

Oversight News

Newsletter of the Commonwealth's Environmental Oversight Section for the Department of Energy's Paducah Site



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection

Division of Waste Management

Hazardous Waste Branch

Paducah Site Section

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Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Section Receives Governor's Honor



The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) Section of the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet's Division of Waste Management (DWM), Hazardous Waste Branch, has received one of the Commonwealth's highest honors, with all seven members of the section commissioned as Kentucky Colonels.

The recognition was presented during a special ceremony at the PGDP site by Division of Waste Management Director Brian Osterman and Assistant Director Louanna Aldridge. The title of Kentucky Colonel is the highest honor bestowed by the Governor of Kentucky and recognizes individuals for noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding service to their community, the Commonwealth, and the nation.

The PGDP Section includes Branch Manager April Webb, Section Supervisor Sonja Smiley, Environmental Engineer Leo Williamson, Professional Geologist Bart Schaffer, Environmental Scientist Consultant Mary Evans, Environmental Scientist III Brian Lainhart, and Environmental Scientist III Brandon Marshall.

The team's primary responsibility is providing independent regulatory oversight of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant while serving as Kentucky's representative in the Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA). The FFA is a three-party agreement among the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The agreement was established to ensure compliance with federal environmental laws while eliminating duplication between corrective action requirements under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

In addition to its regulatory oversight, the PGDP Section manages Kentucky's Agreement in Principle (AIP) Program, which is funded by the DOE. The program enables the Commonwealth to conduct independent assessments of the potential environmental impacts of DOE activities at the Paducah site. Through the AIP Program, Kentucky oversees independent environmental monitoring, supports scientific research, and strengthens communication with area residents and other stakeholders.

The team's work has also played a significant role in advancing the PGDP site's Strategic Vision through the Decision 2029 Plan, a collaborative effort involving the DOE, EPA, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. By helping streamline regulatory processes and promote an integrated project strategy, the PGDP Section has contributed to a plan projected to accelerate final site cleanup by more than 20 years while reducing costs by an estimated \$14 billion.

Achieving those goals has required extensive collaboration and dedication from the team, including reorganizing decades of project files, reviewing technical documents, participating in regulatory meetings, and conducting environmental sampling. Their efforts help ensure cleanup activities remain efficient, compliant with environmental regulations, and focused on protecting both human health and the environment while preparing the site for future industrial redevelopment.

The Kentucky Colonel commissions recognize not only the team's technical expertise and commitment to environmental stewardship, but also their lasting contributions to one of Kentucky's most significant environmental cleanup efforts.

Article by Sonja Smiley

General Matter, Global Laser Enrichment and the Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority Hosts Public Information Meetings

Since uranium enrichment operations ended at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) in May 2013, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has shifted its focus to environmental cleanup, decontamination and decommissioning, and preparing the site for future industrial development. These efforts are aimed not only at completing the site's environmental mission but also at supporting economic growth and revitalization throughout the region.

A major milestone was reached in August 2025 when DOE leased an approximately 100-acre parcel, known as Parcel A, to General Matter (GM). The company plans to construct and operate a uranium enrichment facility once it receives the necessary approvals from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The lease supports two important goals for the PGDP site: reducing DOE's inventory of depleted uranium enrichment tails by putting the material to productive use and encouraging industrial redevelopment that can create new jobs and economic opportunities in western Kentucky.

The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant has been part of western Kentucky's history since construction began in 1952. Originally built to produce enriched uranium for the nation's defense program, the facility later supplied fuel for commercial nuclear power plants.

In 1988, trichloroethene (TCE) and technetium-99 (Tc-99) were detected in several private drinking water wells north of the site. As a result, PGDP was added to the Superfund National Priorities List in 1994. That same year, DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Commonwealth of Kentucky entered into a Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) to oversee the site's environmental investigation and cleanup.

The FFA ensures that contamination associated with past and present operations is thoroughly investigated and that appropriate cleanup actions are taken to protect public health and the environment.

Before any DOE property can be leased or transferred, it must undergo an extensive environmental review process. Work to evaluate Parcel A began in 2015—years before any lease was proposed.

In June 2025, DOE submitted a comprehensive Leasing Data Package to EPA and the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet. The package included environmental inspection reports, chemical and radiological sampling data, visual and radiological surveys, human health and ecological risk evaluations, and assessments of radiological exposure conditions. Following a detailed review by all three agencies, Parcel A was determined to be suitable for lease.

Public interest in nuclear energy has continued to grow since the Kentucky General Assembly created the Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority (KNEDA) in 2024. KNEDA serves as the Commonwealth's nonregulatory agency for nuclear energy development and works to support the expansion of Kentucky's nuclear energy industry. Interest increased further in March 2026 when Global Laser Enrichment (GLE) announced plans to construct a new uranium enrichment facility on a 665-acre site adjacent to—but not on—the PGDP property.

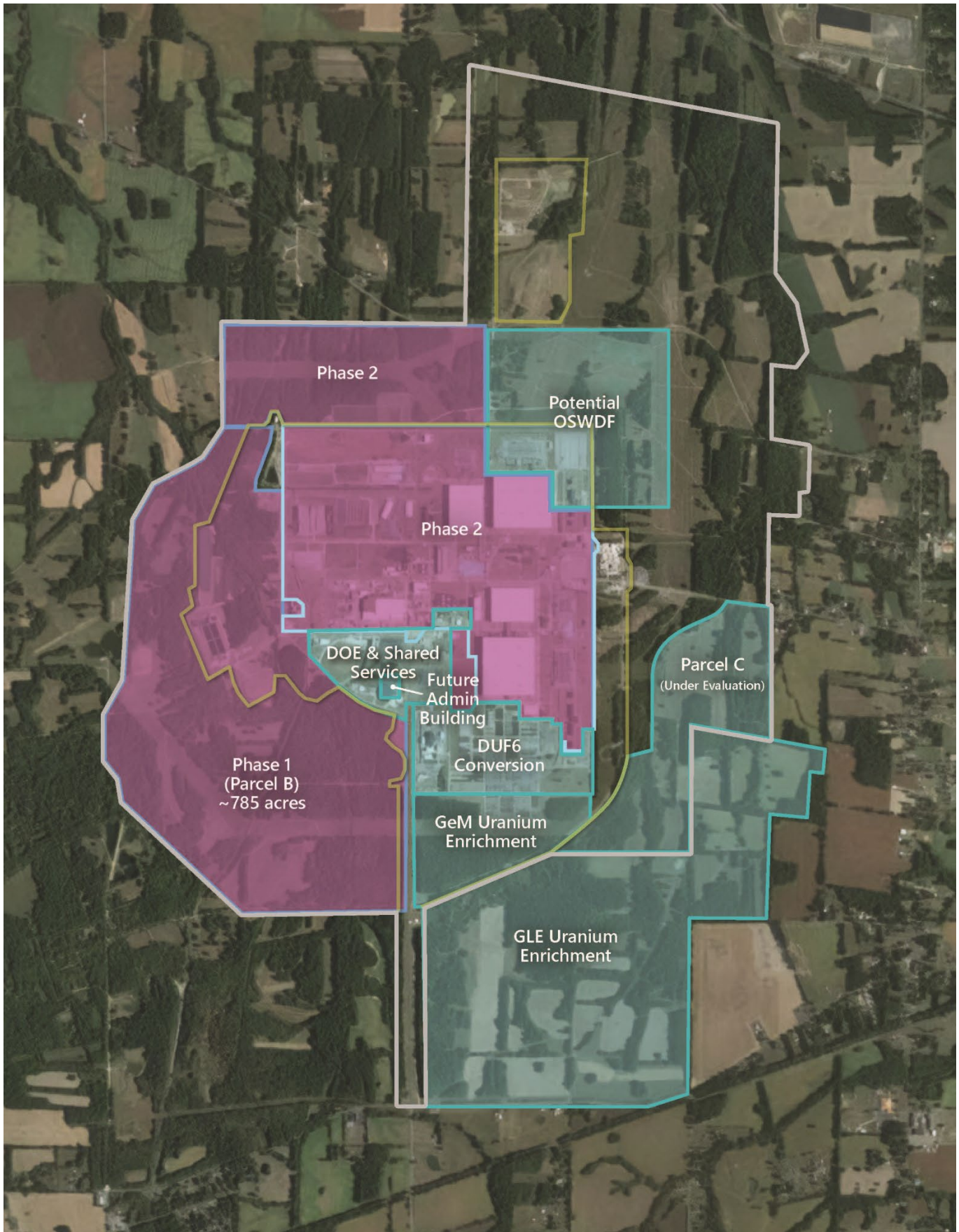
GLE's project is currently under review by the NRC. Once licensed, the facility is expected to re-enrich more than 200,000 metric tons of depleted uranium tails currently stored at the DOE's Paducah and Portsmouth sites. The project has the potential to accelerate DOE's cleanup mission, reduce long-term federal costs, and provide additional fuel for commercial nuclear power generation.

As interest in these projects continues to grow, General Matter, Global Laser Enrichment, and KNEDA have each hosted public meetings to provide information and answer questions from community members. Representatives of Kentucky's Federal Facility Agreement program have attended several of these meetings to help address questions related to environmental cleanup, existing contamination, future site activities, and protection of public health. Community members who would like additional information may contact the organizations directly:

- **General Matter:** contact@generalmatter.com
- **Global Laser Enrichment:** www.gle-us.com
- **Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority:** eric@pgdpcab.org

Article by Mary Evans

Reindustrialization Land Use Map



Kentucky Environmental Oversight News is published semi-annually by the Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection's Division of Waste Management. It features information regarding environmental cleanup activities at the DOE Paducah Site and related topics. Additional information is available from:

Sonja Smiley, FFA Manager
Supervisor, Paducah Site Section,
Kentucky Division of Waste
Management
300 Sower Boulevard, 1st Floor
Frankfort, KY 40601
Phone: 502-782-6317
E-mail: Sonja.Smiley@ky.gov.

The mission of the Kentucky Division of Waste Management is to protect human health and the environment by minimizing adverse impacts on all citizens of the Commonwealth through the development of fair, equitable, and effective waste management programs.

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