

claims the two companies made over a period of over 12 years, from January 2001 to June 2013.

The DOJ also argued that Bechtel improperly claimed and received government funding for lobbying activities in violation of the Byrd Amendment and of contractual and regulatory requirements. According to the DOJ, Bechtel allegedly used taxpayer dollars to pay lobbyists to actively downplay to Congress the significance of concerns that the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board raised in 2009 regarding the design and construction of the WTP. The DOJ said that the lobbying also included an attempt to secure an additional \$50 million in public funds in 2011 that were thought to be in jeopardy because of the safety board's concerns.

By settling the lawsuit, Bechtel and AECOM admit no wrongdoing in the matter. In a statement, Fred deSousa, manager of public affairs for Bechtel, said that the company expressly denies all of the allegations. According to the terms of the settlement, Bechtel will pay \$67.5 million and AECOM will pay \$57.5 million.

Idaho

The Department of Energy announced on December 29 that it is continuing testing of the Idaho Site's long-delayed Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU). The DOE has continued to miss deadlines in the construction and operation of the IWTU, which was to begin treating 900,000 gallons of radioactive liquid waste at the Idaho Site in 2012. Most recently, the DOE informed the state of Idaho that it would miss a September 2016 consent order deadline to begin operations while it worked to resolve technical issues.

Hazen Research, in Golden, Colo., will use a small-scale version of the IWTU's primary reaction vessel to help resolve issues

that surfaced during prior simulated waste treatment runs. Hazen engineers will use the vessel and a liquid waste proxy for a series of experiments designed to create optimum waste treatment conditions within the replica Denitration Mineralization Reformer (DMR).

A cylindrical vessel filled with billions of tiny sand-like particles, the DMR is heated to about 1,200 °F, during which the particles become agitated or fluidized by gasses. Liquid waste is injected into the vessel, and as the liquid is quickly dried by heat, it coats the particles. The granular waste product is transferred to other processes within the IWTU facility before ultimately being sealed in stainless steel canisters.

During prior test runs, the injected liquid simulated waste coated the inside of the DMR, causing a bark-like substance to form. According to the DOE, that anomaly disrupted the fluidized motion of the particles, which in turn caused other chemical, temperature, and mechanical problems inside the vessel.

The DOE said that a working group of technical experts from the DOE complex, industry, and academia determined that the particle size and fluidizing gas composition are crucial to maintaining an optimum reaction environment within the DMR. Testing at Hazen seeks to determine the ideal methodology for controlling particle size and other parameters affecting the bark formation rate to prevent problems within the DMR.

Savannah River

Savannah River Remediation (SRR), the Department of Energy's liquid waste contractor at the Savannah River Site, announced on September 15, 2016, that one of two newly constructed salt solution receipt tanks began receiving waste earlier

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