



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 13, 2008

Contact: Mavis Belisle, Peace Farm, 806.341.4801, [peacefarm@arn.net](mailto:peacefarm@arn.net)

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM, 505.989.7342, c. 505.920.7118, [jay@nukewatch.org](mailto:jay@nukewatch.org)

## **Pantex Projects \$402 Million in Future “Environmental Liabilities” Nevertheless, Cleanup to Be Transferred to Weaponers**

Figures just released as the result of a protracted legal battle show that “Future Environmental Liabilities” at the Pantex Plant are expected to exceed 400 million dollars. The Pantex Plant, near Amarillo, TX, is the NNSA’s site for final assembly and disassembly of nuclear weapons. Three years ago Nuclear Watch New Mexico filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the FY 2006 Pantex “Ten-Year Comprehensive Site Plan,” and sued in March 2007 after the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) failed to respond. Subsequently, Nuclear Watch received a heavily redacted plan, which the organization contested in federal court.

At a recent hearing, the ex-Pantex Manager responsible for the redactions was NNSA’s primary defense witness. Amongst many other questions, the judge asked him “What is the basis for the exclusion of the environmental liability chart on [page] 4-24, other than it is a subject that, obviously, could create public interest?” In Nuclear Watch’s view, no satisfactory answer was given, except that two weeks later NNSA released 104 previously redacted pages.

In the public interest, based on the newly obtained information, “Future Environmental Liabilities” at the Pantex Plant include:

- “Long-Term Stewardship” (LTS, \$210 million), comprised of “surveillance, maintenance, monitoring and records management.” LTS will be implemented under the National Nuclear Security Administration beginning this October 1, ending cleanup by the DOE’s Environmental Management division. LTS activities account for most of the estimated costs after 2025, and have no planned end date. Other than “pump and treat” of groundwater, which is unlikely to remove all contaminants, it’s not clear what other “cleanup” activities will take place.

Peace Farm 188 Highway 60 Panhandle TX 79068-7200  
806 341-4801 • [peacefarm@arn.net](mailto:peacefarm@arn.net) • [www.peacefarm.us](http://www.peacefarm.us)

Nuclear Watch New Mexico 551 West Cordova Road #808 Santa Fe, NM 87505  
505.989.7342 • [info@nukewatch.org](mailto:info@nukewatch.org) • [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org)

- “D&D [demolition and decontamination] of excess facilities” (\$36M).
- “Contaminated Media - Disposition of contaminated media may include soil, sediment, surface water and groundwater” (\$20M).
- “Excess Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Materials – Includes disposition costs of excess materials (components, trainers, tooling, etc.) associated with retired weapons programs. For active weapon programs, the respective weapon program will fund disposition costs” (\$130M; parentheses in the original). In response to Congressional pressure NNSA is now claiming that it has accelerated dismantlements rates, and hence these costs are likely to substantially increase. At the same time, Pantex stores an estimated ~15,000 plutonium pit “triggers,” potentially a huge environmental liability.
- “Other liabilities” (\$4.5M), “e.g. potential Natural Resources Damage Assessment.” Such an assessment could allow the State of Texas to recover funding for remediation of environmental damages at the Plant.

NNSA is currently proposing to “transform” its nuclear weapons complex. Mavis Belisle, Peace Farm Director, noted “Even as Pantex plans to increase bomb production rates, its officials have never been candid with the community about the true costs of environmental mismanagement. Decades of so-called cleanup may not resolve the problems. We will likely have to live with the consequences of increasing nuclear weapons activities at Pantex beyond our children’s lifetimes.” The Peace Farm is located directly across from the Pantex Plant.

As background, the Department of Energy’s FY08 Congressional Budget Request stated

Historical waste management practices at the Pantex Plant have resulted in contamination of the soils and the upper Perched Aquifer. High explosives, metals, and solvents exist in the soils located at the Pantex Plant. The Perched Aquifer contaminant plume has migrated past the Plant boundaries and onto adjacent landowners’ properties to the southeast.

# # #

Relevant pages of the FY 2006 Pantex Plant Ten-Year Comprehensive Site Plan are available at [http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/Pantex06-TYCSP\\_Excerpts.pdf](http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/Pantex06-TYCSP_Excerpts.pdf)

A public hearing on “Complex Transformation” and its impact on the Pantex Plant will be held February 28, 2008 at the Amarillo Globe-News Center Education Room, 401 S. Buchanan, Amarillo, Texas, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. & 6 p.m.-10 p.m.

Peace Farm 188 Highway 60 Panhandle TX 79068-7200  
806 341-4801 • [peacefarm@arn.net](mailto:peacefarm@arn.net) • [www.peacefarm.us](http://www.peacefarm.us)

Nuclear Watch New Mexico 551 West Cordova Road #808 Santa Fe, NM 87505  
505.989.7342 • [info@nukewatch.org](mailto:info@nukewatch.org) • [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org)