

# Energy secretary visits Hanford reservation

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — Energy Secretary Rick Perry made his first visit Tuesday to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, which has been plagued by a series of problems.

Perry kicked off his tour at McNary Dam near the Tri-Cities on Monday. Tuesday he toured the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and other Hanford sites near Richland.

“I’m proud to be a part of your team,” Perry told workers at the national laboratory. “Your work saves lives.”

Hanford for decades made plutonium for nuclear weapons, and now is engaged in a massive cleanup of nuclear wastes that is expected to take decades and cost \$100 billion.

The *Tri-City Herald* reported that the Trump Administration has proposed cutting \$120 million from Hanford’s budget next year, but the House and Senate budget proposals have restored a large portion of those cuts.

In the first of two high-profile incidents this year, thousands of Hanford workers were evacuated May 9 when the roof of a 1950s rail tunnel storing a lethal mix of nuclear waste collapsed. Tests showed no radiation was released into the environment.

On June 8, demolition work at a 1940s plutonium

plant sent 350 workers seeking cover inside. Radiation was emitted but not deemed at a level harmful to people.

In addition, vapors for several years have escaped from underground nuclear waste storage tanks at Hanford, making dozens of workers sick. The cause has not been determined.

The tunnel collapse prompted a group of Congress members from northwestern states to demand the federal Government Accountability Office review Hanford cleanup work. The lawmakers said they were concerned about the safety of workers, the public and the environment.

On Monday, Perry visited nearby McNary Dam along the Columbia River.

Perry was noncommittal when asked about a proposal in the president’s budget to privatize the Bonneville Power Administration transmission grid.

“Hydro is going to continue to play a very important role,” Perry said.

Northwest lawmakers have criticized the proposal to sell the transmission grid, saying it will raise rates for consumers and hurt reliability in rural areas. The BPA markets electric power generated by Columbia River system dams.

## HIKE: Unusual hike makes interesting adventure

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“new” Black Butte Trail that starts at the lower trailhead where we had originally met that morning. So, we looked for and, sure enough, eventually hit that trail crossing, which was very familiar territory for us. Just before (south of) that spot, so not where most people travel, we spotted the biggest (by far) cedar tree that I’ve ever seen in the Sisters area. See if you can find it!

In the meantime, I thought I had sucked my camelback pack dry — which had never happened before. But, when we stopped for a final snack break, I discovered that I wasn’t exactly running on empty. I still had quite a bit of ice left in the water bladder, so we chewed on ice cubes at our last rest stop!

From that point, it was just a matter of choosing which of the many optional routes to take from there. If you decide to do a circumnavigation of Black Butte, I’ll bet that you can do it a lot more efficiently than we did, especially if — unlike us — you decide on that course of action *before* you leave. The “big” map of the Sisters Ranger District — with all those decommissioned roads — is still available at the Forest Service office in Sisters.

When we made it back to our vehicles, we were tired

and sore but felt like we had accomplished something; and we earned every one of those letters — or miles — in our first Black Butte circumnavigation! We’re definitely counting this as one of our more interesting adventures in the eight years that we’ve been hiking together.



PHOTO BY CRAIG F. EISENBEIS

This gigantic cedar can be found just a little south of the lower Black Butte summit trail.

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