

## Official: Sequester didn't hurt West Valley clean-up

By Rick Miller, Special to The Salamanca Press | Posted: Friday, May 24, 2013 10:16 am

LITTLE VALLEY — The president of the company contracted to decommission and demolish the former West Valley nuclear reprocessing facility told Cattaraugus County lawmakers Wednesday, May 22 the federal sequester actually resulted in \$10 million more in clean-up dollars this year.

Daniel W. Coyne, president and general manager of CH2M Hill B&W West Valley, spoke to county legislators to update them on the phase one decommissioning at the West Valley Demonstration Project in the town of Ashford.

“We’re one of the few sites that benefited from sequestration,” he said. “We got an additional \$10 million, which brought the project back to the level the U.S. Department of Energy called for under the CH2M Hill contract.

“Sequestration helped us,” he added, smiling. “Go figure that out.”

Coyne noted that the site once had a 1,200-member workforce. That has dwindled to about 190, although with more money available than expected, there will be additional work and call-backs of furloughed employees.

Since CH2M Hill took over as site contractor in July 2011, Coyne said more than 48,000 cubic feet of low-level radioactive waste had been shipped from the site. There are another 80,000 cubic feet of new waste from 40,000 square feet of newly demolished buildings that will be shipped off-site next.

The first radioactive building to be torn down in the state in several decades, Building O-114, was demolished on the site earlier this spring. The building was used to mix low-level radioactive waste with concrete.

“The building is on the ground,” Coyne told legislators.

One of the priorities is to hire a subcontractor to move 275 10-foot-tall casks containing high-level radioactive glass logs from the vitrification of 600,000 gallons of high-level liquid radioactive wastes left over from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel rods by Nuclear Fuel Services from 1966 to 1972.

The canisters will be placed in double-steel casks, welded shut and placed in a five-canister dry storage container for open storage on a concrete pad until there is a place to ship them for permanent storage, Coyne said.

The glass logs had been destined for Yucca Mountain before Congress ended funding for the desert repository four years ago. Now, instead of sitting inside a shielded room in the main process building, they will remain in storage outside on a concrete pad, much like spent nuclear fuel at nuclear power plants across the country.

After the canisters are moved by remote handling equipment into the storage casks and moved to the slab that will be constructed this summer, the main process building where they were being stored can be demolished. Once that building is torn down, the project to remove a radioactive plume that originated from a cell in the building can begin.

One of the contaminants, strontium 90, has been heading toward a nearby creek for some time. It has been intercepted by a deep trench filled with material designed to draw the radioactive material from water passing through the trench.

Coyne said, in all, the company has contracted to take down 60 buildings on the site, including the main process building, and the vitrification plant, where the concentrated liquid waste was mixed with molten glass that hardened into the glass logs encased in steel.