

NuclearCrimes.org's Wayback Project – 'Hanford: Where DOE Lies Run Deep And Nuclear Waste Runs Deeper,' Re-published 2.18.18

Hanford: Where DOE Lies Run Deep And Nuclear Waste Runs Deeper

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When it comes to the 1 million gallons (some say it's closer to 10 million) of nuclear waste that over the decades have leaked into the soil from storage tanks at Hanford, the story ends just as it has begun. There is very little to tell. There is next to no knowledge of what has migrated deep into the soil and the groundwater - and if it is there, how it got there!

The reason for this is that the Department of Energy, which oversees Hanford and also the complex, ongoing cleanup of the former plutonium production site, has spent decades trying really hard to **not** find out the truth. A theory put forward decades ago by Hanford scientists that nuclear waste hastily thrown into substandard burial containers and trenches at Hanford would never travel deep into the soil - and reach the water table - is having a hard time dying. That theory, despite mounting evidence proving it wrong, has been vigorously defended by the DOE. Why? Because it is convenient to the DOE's selfish needs.

As Hanford whistle-blower and geophysicist John Brodeur wrote (in 2006): '...the DOE is determined not to understand the nature and extent of contamination in the vadose zone [the subsurface zone above the groundwater]... This is because the more that is known, the greater the problem becomes.'

In sum, there's a great deal to be gained by the DOE (such as decisions regarding what can nowadays be dumped at Hanford or be left in the ground and in tanks during cleanup) if Hanford stakeholders all agree that what leaks near the surface will stay near the surface. However, Brodeur notes in his 2010 comments on a recent Hanford draft environmental impact statement: "At Hanford we find several tank farms where the vadose zone contamination is now entering the groundwater, including the B farm complex, C farm, SX farm and T farm...Another example is the SX Farm where very high concentrations of Tc-99 contamination have been identified in the groundwater.' The DOE, however, isn't convinced that extremely high concentration plumes hitting the groundwater are from the tank leaks and irrationally has resisted completing a thorough study of the deep soils below the tank farms to trace plumes to their sources.

Adjacent to the Hanford site is the Columbia River, the U.S.'s second longest. The Columbia was the most radioactive river in the world from World War II to the early 1970s per a 1994 report by the Oregon Public Health Division due to Hanford workers directly dumping nuclear waste into it during the Cold War. But there are many ways pollution can enter a river. Huge quantities of nuclear waste, presently percolating through the subsurface at Hanford, are wholly unmonitored and unknown (potentially historically high) concentrations of this waste are moving through the groundwater, destined for the Columbia River. Brodeur warns: "Long-term groundwater impacts would result in extensive regions of contamination along the Columbia River shoreline making the area uninhabitable." What is 'long term?' The DOE is assuming - and hoping others agree - that if the 1 million gallons hasn't been heard from, it's not a problem. But Brodeur has indicated that other high concentration plumes are waiting in the wings, destined to reach the Columbia River sooner than anyone is anticipating. Long-time critics of the DOE frequently make the same assertion about the DOE - that their models are only as good as their data, and that the DOE is notorious for collecting meager data (possibly because they often have preconceived agendas which 'drive' their models). In the case of Hanford, there is serially 'bad science' happening, and people should know that bad science hurts people. In this story, that means the 'long term' could be just around the corner.

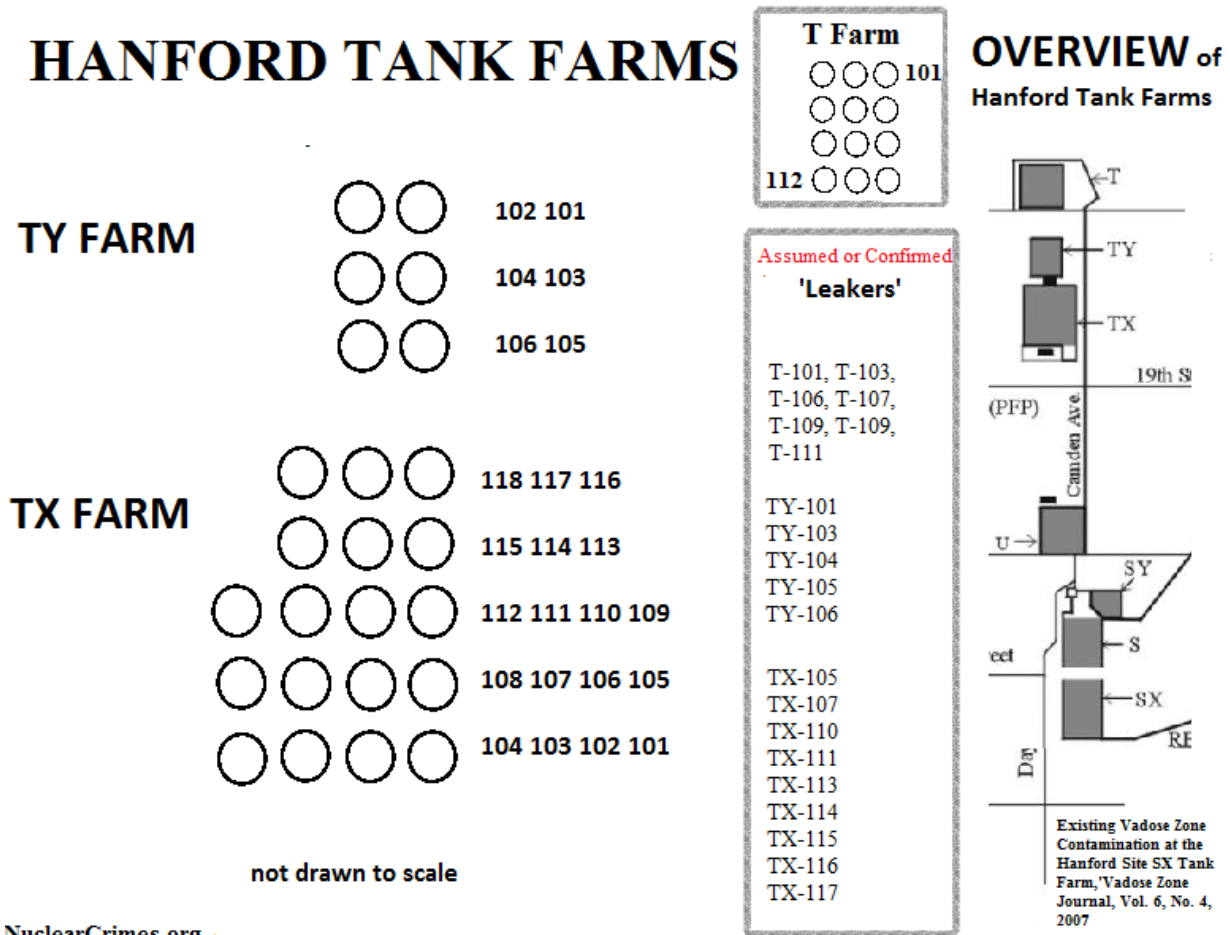
Any student of the nuclear age will notice that the DOE adheres to the phrase 'the more that is known, the bigger the problem is' not only at Hanford but also across its sphere of influence. Where did it acquire that philosophy? Let's examine what Utah federal judge Bruce Jenkins said in the mid-1980s in the most famous downwinder trial. He said that one of the negligent failures of the Atomic Energy Commission, which placed U.S. citizens at risk of injury from above-ground weapons testing fallout, was its failure to monitor radioactivity in communities and population centers near the Nevada Test Site. Jenkins noted that "Careful review of the numerous relevant documents, reports and statements which are now a part of the record in this case compels this court to conclude that the monitoring activities conducted in the areas surrounding the Nevada Test Site in an effort to ascertain external doses of radiation were persistently negligent in philosophy and action. The monitoring program as carried out necessarily produced inadequate data from which to accurately evaluate...risks of adverse health effects, especially as related to children."

The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) simply wasn't interested in having citizens downwind of their nuclear bomb tests discover how badly their environment - including their air, milk, water, etc... - was being contaminated. That was a threat to the atomic testing program. So, the AEC did whatever it could to cover up the information that could lead Americans to the conclusion that their health was in danger. Well, our health is in danger again with the Department of Energy trying to keep us from knowing the truth, which, if known, could hurt its credibility, budget and possibly the programs across the nuclear weapons complex that every day add more contamination to the soil, water and air.

Sources:

['Recent Leaks From Hanford's High-Level Nuclear Waste Tanks: USDOE's Failure to Monitor, Report or Characterize Tank Leaks' - John R. Brodeur for Heart of American Northwest, April 2006](#) – or <http://bit.ly/2FeaJRR>

Hanford Challenge and NRDC Comments on the Draft Tank Closure and Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement for the Hanford Site, 2010



**February 23, 2013 -MONITORING DESIGNED TO FAIL - U.S. DOE
DELIBERATELY DESIGNED MONITORING AT HANFORD TO N-O-T KNOW
EXTENT OF LEAKING WASTE PROBLEM – NuclearCrimes.org/nuclearnews-
3.php (Written by Andrew Kushner. No longer online)**

Although the leaks mentioned in the news in mid-February are small compared to the legacy of pollution - literally over one million gallons of toxic-nuclear waste is already in the 'soil pipeline' - the blanket statement by the Energy Department that there is no immediate risk to human health or the environment is unsupported. Why? Per the book 'The American West at Risk,' most of the monitoring wells at Hanford are 100-150 feet deep, which is only HALFWAY through the unsaturated (or 'vadose') zone of bedrock. What that means is that they aren't DEEP enough to 'intersect the lowest level of pollution' (p.194) - they aren't suited to accurately measure how plumes might be moving towards or into the river! This is typical Department of Energy junk science- BAD monitoring. Experts point out that very high concentrations of cobalt-60 and cesium-137 plumes have already entered the groundwater (water table), which they deduce because contamination was found at the deepest point of a borehole but NOT found in shallower borehole depths; however the DOE ignores this data!

Between the poor monitoring, the DOE's ignoring the need to investigate deep contamination (and consider deep contamination as part of the leak assessment), and the usage of a definition of a 'leak' that wouldn't even characterize the highest known leaks as leaks(!), the DOE has designed their monitoring and characterization plan so that they won't find what's down there and to deliberately bias *downward* the size and danger of the leak problem. Per one expert: 'Little has changed since the GAO and Inspector General found that USDOE deliberately designed its High-Level Nuclear Waste tank leak detection and contamination characterization programs to avoid finding leaks and to support DOE's conclusion that the impacts of those leaks will be low. The evidence shows that this is dangerously wrong.' (p.6) Read more from this expert in [Recent Leaks From Hanford's High-Level Nuclear Waste Tanks: USDOE's Failure to Monitor, Report or Characterize Tank Leaks](#)

NuclearCrimes.org was a free and ad-free website by activist-researcher Andrew Kushner. The website contained analyses spanning a wide spectrum of topics including 'Mighty Oak' (a nuclear test blunder), the Rongelapese, nuclear spacecraft re-entries, global nuclear testing fallout, radiation monitoring in the nuclear age, and radiation victim compensation (e.g., the Irene Allen case). It was founded as Idealist.ws in 2007, renamed to NuclearCrimes.org in 2011, and was closed in 2014.

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