

The terrible environmental consequences in nuclear waste are a threat to the water supply of millions humans living near Lakes Erie and Ontario, and the Niagara and St. Lawrence Rivers. An inch of rain an hour for many hours is more frequent these days. Such a storm flooded the village of Gowanda in 2009. Such a storm could accelerate the erosion of West Valley into Cattaraugus Creek and then Lake Erie. No current water supply filtration systems can cope with radioactive water.

Recently the West Valley Management Team assembled an impressive group of climatologist physicists to add to the information on possible impacts and outcomes of Climate Change on West Valley. Their qualifications and research findings are at

http://westvalleyphaseonestudies.org/images/documents/ClimateWorkshop_Handbook_R4.pdf.

The engineers at West Valley are proud of the bank stabilization projects that they assure us will handle even exceptional storms through the West Valley plateau. But my mind conjures the scenes of destruction in New York and Vermont as a result of Hurricane Irene last year, and the huge masonry abutments that were detached from the water banks and ended stranded in the new much wider streambeds. Nature has a way of making its own rules and ignoring puny human standards.

All this threatens your world, and we concerned citizens will gather to explain the current dangers and how they could affect you and yours.

On February 26 at 7pm, in the auditorium in the Central Library in downtown Buffalo, in an event hosted by Lynda Schneekloth of the Sierra Club Niagara Group, Western New Yorkers can learn in great detail the dangers of West Valley. Experts who have studied and worked on the problems of West Valley will take part, including Barbara J. Warren, executive director of Citizens' Environmental Coalition; Joanne E. Hameister, a research analyst who has worked on the issue since 1980; and Diane D'Arrigo, radioactive waste project director for Nuclear Information and Resource Service. These are folks with decades of dedication to doing something about the terrible threat of the nuclear waste in our midst, for which the rest of us are deeply indebted. So get out to this event and get active about removing a serious threat to your water, your life, and your descendents.

> Art Klein, Tonawanda

Art Klein chairs the West Valley Task Force for the Sierra Club Niagara Group.



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Schumer calls on DOE to ensure financial security of Jamestown's RHI Monofrax

BY MIKE DESMOND
02-19-2013

Scientists cleaning up nuclear waste sites in **West Valley**, South Carolina and the state of Washington have a process that turns the waste into glass logs and they all use a substance produced in a Jamestown plant.

RHI Monofrax is the only producer in the hemisphere which makes special glass material used by the Department of Energy. The company has part of the plant set aside and workers ready to make more.

Senator Charles Schumer held a news conference Monday at the Jamestown plant urging Washington to stop shuffling papers and order the material to do the nuclear cleanups it has agreed to do.

“The federal government must do all it can to protect RHI Monofrax, a company that employs nearly 250 people in Chautauqua County and produces a one-of-a-kind product that is critical to containing hazardous nuclear waste. That is why I’m urging the Department of Energy to adopt a common sense procurement strategy when it comes to buying these materials,” said Schumer.

“The Department of Energy has announced a need to purchase \$75 million in nuclear waste disposal materials that are only manufactured at RHI, but they currently plan on buying them in dribs and drabs over the next 25 years. This schedule must be sped up, so that RHI Monofrax can meet production demands and help with the disposal of nuclear waste across the country. If the Department of Energy fails to fast-track this procurement, Western New York could lose the ability to complete the order on time while nuclear cleanup sites are left with undisposed nuclear waste, and the Department of Energy could be left with a larger bill.”

“The Department of Energy slow walking our contract has put RHI Monofrax in Falconer in a dangerous place,” said RHI President Daryl Clendenen. “Senator Schumer’s efforts to help us cut through the red tape come at a vital time for our company and our employees. With the Senator’s help it is my hope that the Department of Energy heeds our call and makes this change, giving us greater flexibility and helping in the efforts to keep RHI open and operating in Chautauqua County.”

Chautauqua County Executive Gregory Edwards says the plant is a major high-tech employer in his county, with a century of experience.

“We have been working with RHI Monofrax for nine months on a very unique business situation where they are sole supplier to the Department of Energy for an important part of the vitrification process to contain nuclear waste,” said Greg Edwards. “

Edwards says Monofrax may be forced into some worker decisions if the Energy Department doesn't shuffle paperwork faster for the company.

"The high level of the training of the quality and training of its workforce is why it is critical to keep them moving forward," said Edwards.

Edwards says Monofrax also supplies materials for other key producers of glass, like Corning Glass.

Press Release

Feb. 22, 2013, 10:42 a.m. EST

Perma-Fix Awarded Technical Services Contract for West Valley Demonstration Project Support Services



ATLANTA, GA, Feb 22, 2013 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) -- Perma-Fix Environmental Services, Inc. [/quotes/zigman/76779/quotes/nls/pesi PESI +4.86%](#) today announced that it has been awarded a task order by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for technical services at the West Valley Demonstration Project, West Valley, New York. The task order has a three-year performance period with a \$1.3 million value.

The task order will be issued from the Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) master contract, firm-fixed-price and time and materials. Under the task order, Perma-Fix will perform technical services for the data management system that will be used to support decommissioning activities at the West Valley Demonstration Project.

Dr. Louis F. Centofanti, Chairman and CEO, commented, "We are pleased to be selected for this important project in support of the DOE's mission to complete the safe cleanup of the environmental legacy brought about from five decades of nuclear weapons development and government-sponsored nuclear energy research."

About Perma-Fix Environmental Services

Perma-Fix Environmental Services, Inc. is a nuclear services company and leading provider of nuclear waste management services. The Company's nuclear waste services include management and treatment of radioactive and mixed waste for hospitals, research labs and institutions, federal agencies, including the Department of Energy ("DOE"), the Department of Defense ("DoD"), and the commercial nuclear industry. The Company's nuclear services group provides project management, waste management, environmental restoration, decontamination and decommissioning, new build construction, and radiological protection, safety and industrial hygiene capability to our clients. The Company operates four nuclear waste treatment facilities and provides nuclear services at DOE, DoD, and commercial facilities, nationwide.

Please visit us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.perma-fix.com>.

Ashford Town Board hears update on demolition at West Valley Demonstration Project

Tuesday February 26, 2013 | By: Jessie Owen, Journal editor | News



ALL SET — Pictured is the 01-14 building at the West Valley Demonstration Project, as it appeared on Dec. 18. The structure was completely deactivated and ready for demolition. Photos courtesy of CH2M Hill Vice President of Communication and External Affairs Lynette Bennett.

ASHFORD — The Ashford Town Board welcomed representatives from CH2M Hill and the West Valley Demonstration Project, to give an update about decommissioning work done on that local site.

On Feb. 13, 01-14 Building Demolition Project Manager Kirk Winterholler, along with several other representatives, briefed the Ashford Board on demolition done to the site's building 01-14.

This multistory metal, block and concrete structure was originally built to house acid recovery systems, during nuclear fuel reprocessing activities. Per Winterholler, that acid recovery equipment was never used and has since been removed.

This building also contained a vitrification offgas treatment system. "Several complex radioactive systems ran through this building," Winterholler said. "It wasn't just like tearing down your house."

The facility was comprised of three process cells and included various support areas. Winterholler said that the individuals' working on the building had to be "very careful" when handling the equipment that needed to be removed, prior to demolition. That included reheaters; catalytic reactors; heating, ventilation and air conditioning blowers; filter housing; a waste dispensing vessel and systems piping.



DOWN IT COMES — Building 01-14 at the WVDP is pictured, during recent demolition activities.

The actual demolition began, just before the Christmas holiday, on the building and its support facilities. “We started from the outside in and then from the top down,” Winterholler said. Step one, which included the complete demolition of the control room, truck bay, conference room, motor control center rooms, clean drum room, ammonia pipe gallery and utility pipe bridge, is completed.

Step two, which includes the roof structure and exterior concrete block walls, is in progress.

“All contaminated material will be dealt with separately,” Winterholler said, adding that he hopes this building will be down on the ground by May 9.

To prepare building 01-14 for demolition, workers removed highly-contaminated piping, pumps and hazardous materials. Foaming and grouting was done on the waste dispensing vessel, reheaters and offgas piping, for removal. Fixative was applied to cells, sumps and contaminated piping internals.

Additional steps, including the removal of ventilation system filters, the isolation of air systems, the removal of hazardous materials throughout the building, the plugging and isolation of fire lines, the removal of asbestos-containing materials, the removal of shielded pipe chase sections and other site preparations, were completed. “This was a pilot project to show that this type of demolition can be done,” Winterholler said. “This is the first step of our demo.”

The WVDP representatives said that air monitoring, contamination surveys and radiological and environmental mitigation have been done, every step of the way, which is “important to people living around the site,” according to Winterholler. Air monitoring is done on an hourly basis, during the building’s demolition.



SETTLE DOWN — Workers at the West Valley Demonstration Project mitigated fugitive dust, using water for dust suppression.

Frequent surveys of the processor head and bucket and of debris are taken, throughout each day. Dust suppression is completed, while demolition is ongoing. All debris and equipment is locked down, at the end of the day.

Step three of this building’s decommissioning will include the demolition of the remainder of the facility. Waste will be shipped to Energy Solutions in Utah, via Alaron, Pa. According to Winterholler, a majority of the special equipment will be contained at the Nevada National Security Site. Waste water will be kept in an on-site interceptor, via holding tanks in the utility room.

The end state for this portion of the WVDP will be an earthen cover that slopes, north to south.

“It’s nice to see progress,” said Ashford Board Member John Pfeffer, thanking the WVDP representatives for their

presentation. "This is the most exciting thing at the plant right now," Winterholler said. "It's great to be a part of."

CH2M HILL B&W West Valley Manager Dan Coyne said that the team went through extensive training, to prepare for the demolition of building 01-14. "We treat everything like it's contaminated, so we can train the workers," he said.

In response to a question posed by Ashford Board Member Charlie Davis, Coyne said that progress was not as far along as he would like, but "we're doing fine. We have been dealing with some changes. Where I want to be is to have this building on the ground. But we are making strides. We have the right leadership team and now it's a matter of keeping people busy and hoping the money is coming in."

Pfeffer pointed out that the labor being done on building 01-14 was the "most activity" people living close to the site have seen, "in a long time."

Coyne said that the "next big visual" community members can expect to see is the moving of soil and the creation of a large, concrete pad.

Pfeffer said, "We need to emphasize, to elected officials, how important it is to clean this up." The final monetary number the WVDP will receive for the upcoming fiscal year has not yet been announced.

In other news:

- The board authorized advertising for bids for the upcoming trash pickup, which is usually held prior to Memorial Day. Those bids will be opened, during the board's March meeting.
 - Board President Chris Gerwitz created a spreadsheet, documenting National Grid's data on power collected from solar panels in town, per a request from Pfeffer. Gerwitz said he will provide this information on a monthly basis.
 - The board authorized Clerk Patricia Dashnaw to send a congratulations letter to Mary Crandall, the West Valley firefighter of the year.
 - Highway Superintendent Tim Engels reported that his department will be working with the town of Sardinia on correcting a visibility issue on Bolton and Creek roads.
 - Bids for a 550 chassis, as well as bids for the trash pickup, will be opened at the March 13 meeting.
 - Board Member Beverly Hess reported that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recently banded 19 turkey hens on her property, as part of its turkey hen study. This is part of a four-year, statewide study that will determine hen survival and harvest rates.
 - The board discussed proposed NYS legislation that could require gun owners to take out a \$1 million liability insurance policy on each firearm. "I am not a gun fanatic, but the town should do something about this," Hess said.
- Pfeffer said that the board's only option would be to make a resolution disagreeing with this proposed legislation. "It's the concept of backyard legislation to discourage people from owning guns," Board Member William Heim said. "They are looking at frivolous lawsuits."
- Dashnaw was approved to attend an annual town clerk conference.

The next Ashford Town Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Wednesday February 27, 2013

The Buffalo News.com

City & Region

West Valley N-fuel facility set to be discussed at meeting

Published: February 25, 2013, 11:23 PM

Updated: February 25, 2013, 11:23 PM

The history and the future of the nuclear fuel-reprocessing facility in West Valley will be the topic of a public meeting at 7 p.m. today in the auditorium of the Central Library in Lafayette Square in downtown Buffalo.

The Sierra Club Niagara Group, which is sponsoring the program with half a dozen other environmental groups, hopes to raise awareness of the potential dangers of radioactive waste at the West Valley site and make sure that the public has a role in deciding what to do about removing the waste.

