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March 23, 2010

Secretary Chu Highlights Recovery Act Cleanup Progress

Over \$1.5 billion spent creates or saves over 14,400 jobs nationally; commitment to small businesses ensures greatest economic impact

OAK RIDGE, TENN. – Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced today that the Department’s Environmental Management program has spent more than \$1.5 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds on cleanup projects around the country – 25 percent of the program’s total - creating an estimated 14,400 jobs since the start of the Recovery Act.

“Because of the Recovery Act, programs around the country have been able to expand, hire and continue our important cleanup work,” said Secretary Chu. “These investments have played a key role in helping local economies recover, creating jobs and supporting small businesses in dozens of communities.”

Secretary Chu’s announcement came during a visit to Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where he toured a range of Recovery Act projects and saw firsthand the progress that has been made possible as a result of these investments.

With the Recovery Act funding, the Department of Energy will be able to reduce the legacy footprint of Cold War-era sites across the country by 40 percent by 2011. That means the footprint of the Environmental Management (EM) program will shrink from approximately 900 sq. miles to about 540 sq. miles.

Already, over seven football fields worth of excess facilities have been demolished (407,295 sq. ft.); 91 Olympic swimming pools full of debris and soil have been removed (226,732 cubic meters); nearly 3,300 rail cars full of uranium mill tailings have been disposed of; and about 10,950 cubic meters of low-level and mixed low-level waste have been sent to disposal locations. These are important steps forward as each of the sites works to achieve their cleanup goals.

These cleanup efforts have included significant work by small businesses, which have played an important role in spurring job growth and economic recovery in these communities. Of the \$6 billion in total Recovery Act funding for the EM program, almost \$700 million to date has been awarded to small businesses that are accelerating the cleanup of soil and groundwater, transporting and disposing of waste, and clearing and demolishing former weapons complex facilities.

The Safety and Ecology Corporation (SEC), based in Knoxville, Tenn., is one of the small businesses to benefit from Recovery Act funding. The company has been awarded four Recovery Act projects totaling \$21 million for the demolition of facilities and cleanup of hazardous materials at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 National Security Complex. As a result of these Recovery Act investments, the company estimates it will save or create approximately 115 jobs in Oak Ridge.

One of those jobs belongs to Jacob Effler, site superintendent for SEC’s Recovery Project B&W Bldg 9735 Decommissioning and Decontamination (D&D). Under the Recovery Act, Effler was given the opportunity to work his way up from a laborer with the company to a project supervisor. Today, in addition to overseeing a Recovery Act project at the Oak Ridge Site, Effler has been going to school at night to get a degree in Engineering and Construction Management.

“For me, the Recovery Act project has been great. It has allowed me the opportunity learn new things, while moving my career forward. On each project, I progressively took on more responsibility and had other superintendents help me along the way. I am grateful they gave me a chance,” said Mr. Effler.

Over the next two years, DOE's Environmental Management program will continue to spend its remaining \$4.5 billion in Recovery Act funding, supporting job creation, small business contracting, and cleanup work across the country.

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