

HJM 5 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

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Meeting Dates: 5/4, 5/10

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Urges Congress to continue to appropriate funds for Hanford Nuclear Reservation cleanup, with specific focus on funding for remediation of ground water contamination.

No fiscal impact, no revenue impact

House Vote: Adopted. Ayes, 53; Nays, 2--Nearman, Post; Excused, 5--Boone, Gorsek, Hack, Hayden, Malstrom.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Interim review of agency by Joint Department of Energy Oversight Committee
- Importance of reminding Congress of funding need
- Hanford is the world's largest environmental clean up project
- Ground water plume is most likely pathway for contaminated materials to reach Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Hanford is located on the Columbia River, just 35 miles from Oregon's border. For more than 40 years, the federal government produced plutonium for America's nuclear weapons program at the Hanford nuclear site in southeast Washington. That process created large amounts of radioactive and chemically hazardous waste. Since plutonium production ended in 1989, the focus at Hanford has shifted to waste cleanup. More than 2,000 distinct waste sites have been identified at Hanford, ranging from small areas of surface contamination to hundreds of solid waste burial trenches. There are hundreds of contaminated facilities, including nine nuclear production reactors, laboratories, and large chemical reprocessing plants. An estimated 444 billion gallons of contaminated liquid was dumped into the soil, causing extensive contamination of Hanford's ground water. The most hazardous of the liquid waste was pumped to 177 underground storage tanks.

House Joint Memorial 5A would urge Congress to continue to appropriate funds for Hanford Nuclear Reservation cleanup, with a specific focus on funding for the remediation of ground water contamination.