



# Heart of America Northwest

*The Public's Voice for Hanford Cleanup*



Hanford Reach National Monument: radioactive contamination is leaking towards the Columbia River everyday.

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Recent press & Hanford Advisory Board pressure contractors to increase beryllium disease prevention at Hanford: <http://ow.ly/11f0K>  
2 days ago

Awesome Hanford pic: RT @plutoniumpage: Checking out the hot cells <http://twitpic.com/1lmwvp>  
2 days ago

We're honored to accept @uwsph's Service Award for Community Partners this afternoon!  
3 days ago

Update - comment period on changes & delays to the Hanford Cleanup Agreement now ends June 30th. Workshops in SEA & PDX probably 6/23 & 24  
3 days ago



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## Hanford History



### [Hanford History 101](#)

### [Hanford "Hotspots" Map](#)

The [Hanford Nuclear Reservation](#), located in southeastern Washington, is the most contaminated site in the Western Hemisphere. Since it was established in 1943, Hanford has evolved from producing Plutonium and Tritium for the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal to a [Superfund clean up site](#) dealing with the radioactive and toxic wastes generated by those operations.

**As much as 1.7 trillion gallons of contaminated wastes were dumped into unlined soil trenches at Hanford.** More than a third of the [177 underground storage tanks](#) have leaked, resulting in more than a million gallons of liquid High-Level Nuclear Waste contaminating groundwater near the Columbia River.

Based on the 2009 draft Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (and preceding documents) the U.S. Department of Energy intends to ship over 17,000 truckloads (3 million cubic feet) of radioactive toxic waste from nuclear facilities around the country to be stored at Hanford. Under the [Federal Superfund Law](#) and the State Model Toxics Control Act, no new waste can be brought to a contaminated facility until the existing contamination is brought into compliance with the law.



On November 2, 2004, Washington voters overwhelmingly passed [Initiative 297](#), now known as the [Clean-Up Priority Act](#), to require Washington to use existing laws to clean up the mess at Hanford before new waste can be brought in. The USDOE promptly filed suit to overturn the initiative. As a result, the State of Washington has not been able to enforce the initiative at Hanford. On the other hand, when [I-297](#) was put on the ballot, the USDOE finally ended the practice of dumping in unlined trenches.

SB 5445, the bill to clarify specious claims that the USDOE made about [I-297](#) in their lawsuits, passed in the WA State Senate in April 2005. Unfortunately, both SB 5445 and its companion bill, HB 1474, died in committee in the House.

## History of the People of Hanford

The [Native Americans](#) living on and near the Hanford Site have been dispossessed of their land and culture because of government policies and economic expediency. In 1855, tribes such as the Cayuse signed a [treaty](#) with the U.S. government concerning their exclusive rights to certain reservations and to hunt, gather food, fish, and graze on open and unclaimed areas of land ceded to the government.

The largest challenge today will be to push forth the cleanup efforts of the Hanford Site without compromising the rights of the [Native Americans](#) to the already diminishing land they claim. There are more than 120 recognized tribal archaeological sites along the Hanford Reach.

## Hanford's Workforce

During peak weapons production in the 1950's, Hanford employed 50,000 people. Hanford currently employs approximately 11,500 people in the clean-up workforce.

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Heart of America Northwest

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HOANW Research Center

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The U.S. Department of Energy's "target budgets" for 2005 through 2011 cut nearly \$1 billion in yearly cleanup funding, eliminating 6,000 jobs.

Recently proposed budget cuts for the construction of Hanford's [vitrification](#) (glassification) plant reduced spending for 2006 from \$690 million to \$526 million, costing jobs and delaying clean-up. All the while, many Hanford workers are battling work-related illnesses such as Chronic Beryllium Disease from breathing in on-site toxic contamination.

**1986:** 20,000 documents that had been kept secret are released to the public, including information about the [Green Run](#), an intentional release of radioactive iodine 131 for two days in 1949. Radiation levels higher than government-established limits reached as far north as Spokane and as far south as California.

**1989:** [Tri-Party Agreement \(TPA\)](#) is signed by the U.S. Department of Energy, Washington State Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for clean-up of Hanford. This is the legally binding agreement that governs clean-up of Hanford through a series of negotiated milestones.

**1989:** Environmental public interest groups begin working together as the Hanford Public Interest Network (HPIN). In 2006, the agreed upon number of meeting dates was cut from six meetings per year to four.

**1989:** The Hanford Dose Reconstruction Project begins to look into the health impacts of the 1949 Iodine 131 releases. Impacted residents are called "[downwinders](#)."

**1992:** Heart of America Northwest sues to stop the discharge of two billion gallons of untreated liquid wastes, including cooling waters containing hazardous wastes.

**1994-95:** As a result of the 1992 lawsuit, USDOE stops discharging these untreated liquid wastes.

**1994:** The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) is established, consisting of 32 stakeholder positions from around the region that advise USDOE on clean-up. The HAB meets six times a year through out the region.

**1996:** Public involvement in the USDOE Budget Prioritization process leads to the implementation of annual public hearings on budget. According to the TPA, meetings are supposed to occur in any community that requests a meeting. In 2005 this provision is not upheld.

**2000:** [Fast Flux Test Facility \(FFTF\)](#) nuclear reactor is deactivated, preventing the generation of more nuclear waste. In addition, shutdown of the FFTF rerouted \$30 million a year, the amount it cost to run the FFTF, to the clean-up project.



**2002:** December: USDOE starts ("Remote Handled Transuranic" waste) to Hanford for "storage" in [unlined soil ditches](#) and parking lots. USDOE has no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Heart of America Northwest leads opposition and urges State of Washington to stop cooperating.

**2003:** USDOE continues shipping extremely radioactive Plutonium waste to Hanford while State agrees to negotiate with Heart of America Northwest and hanford Public Interest Network groups over whether Washington will stop use of Hanford as a national radioactive waste dump and insist that USDOE stop dumping waste in unlined soil ditches.

Washington State Ecology refuses to act to stop USDOE from using unlined soil ditches for disposing of waste - USDOE issues proposal to use those ditches as a national radioactive waste dump.

Protect Washington Coalition is brought together to draft initiative 297, to require cleanup and compliance before more waste is dumped at contaminated sites and to put an end to USDOE dumping waste in unlined soil ditches. Massive citizen organizing effort for signature collection begins and runs until end of year.

Heart of America Northwest, Columbia Riverkeeper, PSR and Sierra Club sue to stop USDOE from trucking and storing highly radioactive Plutonium waste to Hanford without an EIS. State joins. Court enjoins USDOE.

**2003:** Representatives Jay Inslee (D-1,WA) and Adam Smith (D-9,WA) introduce legislation (H.R. 2508) to stop the practice of USDOE dumping radioactive, toxic waste in unlined soil trenches at Hanford. USDOE promises to end the practice soon after the legislation is introduced, but the practice resumes shortly thereafter.

**2004:** USDOE releases Hanford Solid Waste Environmental Impact Statement announcing that the preferred alternative is to dump tens of thousands of truckloads of radioactive and mixed radioactive hazardous waste from the nation's nuclear weapons production facilities at Hanford.

**2004:** Initiative 297 is filed with record number (282,000) of signatures for an Initiative to the Legislature. The purposes of the initiative include stopping Hanford or other contaminated sites from having more mixed radioactive hazardous wastes dumped while existing wastes violate state hazardous waste laws and are contaminating the environment. This would protect Washington from USDOE's proposal to dump wastes in Hanford's unlined soil ditches or to expand mixed waste

dumping.

**2004:** Pressure from Initiative 297 being on ballot (Heart of America Northwest airs photos of wastes being dumped in unlined ditches) causes USDOE to stop dumping waste in unlined soil trenches!!!

**2004:** Initiative 297 passes with the highest vote total for any ballot initiative or candidate in Washington State history, winning in 37 out of 39 Washington counties!!!

**2004:** December: USDOE sues to enjoin implementation of Initiative 297, claiming that the Atomic Energy Act preempts all state regulation of mixed radioactive and hazardous wastes if such regulation has a direct and substantial effect on USDOE's decisions about the radioactive portion of those wastes.

**2005:** Sponsors of Initiative 297 introduce legislation in Washington State Legislature to clarify and eliminate specious claims made by USDOE in lawsuit. SB 5445 passes in Senate surpassing 2/3 majority vote required to amend an initiative with in two years. 34 yays, 15 nays.

**2005:** FFTF sodium reactor core drilled, eliminating possibility of restart.

**2005:** USDOE and the Bush Administration implemented planned cuts to the Hanford clean-up budget of \$340 million dollars. This cut includes \$315 million taken from clean-up funding and 25 million diverted from clean-up to security.

**2005:** Hanford workers afflicted with Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD) and other radiation exposure illnesses begin to organize against Hanford's self insurance program due to lack of responsiveness to worker claims. Workers are seeking more compensation oversight from Hanford's private contractor to State of Washington Labor and Industries.

**2005:** First awards delivered in the Hanford Downwinder Trial. Two of six bellweather plaintiffs received monetary awards for their thyroid cancers.

**2005:** USDOE and the Bush Administration cuts funding for Hanford's vitrification (glassification) plant from the \$690 million needed annually to \$526 million for fiscal year 2006, including a \$100 million cut that resulted from criticism over mismanagement of the project.

**January 2006:** Due to continuation of the lawsuit started with Heart of America Northwest and other citizen groups over importing waste without an EIS, Washington State reaches an agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy that USDOE cannot import four types of radioactive waste until it reissues an adequate EIS. The moratorium on waste import covers: low-level, mixed low-level, transuranic, and mixed transuranic wastes. USDOE admitted that it failed to properly consider impacts to groundwater, health, safety and transportation corridor safety in its 2004 EIS.

**May 2006:** The cost of the Hanford Waste Vitrification Plant continues to escalate and its start up date is delayed from 2011 to 2017.

**June 12, 2006:** U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald strikes down Initiative 297 (Cleanup Priority Act), saying it is unconstitutional. Heart of America Northwest is currently in the midst of a legal battle, fighting hard to appeal the decision. Judge McDonald's opinion says that the provisions would be constitutional if adopted as part of general state hazardous waste law. A bill to reflect this opinion and implement the will of the voters is offered in 2007 and 2008, but does not move forward.

**2006:** Hundreds of Heart of America Northwest and other Hanford Public Interest Network group members attend meetings with top State and USDOE officials urging that the permits for the massive new landfill built at Hanford be restricted to use for Hanford Clean-Up before any offsite waste is disposed - the "Hanford Clean-Up first" principle.

Governor Christine Gregoire is hesitant to support Hanford as a site for the Bush Administration's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) due to the risk it poses by adding more waste to Hanford. Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Expansion plan would "reprocess" spent fuel to extract Plutonium -- creating vast additional quantities of liquid High-Level Nuclear Wastes. These wastes would be similar to the 153 million gallons sitting in Hanford's tanks without any treatment facility available to turn them into solid glass. Extremely radioactive wastes would be buried in shallow landfills at Hanford, if Hanford was chosen for GNEP.

**2007:** Washington Ecology, Governor Gregoire and Heart of America Northwest agree on permit language reflecting the "Hanford Clean-Up first" principle for the massive new landfill at Hanford, which USDOE had wanted to use as a national waste dump.

Hundreds of Heart of America Northwest, Columbia Riverkeeper and other groups' members turn out for the Hood River hearing on the Bush Administration's and USDOE's GNEP proposal environmental impact statement. Hood River is the only location at which USDOE agreed to hold a hearing outside the Tri-Cities in the Northwest. Testimony voicing concern over new waste, nuclear proliferation, economics and risks overwhelm supporters who were bused in from Tri-Cities. Pasco hearing has hundreds of pro-GNEP speakers supporting bringing the waste and reprocessing to Hanford and restart of Hanford's FFTF reactor as part of GNEP. A brave small group of citizens and Heart of America Northwest members from Walla Walla, and other speakers from around the region object, despite the name calling.

**2008:** [Governor Gregoire sued the Department of Energy](#) in part due to Heart of America Northwest organizing hundreds of citizens to urge the Governor to reject

any agreement to delay cleanup while USDOE wants to add more wastes.

After much citizen outcry the USDOE granted a 30 day extension for the [GNEP PEIS comment period!](#)

**2009: "Clean-up First" Victory!** After many years of persistent pressure from Heart of America Northwest and the public, principles of "Clean-up First" were included in the Hanford Clean-up Agreement proposal. The proposal stated, Hanford's preferred alternative will be to *not import offsite waste to Hanford until existing Waste Treatment Facilities are ready.*

2009 also marked the release of the long-awaited draft Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement, a 6,000 page document that was supposed to evaluate the impacts of different cleanup alternatives at Hanford. The document includes the preferred alternative to ship 3 million cubic feet of radioactive waste to Hanford, making it a national radioactive waste dump.

**2010:** Hundreds turned out to public hearings on the Tank Closure & Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement to oppose Hanford being used as a national radioactive waste dump.

#### Hanford Timeline

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