

GE-Hitachi Could Take Over Uranium Plant

PADUCAH, Ky. (AP) — GE-Hitachi has submitted a proposal for the beleaguered Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant that could help preserve many of the 1,200 jobs there.

The nuclear reprocessing plant had been scheduled to close last year, but a deal reached in May kept it open for another year. Currently, the United States Enrichment Corp. operates the Paducah plant site to enrich depleted uranium for the Tennessee Valley Authority and for a Washington state utility called Energy Northwest.

The United States Enrichment Corp. leases the property from the U.S. Department of Energy, which owns 3,556 acres at the plant site 15 miles west of Paducah.

Earlier this month, the Department of Energy posted a formal document seeking proposals for the plant and its uranium inventory.

The Paducah Sun reports (<http://bit.ly/UY8reY> [1]) GE-Hitachi is proposing to build a new laser-based uranium enrichment plant at the site. GE-Hitachi has been mentioned in connection with Silex Systems Limited, an Australia-based company that was given a license in September for a laser enrichment plant in Wilmington, N.C.

The World Nuclear News reported in November that the Energy Department was negotiating with GE-Hitachi subsidiary Global Laser Enrichment to evaluate the possibility of building a laser enrichment plant at Paducah.

The plant has had problems in the past with environmental issues. A group of 70 to 80 residents who live near the plant reached a \$1.75 million settlement in April 2010 with Lockheed Martin over allegations that improperly disposed of waste and contaminated water that leaked from the plant devalued their properties.

And last year, the federal government and U.S. Department of Energy contractor Bechtel Jacobs reached a \$230,000 settlement over allegations that the company improperly handled and disposed of radioactive waste at the plant.

Chad Chancellor, president of Paducah Economic Development, said the GE-Hitachi project has the potential to be one of the larger employers in the region.

Information from: *The Paducah Sun*, <http://www.paducahsun.com> [2]

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