

Testimony of Tim Walsh
Assistant Secretary
Office of Environmental Management
Before the
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
April 20, 2026

Chairwoman Fischer, Ranking Member King and Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the head of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM). As a United States Army veteran, I appreciate your service on the Senate Armed Services Committee in support of the first duty of the federal government—defending and protecting our great nation.

With President Trump's Fiscal Year 2027 budget we are putting the American people first by cleaning up the environment and ensuring communities are protected and have the opportunity to prosper. We are cleaning up the legacy of past defense and nuclear research programs to power America's future with affordable, reliable, and secure energy. As sites transform from nuclear remediation to nuclear renaissance, we unlock assets to close the nuclear fuel cycle, grow advanced nuclear energy, and lower electricity prices.

EM plays a vital role in supporting the three pillars of DOE. First, EM supports nuclear deterrence to promote peace around the globe and prosperity at home. EM works closely with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Office of Naval Reactors to clean up legacy waste and decommission and demolish legacy assets to support new missions. Second, EM supports our national labs with cleanup, decommissioning, and demolition to advance missions in science and innovation. And third, EM is pursuing President Trump's golden era of energy dominance to restore affordable, reliable, and secure energy for the American people. Energy abundance equals re-industrialization, jobs, prosperity, and national security.

The EM program is delivering on all fronts, and we are doing it at a record pace under an Administration that is putting America first. Delivering more for America begins with focus on environmental remediation, site restoration, and economic revitalization. We are leveraging the clean-up expertise developed over the past 37 years to be more efficient, move with urgency, be better stewards of tax-payer dollars, and be outcome oriented.

EM is working to accelerate cleanup, evaluate, and potentially transform all major legacy sites into hubs for nuclear energy, advanced manufacturing, and AI infrastructure. EM is adopting a risk-based approach, coupled with artificial intelligence and data-driven scientific and engineering process improvements, to identify and implement the most effective technical solutions that will expedite the cleanup process. Following the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Wright, EM is a future focused organization driving toward clean-up mission completion to allow for new economic development that will create good paying generational American jobs and community revitalization.

EM's role is essential to igniting American innovation to win the global AI race by providing land and infrastructure necessary for new energy generation to support hyper-scaler data center development. To fulfill President Trump's Rate Payer Protection Pledge and support his Executive Order 14318 to accelerate federal permitting of data center infrastructure, EM is leveraging assets to accelerate infrastructure development and power generation to support lower energy costs while increasing grid reliability and security. Through the decommissioning and demolition of Manhattan Project and Cold War era relics, space is being created for private investments into new power generation including gas turbines and nuclear reactors, AI infrastructure, labs, national security priorities, and nuclear fuel reprocessing and recycling. We are changing the course of the future by expediting remediation and revitalization of sites that served our great nation for decades. The communities that built the infrastructure behind our victories in World War II and the Cold War, will once again play a vital role in shaping America's future as a global leader in scientific and engineering innovation.

Unleashing Affordable American Energy

To prosper, America needs affordable, reliable and secure energy. To meet the urgency of the moment, the Trump Administration is taking bold action to reverse Biden era policies that left our nation in a state of energy emergency. American energy is being unleashed by cutting burdensome red tape, restoring common sense, reducing delays for energy infrastructure, putting innovation over excessive regulation, and ending limits on consumer choices.

The EM program helps clean up past defense sites to support affordable American energy. By using its skilled workforce, focusing on results, and driving innovation, the FY 2027 budget backs cleanup, land revitalization, and infrastructure growth. Transforming sites from remediation to new use unlocks assets to close the nuclear fuel cycle, advance nuclear technology, and reduce energy costs.

EM is championing a shift from a perpetual "legacy cleanup" mindset to a "future-focused" one, that transforms liabilities into opportunities and national assets. We are not just managing the past; we are powering the future. The public-private partnership recently announced at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Pike County, Ohio is a major step forward for Southern Ohio's economic and energy future. By capitalizing on domestic investments and federal land assets, the partnership will safely advance restoration and revitalization of the Portsmouth site with enormous economic benefits to the region and the country.

As EM works to complete environmental cleanup of land in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, it is making property available for economic development and beneficial reuse including commercial

uranium enrichment, nuclear fuel fabrication, and small modular reactor development and other advanced manufacturing — creating affordable energy solutions, good paying jobs and prosperity. What was once a massive gaseous diffusion plant used for nuclear weapons production during the Manhattan Project is now a hub for America’s advanced nuclear industry. An additional 700 acres of land was transferred this year with companies planning to invest \$6.7 billion and create over a thousand jobs. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget supports continuing critical cleanup work in Oak Ridge.

As the nuclear renaissance advances, EM is employing its unique capabilities to help secure the domestic nuclear fuel cycle. This will ultimately enable the United States to expand nuclear capacity from 100 GW today to 400 GW by 2050 as outlined in President Trump’s Executive Order 14300 and lead the globe in nuclear power generation. The EM program is leveraging unique capabilities in South Carolina to meet these goals and support President Trump’s executive orders on reinvigorating the nuclear industrial base and deploying advanced nuclear reactor technologies for national security. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget supports a recent decision to use the Savannah River Site’s H Canyon to restart uranium recovery. It is an initiative that will produce as much as 19 metric tons of High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) fuel for advanced nuclear reactors, jumpstarting America’s nuclear industrial base and closing the fuel cycle. The request also supports restart of another one-of-a-kind national capability at the Savannah River Site to recycle surplus plutonium and partner with industry to produce fuel for advanced nuclear reactors, accelerating the plutonium disposition mission by up to 13 years and saving American taxpayers up to \$350 million.

The budget proposal includes a significant investment in Nevada, where EM continues to focus on the safe, secure, and successful completion of the cleanup mission at the Nevada National Security Site. We remain on track to complete that mission over the next five years. Work is advancing at the Engine Maintenance Assembly and Disassembly (EMAD) facility to complete demolition of the cold bay and prepare the hot bay for beneficial reuse in 2027. This is projected to save taxpayers \$45 million. EM’s mission in Nevada also provides safe and secure disposal for low-level radioactive waste generated by cleanup, science, and national defense missions across the DOE complex.

Strengthening National Security

In addition to supporting a strong American energy future, the EM cleanup mission provides services to enable the modernization of America’s nuclear deterrent and opens opportunities for President Trump’s peace through strength national security agenda.

EM progress in Tennessee is playing a crucial role in the Department of Energy’s ability to modernize America’s nuclear stockpile. Our Oak Ridge team recently completed demolition of a massive Manhattan Era facility at one of our nation’s most important national security sites — creating space for strengthening America’s nuclear deterrent. EM will continue building on this cleanup momentum through smart sequencing of demolition work at high-risk excess facilities at the National Nuclear Security Administration’s Y-12 National Security Complex and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Fiscal Year 2027.

In Idaho, EM completed demolition of the second naval reactor prototype plant for redevelopment. In transforming this liability into an opportunity to support a critical national security mission, EM is enabling the National Nuclear Security Administration's Office of Naval Reactors to allocate more of their resources towards core missions in service of the safety and security of our nation at a considerable cost savings for American taxpayers.

EM is equally focused on ensuring existing capabilities like the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico are well positioned to support DOE missions for years to come. EM completed a massive modern ventilation system upgrade at the nation's only geologic repository for transuranic waste. Infrastructure upgrades, including installation of a new hoist system, will continue in Fiscal Year 2027 to support not only ongoing cleanup activities but also other DOE national security and scientific missions.

Putting Americans First – Protecting People and the Environment

Enabling the security, energy and science missions depends on EM's core work to protect people and the environment. With work completed at 92 sites, EM is focused on cleanup activities at the remaining 14 active sites, as well as operating the geologic disposal facility in New Mexico. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget is a fiscally responsible budget that reflects the President's strong commitment to safely advancing the EM mission as legacy waste is addressed and liabilities are transformed into opportunities for American security, American energy and American jobs. Through this \$8.2 billion investment we are putting the American people first – cleaning up the environment to ensure communities are protected and prosperous. By making smart investments, igniting innovation and prioritizing outcome driven solutions, we aim to deliver more – safely, sooner and at a better value for American taxpayers.

Tank waste treatment capabilities are in place to address the radioactive tank waste that drives EM's costs and risks. Over 11 million gallons of tank waste have been treated at the Savannah River Site via the Salt Waste Processing Facility. The processing rate has ramped up and will continue to accelerate in Fiscal Year 2027. The Integrated Waste Treatment Unit at Idaho has been restarted and will continue processing tank waste. Hanford has treated over 1 million gallons of tank waste and started solidifying it in glass. As the Waste Treatment Plant operates, Hanford is also increasing operational flexibility, creating more tank space for waste retrieval, and adopting a dual glass-and-grout strategy to speed up cleanup and disposal. This approach aims to accelerate remediation, reduce environmental risks in Washington state, and substantially complete the tank retrieval mission by 2040. Enhancing the Hanford tank cleanup mission is an investment in artificial intelligence through the Genesis Mission to provide data driven scientific and engineering solutions.

EM progress extends well beyond the tank waste mission. Key demolition work also continues at the West Valley Demonstration Project in New York where last year we completed tear down of the last major facility on schedule and under budget, reducing environmental risks, and paving the way for the next chapter of cleanup success at the site. Our West Valley team will build on this momentum in Fiscal Year 2027 as cleanup work continues below the building footprint.

Additional cleanup priorities continue to advance, including shipping transuranic waste to the WIPP in New Mexico from Idaho and the Los Alamos National Laboratory, as well as other generator sites, executing key risk reduction work, progressing skyline changes across the EM complex, and cleaning contaminated groundwater.

Conclusion

Thanks to substantial investments from Congress, EM is working with top American industry partners to safely address the environmental impact left by past nuclear weapons programs and energy research. The FY 2027 budget demonstrates strong support from the Trump Administration for EM's essential mission and its commitment to safe and efficient federal cleanup efforts.

EM is developing into a forward-looking organization committed to acceleration, accountability, measurable results, and beneficial outcomes. Our primary objective is to safeguard the space around our nuclear assets and mitigate risks to human health. Achieving this requires a sense of urgency as we progress in the remediation and revitalization of sites that have supported our nation over many decades.

Our cleanup mission lays the groundwork for safer, cleaner, and more prosperous communities nationwide. EM is committed to collaborating with Congress to evolve, turn liabilities into assets, bolster national security, and support affordable American energy.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our nation. God bless the members of our armed services and God bless America.