

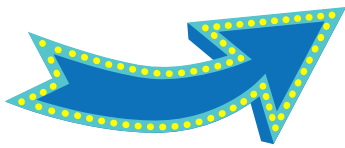


Hanford Cleanup Budget

U.S. Dept. of Energy Fiscal Year 2026
Budget Request Comment Period

COMMENT DEADLINE: FRI, APRIL 5, 2024

WHAT?



The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) is gathering your comments on its fiscal year 2026 Budget Request. USDOE is required to submit a compliant budget that keeps cleanup on track, but the budget changes as it goes up the chain of command to the President. Your comments can help put a spotlight on why it is important that the cleanup is fully funded, and communicate your cleanup priorities.

BACKGROUND

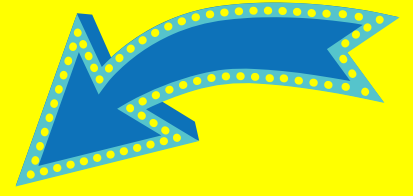
The Hanford Site budget process is complicated. There are always three fiscal years of budget in play at one time: the current year and the next two. So in 2024, the local USDOE site managers that run the Richland Operations and Office of River Protection are working on their budget requests for fiscal year 2026. Hanford's fiscal year goes from Oct 1 to Sept 30.

Certain parts of the budget process are hidden from public view. Since 2013, more and more of the budget numbers have been embargoed so that you can't see them. This makes it really hard to provide meaningful comments on what the USDOE local field office is planning to request. The lack of information also means you can't see how the field offices are prioritizing cleanup to know what would "fall off the plate" if the cleanup was not fully funded.

Read on to see Hanford Challenge's concerns and sample comments.



HANFORD CHALLENGE CONCERNS



In the past, the public, stakeholders, and regulators had a **collaborative relationship** with the USDOE field offices when it came time for budget submittals. It was well-known that for federal employees "the President's budget is our budget", even if they didn't like cuts that were made from their original submittal.

The WA State Department of Ecology, Environmental Protection Agency, and public were seen as allies in the work of advocating for a fully-funded cleanup that protected human and environmental health.

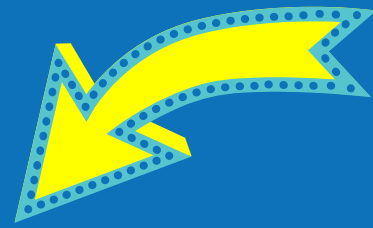
THIS COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT IS GONE. USDOE conversations about the budget have turned defensive and closed, with no effort to share preliminary budget submittal numbers — all under the excuse that this information is embargoed until the President releases their budget request to Congress.



While we are disheartened with this lack of transparency, future leadership could turn us back to an era of collaboration to ensure that the case is made, loud and clear, from all fronts, that **the cleanup must be fully funded in order to succeed.** Until then, we will work towards this future.



HANFORD CHALLENGE CONCERNS CONTINUED



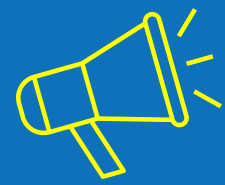
In addition, we are concerned that USDOE isn't asking for the amount of money it truly needs to keep cleanup on track. For example, the projected cleanup cost for FY 2023 was between \$4.4-6.8 billion, according to USDOE's own Hanford Lifecycle Scope, Schedule and Cost Report. However, **for the FY 2023 budget request, USDOE only asked for \$2.5 billion.**

According to Ecology, every year of inadequate funding delays cleanup an additional 1½ to 3 years.

Year after year, USDOE asks for less money than what is actually needed to fund cleanup priorities. USDOE will never be able to fully fund cleanup and stay on track if it doesn't ask for the amount that is needed to do the work. We are concerned that cleanup will take longer and longer, and USDOE will look for shortcuts to save money and time. All because USDOE didn't ask for the money it knows it needs.



SAMPLE COMMENTS



REQUEST A COMPLIANT CLEANUP BUDGET:

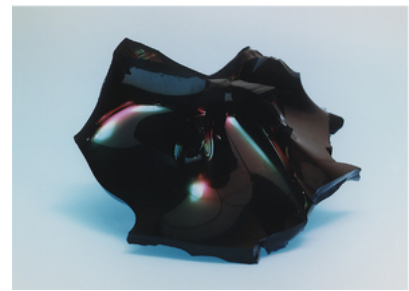
Don't make cuts before they are made for you. Ask for the amount of money needed to fully fund cleanup. Requesting insufficient funding delays cleanup. Make the case for a fully funded cleanup that meets legally mandated deadlines and ensures human and environmental protection. Request funding levels based on projections in the 2022 Lifecycle Scope, Schedule and Cost Report and use the report as leverage to advocate for the funding needed to stay on track.

Prioritize funding for:

- **TANK WASTE VITRIFICATION:** Make glass safely. Prioritize work on Direct Feed Low Activity Waste to immobilize tank waste in glass.



*Low Activity Waste Facility
Image courtesy of USDOE*

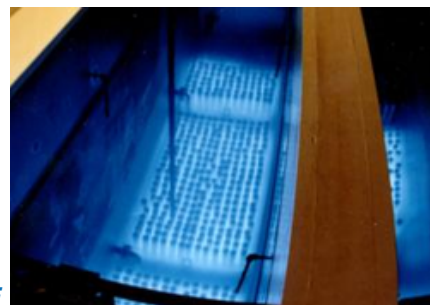


*An example of vitrification (glass)
Image courtesy of WA State Dept. of Ecology*

- **324 BUILDING CLEANUP:** Safely clean up B-cell contamination and make sure waste is characterized appropriately to keep long-lived radionuclides out of Hanford's onsite landfill, the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility.
- **WESF CAPSULES TO DRY STORAGE SOONER:** Safely get the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility (WESF) strontium and cesium capsules to dry storage. Ensure funding for testing the degradation of concrete storage pools following removal of capsules to allow this data to increase safety everywhere that concrete and radiation are interacting.

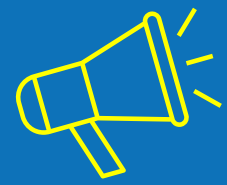


*324 Building
Image courtesy of USDOE*



*Waste Encapsulation
Storage Facility
Image courtesy of USDOE*

SAMPLE COMMENTS



REQUEST A COMPLIANT CLEANUP BUDGET:

Prioritize funding for:

- **HANFORD WASTE TREATED ONSITE:** Restore onsite capacity for treating Hanford waste that is currently sent to Perma-Fix Northwest.
- **WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY:** Ensure worker training and personal protective gear, including supplied air for protection from toxic chemical vapors in Hanford's tank farms.
- **NEW TANKS:** Start the process for building new tanks and increase readiness and quick-to-implement infrastructure for emergency pumping of leaking tanks.



*Hanford workers
Image courtesy of USDOE*



*Tanks under construction
Image courtesy of USDOE*

- **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:** Solicit public input and values early and often. Use this input to shape cleanup decisions instead of performing check-the-box public involvement after decisions are essentially a done deal.

DELAY TANK CLOSURE: Don't spend resources on tank farm closure.

INCREASE TRANSPARENCY: Open the field office budget submittal process and share field office budget planning details. These numbers provide the context needed to write meaningful comments.

LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION



Hanford Cleanup Budget

U.S. Dept. of Energy Fiscal Year 2026
Budget Request Comment Period

COMMENT DEADLINE: FRI, APRIL 5, 2024

Public Interest and Stakeholder Resources

- [Hanford Challenge Comment Form](#)
- [Hanford Challenge Formal Public Comments](#)
- [USDOE Public Meeting on Hanford Cleanup Priorities on March 6th, 2024](#)
- [Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility Information and Video](#)
- [Perma-Fix Northwest Information and Video](#)
- [WA Dept. of Ecology 2023 Cost of Hanford Cleanup Fact Sheet](#)
- [Hanford Advisory Board FY26 Cleanup Priorities Advice #315 February 2024](#)

QUICK & EASY COMMENT FORM

or Email comments to the USDOE Field Offices at

CleanupPriorities@rl.gov

This Say What? Guide is funded through a Public Participation Grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology. The content was reviewed for grant consistency, but is not necessarily endorsed by the agency.