

COLUMBIA



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PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

URANIUM IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER? NOT ON OUR WATCH!

Right now the U.S. Department of Energy and its regulators—the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology—are developing a plan to clean up forty square miles of contaminated soil and groundwater on the southern edge of the Hanford Nuclear Site, known as the “300 Area.” This area includes ten square miles of shoreline and is heavily contaminated with radioactive and toxic pollution, including uranium, tritium, and heavy metals. Now is the time to weigh-in on a plan that decides how much and how long uranium and other dangerous pollutants will threaten the Columbia River. **Submit your comment by September 16, 2013.**

HOW MUCH URANIUM IS IN THE GROUND?

The Department of Energy disposed of

33,565

kilograms of Uranium
into ponds in the 300 Area.

That's equal to **2,387**
cases of beer.



ENERGY'S PROPOSED PLAN

Removal, Treatment and Disposal: In areas with the greatest concentration of uranium, Energy proposes to remove the first 15 feet of soil and dispose of the contaminated soil in the Environmental Remediation Disposal Facility. They will not remove uranium waste sites deep in the soil that contribute to groundwater pollution.

Monitored Natural Attenuation: Energy will rely on natural processes such as radioactive decay and dilution for pollution to slowly go away. This is a “do nothing” plan.

Groundwater Monitoring: Energy will keep an eye on groundwater pollution over time. However, there is no plan to deal with unexpected spikes in radionuclides or contaminants.

Phosphate Injections to Groundwater: Energy wants to use an experimental technology to inject phosphate, which theoretically binds to uranium and prevents uranium from reaching the Columbia River.

Institutional Controls: In the long term, Energy will restrict and control access by requiring signage, deed and zone restrictions, and permits.

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Hanford Facts

Size: 586 square miles

Plutonium produced: 57 tons

Contaminated Groundwater:
72 square miles

Underground Storage Tanks: 177

High Level Radioactive Waste In
Underground Tanks: 56 million gallons

Amount of Waste That Has Leaked
from Underground Tanks:
1 million gallons

Oldest Tank: 1944

Newest Tank: 1986

Contaminated Facilities: ~ 500

Spent Nuclear Fuel on Site:
2,100 tons

Waste disposed in Hanford Landfill: 10
million tons

Trench Waste:
15 million cubic feet

THE PUBLIC DESERVES ANSWERS

- **Does the plan protect kids, people who recreate in the Columbia River, and Native Americans?** For a portion of the 300 Area, the plan only calls for cleaning up the site to industrial safety levels. But the government cannot ensure that future generations won't use that area for homes, farming, or recreation.
- **How will monitored natural attenuation, or "do nothing," protect the Columbia River?** The government has a duty to protect present and future generations from Hanford's nuclear legacy. The plan is thin on evidence to support its claim that doing nothing will protect the Columbia River.
- **What is the government's Plan B if experimental technology does not work?** Given the uncertainty surrounding phosphate injections, the government should outline a backup plan and explain how it will protect the Columbia River.
- **Why can't the government dig more, and dig deeper to remove uranium?** The government's cleanup plan doesn't go far enough in explaining why digging more and digging deeper isn't a viable option.

DON'T LET POLLUTION CONTINUE ON OUR WATCH

- The government used this area to: (1) produce uranium fuel for Hanford's nine nuclear reactors, and (2) operate experimental and laboratory facilities, including six small-scale nuclear reactors.
- During operations, the government disposed liquid wastes containing uranium and other pollutants directly into the ground and into ponds.
- The result: a groundwater plume contaminated with uranium and other pollutants spanning nearly 4,000 feet of the river shoreline.

**Let the Department of Energy know that Uranium
doesn't belong in the Columbia River.**

Submit your comment to Energy by **September 16, 2013.**

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GET INVOLVED at columbiariverkeeper.org - **CONTACT US** at theresa@columbiariverkeeper.org



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