

A Salute to 2006!

So here we are, in 2006 already. This is the big year for some of the U.S. Department of Energy sites being cleaned up. Cleanup and remediation at Rocky Flats, Fernald, and Mound is supposed to be completed by the end of this year.

Except . . . Rocky Flats is already done. Ahead of schedule. All that remains, really, is some paperwork related to handover from the contractor to the DOE. Fernald is well on its way to finishing up as well, and Fluor Fernald, the cleanup contractor, expects to complete the job this summer, also ahead of schedule. And Mound will most certainly meet the schedule for handover of the site and its remaining buildings to a city development organization.

Several commercial nuclear power plants will complete the physical work of their decommissioning this year, as well, including Yankee Rowe, Big Rock Point, and Connecticut Yankee (although actual license termination may occur a year or so later). In 2005, Trojan, Saxton, and Maine Yankee obtained license terminations. Only a few commercial decommissioning projects are still continuing, including Rancho Seco, which is going about the process in an incremental fashion, San Onofre-1 (which is not going for license termination until the other two units on the site are decommissioned, many years from now), and Fermi-1 (also on the site of another unit).

So, 2006 will be a pretty big year for the D&D and site cleanup people. When sites are cleaned up and all the records turned over to legacy management organizations, the industry can point with pride at jobs well done. More important, the industry can reassure friends and critics alike that it knows how to clean up after itself.

Does that mean that after this year, there will be no more news to report

and no more stories to present in this magazine? Well, hardly.

The start of 2006 also means that commercial low-level radioactive waste generators in three-quarters of the United States have only two and a half more years of access to an LLW waste disposal site that accepts Class B and C waste. On July 1, 2008, the Barnwell LLW disposal site closes to all but Atlantic Compact states (Connecticut, New Jersey, and South Carolina) waste generators. The lack of access to LLW disposal will continue to be a major issue in the U.S. nuclear industry, one that affects not just nuclear power plants (both those currently operating and those on the drawing board), but research institutions, universities, medical laboratories, hospitals, and so on.

In 2006, plenty of sites are just getting a good grip on the cleanup work ahead of them, including Hanford, Savannah River, the Idaho National Laboratory, and Oak Ridge. These pages have reported wonderful accomplishments at those sites, but their vast size and various missions mean that there will be plenty more accomplishments to write about for many years to come.

And then, of course, there is Yucca Mountain. Maybe, just maybe, 2006 will be the year that the DOE submits its license application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the high-level waste repository at the mountain. Maybe. The DOE is no longer making any projections as to when the license application will be ready. But regardless of when the application is finally submitted, Yucca Mountain is, and will continue to be, a major story for waste writers everywhere.

For the nautically minded, there's the decommissioning of the N.S. *Savannah*, this country's only nuclear merchant ship.



What's in store for the year?

And lest we be accused of being terribly parochial, there is a whole world outside the United States that is watching what we are doing and applying the lessons learned to their own decommissioning projects, their own battles over waste disposal facility siting, and their own cleanup and remediation efforts.

So, yes, 2006 will be a time when a lot of work comes to a satisfactory finish, but it's also a time to reflect that there's still a lot of work out there to be done. These pages will continue to report on that work, for many years to come.—*Nancy J. Zacha, Editor*