

Cleaning up Hanford

Hanford cleanup is more than 25 years behind schedule with 177 underground tanks containing 56 million gallons of radioactive waste. The majority of the tanks are 60-70 years old with single shells, well past their 25-year design life. Two tanks are actively leaking.

The Columbia River, the largest river in the Pacific Northwest and the 4th largest in the nation, passes through the Hanford Site. Failure of the aging infrastructure and cleanup delays are a direct threat to Tribal treaty rights, local communities, downsteam residents, agricultural activities, fish and wildlife, the regional economy, and the environment.

The Tri-Party Agreement

In 1989, the state of Washington, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency signed the Tri-Party Agreement, which is the governing document and roadmap to Hanford cleanup.

The TPA ensures that cleanup of Hanford's dangerous and radioactive nuclear waste is in compliance with federal and state law.

The TPA originally had 161 enforceable milestones and now contains more than 1,500. A milestone is a deadline with expectations of cleanup and dates due for various tasks, projects, or facilities. Any of the three agencies can request changes to the TPA. The approval process for changes includes public involvement.

Consent Decree

Due to continued delays in progress of treating and retrieving tank waste, the state negotiated a federal Consent Decree with Energy and EPA in 2010 addressing tank waste treatment and retrievals.

The Consent Decree was amended in 2016 to reflect further delays in cleanup. Key tank waste retrieval and treatment deadlines are set out in the consent decree.

Compliant Budget

Both the TPA and Consent Decree require adequate funding to meet cleanup milestones.

A compliant budget is the amount of funding needed to keep Hanford cleanup on track.

Ecology estimates that a compliant budget of \$3.35 billion is needed Fiscal Year 2023 and \$3.76 billion for 2024.

Hanford has been underfunded by more than \$4 billion in the last 8 years.

This adds \$6 billion to \$10 billion in overall costs.

Every year of inadequate funding delays cleanup an additional 1.5-3.0 years.



Ecology staff inspects the Tank-Side Cesium Removal system.

Analysis of Alternatives

Several years ago Energy was required to start an "Analysis of Alternatives" (AoA) to assess potential cost-saving alternatives to complete tank waste treatment at Hanford.

Energy's March 2021 report presents 18 alternatives, each estimated to take from 42 to 150-plus years to and \$105 billion to more than \$130 billion to complete. Because of the extended time frames and costs associated, these alternatives are not viable.



Radioactive saltcake, sludge and liquid wastes make up the dangerous waste inside of Hanford's 177 underground tanks.

Holistic Negotiations

In 2019 Energy notified Ecology that numerous tank waste treatment milestones were going to be missed. Rather that return to litigation, Ecology proposed that the Tri-Parties enter into comprehensive negotiations to address the ongoing delays. Holistic Negotiations are nearing conclusion.

Priorities

The successful retrieval, treatment, and disposal of 56 million gallons of tank waste needs to happen before catastrophic failure of a 40 to 70-year-old infrastructure.

This isn't a competition between sites for artificially limited funding, it needs to be a federal priority to fulfill the promises made to cleanup the sites after our communities sacrificed on behalf of the nation to win World War II and the Cold War.

Adequate funding levels:

- · Honor the war effort.
- Respect the current workforce.
- Shortens the duration of cleanup.
- Minimizes the long-term costs to the taxpayers.
- Assures the safety and vibrancy of the regional economy.

One of the best actions we can take to protect the nearby Columbia River and all it encompasses is to have compliant funding for Hanford cleanup.



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 509-372-7950 or email at Hanford@ecy.wa.gov, or visit https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.