

Hurrah for ARRA

Over the past several months, you may have heard various pundits ranting and raving either for or against the spending by the U.S. government on projects funded by the economic Stimulus Bill (or, more formally, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—ARRA). Conservatives look at the current budget deficit and blanch at the \$800-billion price tag. Financial pragmatists look at the thousands of teachers, police officers, and fire fighters whose jobs were supported in 2009–2010 by stimulus funds (particularly now that these same teachers, police officers, and fire fighters are facing layoffs in the latter half of 2010 now that the stimulus money has, for the most part, run out). And they ask if the stimulus really accomplished anything except delaying for one year a whole raft of layoffs. Liberal economists are discussing the need for a second stimulus to shore up the economy until the private sector has recovered sufficiently.

In the nuclear decontamination and decommissioning world, however, there is no doubt at all that the ARRA funds have done a lot of good for the country. If you can throw an extra \$6 billion (the amount of stimulus money allocated to the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, which funds government nuclear D&D work in the United States) at selected D&D projects, you're going to put a lot of people on the payroll, and you're going to get results. And now, after a year or so, we are starting to see those results.

Almost every day, I get a press release from a project or site that records the progress on a project, or even the completion of a project, thanks to ARRA funding. In this issue of the magazine, we look at a few

of those projects.

In the "Headlines" section, you can read that the DOE has finished cleanup of facilities used in the old U.S. Atomic Energy Commission days at GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy's Vallecitos Nuclear Center, thanks to funding from the ARRA (see page 12).

In the features section, a photo essay starting on page 41 looks at the demolition of the massive K Cooling Tower at the Savannah River Site. This tower, which was never really used because of the sudden ending of the Cold War, still had to be maintained because aviation lights on its top needed regular tending. Now, with the cooling tower just a pile of rubble on the ground (and that rubble will probably have been cleaned up by the time you read this), those workers who had to deal with those lights are freed up for other D&D work.

ARRA funding is also increasing the amount of waste being sent to the Hanford Site's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility each day, as well as contributing to facility and equipment upgrades. A photo essay beginning on page 60 gives more details.

Articles appearing in the *next* issue (September/October 2010) will look at how ARRA funding has accelerated cleanup projects at both Paducah and Brookhaven.

These are just a few of the many projects that are being finished early or are being undertaken because of ARRA funding. Who knows when the Savannah River Site would have been able to get around to the demolition of the K Cooling Tower without the stimulus funding? It might have been next year, but it might have been in 10 years. And certainly, increasing the amount of waste you can



What an Extra \$6 Billion Will Buy You

dispose of in a day means that the job will be finished sooner.

Projects funded by ARRA have to be finished by the end of fiscal year 2011, that is, by September 30, 2011. That means there is about one more year in which to enjoy this additional funding for critical DOE cleanup projects. Economists from all sides of the political spectrum can agree or disagree, but from this editor's viewpoint, the stimulus money has created or saved jobs, while at the same time making the planet a little safer. Not a bad investment at all.—Nancy J. Zacha, Editor