Editor's Note

Comments on this issue

The future of things past

This issue of *Radwaste Solutions* is coming out just as two notable waste management meetings are set to begin—Exchange Montitor's RadWaste Summit in Summerlin, Nev., (September 5-7) and the 2017 National Cleanup Workshop in Alexandria, Va., (September 12-14), presented by the Energy Communities Alliance in cooperation with the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management and the Energy Facility Contractors Group.

Both meetings should prove valuable to anyone working in radioactive waste management, whether that involves the decontamination and decommissioning of commercial nuclear facilities, the disposition and management of various waste streams, or the remediation of legacy waste resulting from the United State's nuclear programs. Of course, the Cleanup Workshop will focus on the DOE's efforts to clean up Manhattan Project and Cold War legacy waste, but the RadWaste Summit also devotes a good portion of its agenda to discussing DOE cleanup activities and priorities, including an update on progress at New Mexico's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

The future of legacy waste remediation is an important subject. With changing national leadership and budget priorities, there remains a certain amount of uncertainty in how the DOE will meet its legacy waste challenges. Case in point: A news article from the Northwest News Network (www.nwnewsnetwork.org) came across my desk recently about Energy Secretary Rick Perry touring the DOE's Hanford Site, which has had its share of challenges. The article, "Energy Secretary: Hanford Budget Will Be Enough to 'Get the Job Done'" (August 15), noted that Perry would not discuss the level of funding the DOE expects will be available to the site near Richland, Wash. Perry, who was quoted as saying he wasn't going to craft a budget on the spot, cannot be faulted for being circumspect, but neither can the public be faulted for wanting some reassurance that the cleanup will get done.

While much work remains to be done, the DOE is making steady progress in cleaning up the nation's legacy nuclear waste.

The response I've heard from many of those in the DOE, however, is that the job will get done, one way or another. At another notable radwaste meeting, the Waste Management Conference, held in Phoenix, Ariz., in March, then DOE Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Sue Cange noted how the Office of Environmental Management is working to "harness and sustain" the momentum gained from its past accomplishments to further advance cleanup progress across the DOE complex (see "Sustaining the Momentum," starting on page 44).

Some of the more recent accomplishments that are adding to Environmental Management's momentum are detailed in this issue, which focuses on subjects pertaining to D&D and environmental remediation. First, working with contractor CH2M Hill, the DOE is in the final stages of decommissioning Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant, with the goal of removing the former production facility to its concrete slab by the end of the year (page 16).

Meanwhile, across the country, at the DOE's Savannah River Site in South Carolina, workers with DOE contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions are using passive environmental remediation systems to cheaply and effectively remove contaminants from groundwater (page 34). These systems, which use little to no outside energy, are replacing large pump-and-treat systems that are expensive to operate and maintain.

Likewise, Cliff Carpenter of the DOE's Office of Legacy Management provides an example of the work the office is doing in monitoring and maintaining contaminated Cold War legacy sites, keeping them safe for generations to come (page 38).

You will also find in this issue a look at work being done by researchers with the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute on developing new virtual decommissioning simulator technologies (page 24); an update on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's progress in amending its rules for decommissioning power reactors (page 27); and a report by the Nuclear Energy Agency on more accurately estimating the costs of nuclear decommissioning projects (page 31). Of course, you'll also find our annual Buyers Guide, listing nearly 400 global companies offering more than 160 products and services related to radioactive waste management.

And if you happen to be at one or both of September's meetings, take note of what the DOE is doing and let us know what you think they can do differently or better. We'll be there, listening.—*Tim Gregoire, Editor*