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Agencies welcome Manhattan Project National Historical Park

DOE Eliminates Age Requirement for B Reactor National Historic Landmark

RICHLAND, Wash. – Following the Nov. 10 establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Richland Operations Office has eliminated the age requirement for entrance to the B Reactor National Historic Landmark. The B Reactor, built in 1943-44 as a key part of the top-secret Manhattan Project during World War II, has had more than 50,000 visitors since tours began in 2009. In 2012, DOE reduced the age requirement from 18 to 12.

"This step signifies our commitment to the new National Park and our hope that visitors of all ages will come from far and wide to learn about Hanford's role in the Manhattan Project," said Stacy Charboneau, manager of the DOE Richland Operations Office. "This change would not be possible without the tremendous amount of cleanup work that has been completed to date, particularly along the Columbia River corridor. That work has paved the way for public access to our historic facilities."

In December 2014, Congress passed legislation authorizing the creation of a new unit of the National Park Service to tell the story of the top-secret Manhattan Project, which helped bring an end to World War II and ushered in the Atomic Age. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park will be jointly managed by DOE and the National Park Service (NPS) and will include facilities at the three Manhattan Project sites -- Los Alamos, N.M., Oak Ridge, Tenn., and the Hanford Site in Washington state. The Hanford facilities included in the park are the B Reactor, the world's first full-scale plutonium production reactor, as well as four remaining facilities from the pre-war landscape: the Bruggemann (fruit) Warehouse, the 1908 Hanford Irrigation District Pump House, the White Bluffs Bank, and the Hanford High School in the town of Hanford and Hanford Construction Camp Historic District.

At B Reactor today, DOE and the NPS marked establishment of the park with elected officials and community leaders who have been instrumental in the park's creation. More than 250 guests gathered at the front face of the B Reactor to celebrate, including dozens of members of the B Reactor Museum Association, a local organization formed more than 25 years ago with the goal of permanently preserving the B Reactor.

"The passion and energy in this community are remarkable," said Chip Jenkins, acting regional director of the NPS's Pacific West Region. "We are thrilled to be joining the Department of Energy

in sharing the complex story of the Manhattan Project with the world and ensuring that the achievements – and the lessons – are not forgotten.”

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park has been strongly supported by Washington Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, who have been longtime advocates for preserving B Reactor and Hanford’s pre-war historic landscape.

“This Park is not only a tribute to Hanford’s history and its critical role in World War II, but also a nod to its future,” Sen. Murray said. “I’m so proud of the work happening at every level to ensure a continued commitment to cleaning up the site and transforming it into a place to learn about a key piece of world history.”

“The Manhattan Project began a tradition of scientific achievement and innovation that lives on today through the world-class research happening now at the Pacific Northwest National Lab,” Sen. Cantwell said. “This park not only commemorates a significant national achievement, but it also provides a new avenue for scientific curiosity and learning to all who visit. More than 100,000 people will visit the park in its first year, increasing visitors to our Tri-Cities region tenfold and creating jobs at hotels and restaurants.”

Cantwell, who co-sponsored the Park legislation in the Senate, was among the speakers at today’s B Reactor event, along with now-retired Congressman Doc Hastings, who was its champion in the House of Representatives. Representative Dan Newhouse, who replaced Hastings in Washington’s 4th District seat, applauded the move to enhance access to B Reactor as part of the new National Park.

“The compelling story of the Manhattan Project and the lives of those who lived and worked at Hanford will stir the imagination of all Americans, young and old,” said Rep. Newhouse. “The progress on cleanup has brought about this exciting opportunity to encourage young people to examine a critical period in American history, as well as Hanford’s contributions to scientific breakthroughs during World War II and the Cold War.”

As part of the day’s activities, and to highlight B Reactor’s improved accessibility, DOE and NPS invited eight local fourth-grade classes to be the first elementary-school aged kids to tour B Reactor, and earn Junior Ranger buttons. The fourth-graders also took part in NPS’s “Every Kid in a Park” initiative, which allows every fourth-grader in America to earn a free 2016 Annual Park Pass as part of the celebration of the NPS’s centennial in 2016.

More information on the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is available on the NPS website, at Nps.gov/MAPR. The agreement between NPS and DOE for management of the new Park is also available on the web, at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?parkID=482&projectID=57561>

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