

## **Benton commissioner seeks federal grant for Hanford site, FFTF study**

*It's a nice thought for FFTF but haven't the fuel and sodium gone?*

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Benton County Commissioner Claude Oliver is proceeding with plans to apply for a federal Global Nuclear Energy Partnership grant despite an announcement that the Tri-City Industrial Development Council also plans to apply.

Oliver and longtime supporters of restarting Hanford's Fast Flux Test Facility plan to meet a Sept. 7 deadline with a more limited proposal than TRIDEC plans.

"We have got to have something with broad scientific, academic and political support," Oliver said.

TRIDEC is applying for a grant of up to \$5 million to study parts of the Hanford nuclear reservation as a site for a new federal program to recycle used nuclear fuel. TRIDEC's plan has the support of U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., who Oliver is challenging on the Republican ballot in the September primary.

TRIDEC would like to offer a variety of options in Hanford's 400 Area, which includes the FFTF research reactor; Energy Northwest, which operates a nuclear power plant near the 400 Area; and possibly a laboratory just north of Richland in the 300 Area.

DOE is interested in developing a Consolidated Fuel Treatment Center, which would separate reactor fuel left from making electricity into usable and waste components.

Then a second facility, an Advanced Burner Reactor, would convert usable components – long-lived radioactive isotopes -- into shorter-lived radioisotopes that present less of a disposal problem. The reactor also would produce electricity.

TRIDEC is proposing a range of land, infrastructure and facilities that might interest DOE. The proposals would offer many options that could work with or without FFTF.

When DOE announced the grant competition in August, it said preference may be given to a proposed site that has the potential to be used for the fuel treatment center and the reactor.

It also said preference would be given to sites at which there is community and state support for use of the site for GNEP facilities.

The proposal Oliver is backing, the Washington State Nuclear Energy and Science Research Center, would include the reactor but not the fuel recycling center. Although DOE appears to be looking to France for nuclear testing for the recycling program and the U.S. for operations of the facilities, Oliver believes FFTF would be a better option for testing.

In a letter to Gov. Chris Gregoire, Oliver wrote that he favors using existing facilities for GNEP testing while transitioning into commercial isotope production. Oliver has previously led efforts to get FFTF restarted to make isotopes for medical and other commercial uses, but has not won DOE support.

His proposal does not include the fuel treatment center DOE plans because bringing spent nuclear fuel to Hanford for storage until it is reprocessed would not be popular, according to a press release from Oliver's campaign.

In 2004, Washington voters passed an initiative intended to bar nuclear waste from being sent to Hanford.

The initiative was overturned in federal court, but is on appeal.

Sodium used to cool the reactor has been drained and a technical study would be needed to determine if it would be safe to restart.

Supporters fighting to save the reactor earlier said draining the sodium would keep the reactor from being restarted, but now are more optimistic.