

## Looking Down the Road

The U.S. Department of Energy owns a lot of property. The Hanford Reservation alone is more than 500 square miles (about half the size of the entire state of Rhode Island). Granted, a lot of the Hanford site is scrub desert, and people and businesses may not exactly be standing in line to get a piece of it. Still, you have to have a plan for what happens to the land when the DOE finally walks away from the site (or from *most* of the site; some of the site will remain in DOE hands forever). The DOE also has similar concerns about its properties in South Carolina, Idaho, Tennessee, and elsewhere.

And it so happens that the DOE is already thinking about the next step. Buoyed, no doubt, by the successes of post-cleanup strategies at the Rocky Flats and Fernald sites (both becoming, essentially, nature preserves), the department is looking into the distant future when much of the Hanford, Savannah River, Oak Ridge, and other sites are essentially cleaned up and given a new life. At Hanford, the DOE has even created a staff position, Government Affairs Program Manager, to look beyond cleanup.

So, what *do* you do with an old defense site? As mentioned previously, some former sites are located in areas where creating a nature preserve is a good idea. Other sites, however, notably Mound in Ohio, are located in primarily urban areas, and the property is more suitable for industrial and business use.

I have read that a proposal has already been made to lease some portion of the Hanford site to Energy

Northwest, which operates the Columbia nuclear power plant at the edge of the site, for an energy park. Anyone who has spent a summer in the Hanford area knows that the sun shines there for 16 hours a day, every day. That means it might be a good site for a solar power station. (Of course, the sun stops shining in the winter, and then you get the “Richland rain,” which falls all day, though never hard enough to get you wet.)

And then there is B Reactor, the world’s first production-scale reactor. The reactor is open for a few public tours each summer, but these tours are “sold out” within minutes of announced openings. Congress is considering the creation of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park, and B Reactor and other facilities on the Hanford site may be added to the proposal. Hanford also has thousands of artifacts from the World War II and Cold War days, and these need to find a home and a purpose.

Other DOE sites have similar buildings and artifacts that help to tell the story of the Manhattan Project and Cold War activities. A session at an American Nuclear Society meeting a few years ago featured historians and archivists charged with preserving this unique history.

Site remediation is not just about tearing things down and cleaning things up; it’s also about historical preservation and productive reuse. Kudos to the DOE for looking forward to a time when its properties can teach new generations lessons about history, nature, and proper stewardship of national treasures.—

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*Wildlife Preserves, Museums, Business Parks, and More*