U.S. Department of Energy
Idaho Operations Office

Media Contact:
Tim Jackson
(208) 526-8484

For Immediate Release
December 21, 2011

DOE issues Finding of No Significant Impact on Environmental Assessment for Replacement Capability for Disposal of Remote-Handled Low Level Radioactive Waste Generated at Idaho Site

Idaho Falls, ID – After completing a careful assessment, the U.S. Department of Energy has determined that building a new facility at its Idaho National Laboratory site for continued disposal of remote-handled low level radioactive waste generated by operations at the site will not have a significant impact on the environment.

"A new disposal facility at INL for this type of waste will be built in a manner that protects the aquifer," said DOE Idaho Operations Office Manager Richard Provencher. "Continued disposal capability at INL, in combination with ongoing disposal at off-site locations, is important to our national nuclear energy research and development missions. This facility will be used solely to accommodate waste generated at the Idaho site."

The facility, located near the middle of the 890-square-mile desert site, will be built to operate for up to 50 years. It will use reinforced concrete vaults with design features to keep water away from the vaults. Waste will be contained in robust stainless steel liners. An interim earthen cover will be placed over the facility as the vaults are filled during operations, and a final engineered, earthen cover will be placed over the entire facility when it is closed in the future. The engineered cover will include erosion protection and will limit water infiltration. The disposal location is outside of the 10,000-year floodplain. A robust groundwater impact analysis was included in the National Environmental Policy Act evaluation, and it demonstrated that the facility's location and design ensure long-term protection of the underlying aquifer.

The facility will also be designed, located, constructed, operated and closed in a manner that minimizes impacts to natural and cultural resources.

The current disposal facility at the site for this type of waste is also protective of the aquifer, but is scheduled for closure in 2017 as part of overall cleanup activities underway at the site's Radioactive Waste Management Complex under a 2008 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act Record of Decision.

The new disposal facility will accommodate waste generated at the site as part of nuclear energy research and development work performed by INL, which is helping to produce better nuclear materials and fuels for commercial nuclear energy, and nuclear medicine. It will also

accommodate waste generated at the site by the U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, which performs research and development for the nation's nuclear powered Navy.

An 81-day public comment period on the draft environmental assessment concluded on November 21, 2011.

To view the Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act use the following link.
http://www.ID.Energy.gov/InsideNEID/PDF/Final EA DOE_EA-1793 2011-12-20.pdf - 4 Mb

INL,2011a, Evaluation of Groundwater Impacts to Support the National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Assessment for the INL Remote-Handled Low-Level Waste Facility at the Idaho National Laboratory, Revision 3, INL/EXT-10-19168, Idaho National Laboratory.
http://www.ID.Energy.gov/InsideNEID/PDF/INL EXT 10 19168r3 12-20-11.pdf - 171 Kb

INL, 2011b, Air Pathway Assessment for the INL Remote-Handled Low-Level Waste Disposal Project, Idaho National Laboratory, ECAR-1370, Idaho National Laboratory.
http://www.ID.Energy.gov/InsideNEID/PDF/ECAR-1370 Air Pathway Assessment Rev1 2011-09-28.pdf - 2.6 Mb

North Wind, 2011, Analysis of Transportation and Handling Impacts for the Replacement Capability for Disposal of Remote-Handled Low-Level Waste Generated at the Department of Energy's Idaho Site, Revision 1, NWI10-1656-001, North Wind, Inc.
http://www.ID.Energy.gov/InsideNEID/PDF/Analysis of Transportation and Handling Impacts 12152011.pdf
- 11 Mb

All other reference material can be found at https://inlportal.inl.gov/portal/server.pt/community/research_library/263/technical_publications/

Editorial Date December 21, 2011
By Timothy B Jackson