

Friday, Dec. 11, 2009

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## Study dismisses Hanford B Reactor for national park

By Annette Cary, Herald staff writer

HANFORD — A draft National Park Service study on preserving Hanford's historic B Reactor looks at several options but dismisses the possibility of making the reactor directly part of the national park system.

Only Los Alamos, N.M., is being considered to be named a Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

However, most of the five options being considered for Hanford would offer some possible park service role to provide technical assistance or educational programs for B Reactor.

Most of the options for B Reactor would rely heavily on local groups or other nonprofit agencies to preserve the reactor as a museum, develop and maintain exhibits and coordinate public visits. All options likely would require fundraising to keep the reactor open to the public.

The draft study did not reach a conclusion on the best option for B Reactor's future or other Manhattan Project sites.

"This is another step in the process to help identify the best way to achieve preservation of Hanford's historic B Reactor," Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., said in a statement. "Hanford workers played a critical role in our nation's defense for many years. It's a part of our nation's history that needs to be remembered and shared with future generations."

The study was required under a 2004 law written by Hastings and Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., to assess the potential for developing and using B Reactor and other Manhattan Project facilities as historical sites. A draft of the special resource study and environmental assessment being released for public comment was posted on the Internet late Thursday.

Los Alamos was picked as the only possible site for a Manhattan Project national historic park because "the facilities and personnel here maintained the greatest concentration of theoretical and experimental work during the Manhattan Project. It was this work that tied all the sites together," the draft report said.

Los Alamos also has retained its historical character and is near Bandelier National Monument, which would allow more efficient operations than at other sites reviewed, the draft report said.

The study also covered facilities at Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Dayton, Ohio.

Separate legislation could be considered to provide money to the Department of Energy to preserve B Reactor under that option, Alternative E, the draft report said. The park service would be encouraged to have a formal relationship with B Reactor through a written agreement.

In Alternative D, another of the five options considered, B Reactor and facilities in the other three states could be designated affiliated areas of the national park system. B Reactor would be managed by a commission associated with DOE and established by Congress. The commission would ask Congress for money to hire staff for day-to-day operation of B Reactor and to supplement money from other private and nonfederal government sources.

"The National Park Service's primary responsibility under this alternative would be to provide technical assistance in the areas of interpretation and historic preservation," the draft report said.

Under Alternative C, Hanford's B Reactor and other Manhattan Project sites would be proposed for designation as national heritage areas. A nonprofit organization, such as the Atomic Heritage Foundation or the Energy Communities Alliance, would be picked to manage B Reactor.

Some federal money would be available initially for B Reactor, but it would need to become self-sustaining by raising money through grants and tour and membership fees.

Alternative B would place Manhattan Project sites under a nationwide nonprofit consortium that would raise money and be held accountable to local communities. Some park service technical assistance might be available.

The other option, Alternative A, would allow each of the sites to continue to operate independent local programs.

B Reactor was the nation's first production-scale nuclear reactor. Built during World War II, it produced plutonium for the nation's first nuclear explosion and for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, helping end the war.

It looks much the same today as it did during World War II, and DOE began offering tours of the reactor on many Saturdays from spring through fall this year because of public demand. All tour seats filled quickly.

The draft report is posted at [tinyurl.com/ycdlanz](http://tinyurl.com/ycdlanz). Comments may be made online now, but information on other ways to submit written comments was not available Thursday.

The comment period will extend until March 1. Public meetings will be held at 2 and 7 p.m. Jan. 21 at the Red Lion Hanford House in Richland.