Thanks to Members & Friends

As we move forward into the New Year, I want to take a moment to reflect on all that we accomplished together in 2011 - and to say thank you!

Tri-Valley CAREs began the year focused on “walking back” the increased nuclear weapons funding that Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) had extracted from President Obama as the political price to ratify the New START agreement. Working together, we reduced the nuclear weapons budget despite the “deal.” In fact, the year ended with several hundred million dollars in cuts. Moreover, we expect our work to yield additional cuts when the new budget request is revealed February 13.

We also submitted technical comments on a wide array of nuclear weapons projects last year. We opposed a new plutonium factory at Los Alamos, an overblown uranium plant at Y-12, as usual at the Nevada Test Site, increases in radioactivity at Livermore Lab and a failure to include the Sandia, Livermore site in an environmental impact statement (did they really think we wouldn’t notice?).

Tri-Valley CAREs brought its staff, board and youth to Washington to speak truth to power to the Administration and Congress. In the wake of the tragedy at Fukushima, we illuminated the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons - and called for the elimination of both.

We took action in the courts to uphold the National Environmental Policy Act and the Freedom of Information Act. We mobilized the community to improve the cleanup of toxic and radioactive pollution at Livermore Lab. Working with colleagues, we brought hundreds of people to demonstrate against nuclear weapons at the Laboratory gates - and more.

In each of these achievements, YOU were there. Your participation as a member, volunteer or donor made all of our 2011 successes possible.

Hundreds of you offered valuable time and skills. More than 650 of you gave individual financial gifts, ranging from a few dollars to several thousand. Every donation matters, and we are blessed by your partnership.

I thank you - and look forward to our work together in 2012.

Peace,

Marylia Kelley,
Executive Director

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SANE Act to Cut Nuke Spending

As we go to press, Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) is introducing an important new bill, called the SANE (Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures) Act.

The bill, co-sponsored by Markey and 34 other Members of Congress (including 7 from California), calls for canceling, freezing, or reducing more than a dozen costly nuclear programs for a savings of about $100 billion over 10 years.

The SANE Act, if passed, would eliminate several Dept. of Energy projects that Tri-Valley CAREs has worked hard to cut. The bill would zero out all funding for the CMRR-nuclear facility, the Uranium Processing Facility, and the MOX (mixed oxide plutonium fuel) plant. It would further eliminate the DOE’s B61 and W78 Life Extension Programs.

At the Dept. of Defense, the SANE Act calls for a reduction in ballistic missile submarines, land-based missiles, and aircraft bombers - the three legs of the nuclear triad.

The SANE Act is a step in the right direction for nuclear policy, and Tri-Valley CAREs is honored that Rep. Markey listed our group as a participating NGO in the efforts to cut the nuclear weapons budget.

Meanwhile, Rep. Michael Turner (R-OH) announced he will soon introduce a 2012 version of a bill he first introduced last year to mandate increased spending to “modernize” U.S. nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

And, in previewing the Defense Dept.’s 2013 budget request, Secretary Leon Panetta recently said the U.S. will delay production of its next generation nuclear submarine, although he stopped short of announcing any truly deep funding cuts that would go beyond stemming planned increases to the Pentagon budget.

2012 is shaping up as a pivotal year for nuclear issues!
Look for... Cont. from page 4

one at Los Alamos) in an attempt to get around its loss of the PDCE. And, look for action alerts from Tri-Valley CAREs and allied groups calling on Congress to cancel the entire MOX program.

Another set of nuclear weapons programs that Tri-Valley CAREs “watchdogs” are the so-called Life Extension Programs (LEPs) wherein nuclear weapons are not just refurbished but given new military capabilities, thereby blurring the distinction between “new” and “existing” weapons. Look for the scope of the B61-12 LEP to be reduced (good news), although its out year costs will rise about a billion dollars, from around $4.5 to $5.5 billion (not good news).

More information on the estimated costs for the B61-12 LEP should become available later in 2012 as the DOE completes its official cost study. Look for Tri-Valley CAREs to continue to oppose any plan to “mix and match” parts from different versions of the B61 to create a B61-12 “Frankenbomb” in this LEP.

Turning our attention to one of Livermore Lab’s infamous boondoggles, we predict that the National Ignition Facility (NIF) will, again, be a big ticket item in the DOE budget request.

The DOE was supposed to achieve thermonuclear ignition at NIF in 2003, then 2010 and now 2012. The NIF has cost around $7 billion, if one counts construction and R&D costs. And, ignition is highly unlikely to occur in 2012.

Will there be a spike in the FY13 budget request as DOE scrambles to obscure NIF’s failure? And, more importantly, will Congress wise up and cut its funding in the appropriations process that will take place during the spring and summer of 2012? Look for Tri-Valley CAREs’ action alerts on the NIF budget and technical deficiencies this spring.

Another Livermore Lab item worth checking in the budget request is the plutonium facility in the so-called “Superblock.”

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Alerts 4 U

Thursday, February 16

Tri-Valley CAREs meets
7:30 PM, Livermore Library
1188 So. Livermore Ave.
(925) 443-7148 for details

Get active. Get energized. Make a difference. Our
February meeting will have up to the minute information on
the nuclear weapons budget (to be released on 2/13/12) and what it all
means. We will also discuss the Superfund cleanup of toxic and radioactive
waste at Livermore Lab, our upcoming community meeting, the Court’s bad
bio-decision – and more. Join us.

Thursday, February 23

Community Meeting in Tracy
“Nuclear Weapons, Pollution & YOU”
7:30 PM - 9 PM, Tracy Transit Center,
Room 105, on 6th St. & Central Ave.,
located near the Grand Theater
(925) 443-7148 for details

Tri-Valley CAREs is sponsoring this special
meeting to explore polluting activities at the Livermore Lab’s “Site 300”
high explosives testing range in Tracy.
(See enclosed flier and factsheet.)

Friday, February 24

Protest at Vandenberg Air Force Base
Special Bus - Bay Area to VAFB
Reservation required
Fare scholarships available
RSVP: macgregoreddy@gmail.com

The Defense Dept. test launches Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, which are intended to be armed with nuclear warheads, from VAFB on the CA coast near Lompoc to the Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands. There will be a protest at the gates at 11:30 PM, just before the midnight ICBM launch, sponsored by Women’s International League
for Peace and Freedom, United for Peace & Justice, Tri-Valley CAREs and other groups. Father Louie Vitale will be the keynote speaker.

To make the protest more accessible to Bay Area activists, MacGregor has
chartered a “Green Tortoise” bus to the gates of VAFB and back, complete
with bunk beds, a bathroom and a kitchenette! (Reservations required.)
The bus will leave the West Oakland BART station at 5pm on Friday 2/24 and
make pick-ups in San Jose, Palo Alto and Monterey. The return trip will get
you back early Saturday morning. (Get details from MacGregor Eddy or from
Tri-Valley CAREs.)

Thursday, March 1

Letter to the Editor writing party
5:30 PM, Tri-Valley CAREs’ office
2582 Old First St., Livermore
(925) 443-7148 for details

Come and write a letter to your favorite newspaper in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. We have 2 suggested topics for March: The anniversary of the 3/11 Fukushima disaster; and, U.S. spending on nuclear weapons. We will offer a short briefing and handouts on each topic.

Wednesday, March 7

Tri-Valley anti-war vigil
7 PM, 603 Main St., Pleasanton
pleasantonianspeace.org

Reflect on the human and economic costs of the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and
Iraq. This will be the 40th monthly candlelight vigil hosted by P4P. Rain or shine.

Saturday, March 11

Anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear power plant tragedy
7:00 PM, at ILWU Local 34
801 2nd St. / King St. (by AT&T Park) SF
(415) 867-0628 or (917) 774-4079
311bayarea@gmail.com

This very special program will remember the workers and community at the
Fukushima nuclear power plant with original music, poetry and presentations.
The event is sponsored by No Nukes Action to “stop the madness” in solidarity with all who have been exposed to radiation from dangerous nuclear technology. Call for details.

You may recall that Livermore Lab failed a security drill in 2008 when mock terrorists were able to access its nuclear material and create a “radiological device.” Further, the mock attackers were also able to steal nuclear material and leave the Livermore site. Since then, the DOE has been removing nuclear bomb usable quantities of plutonium and highly enriched uranium from the Lab for storage in more secure locations.

However, with the CMRR-nuclear facility being put on hold for a decade or more, we hear that there is renewed interest in keeping the Livermore Lab facility open for plutonium bomb core work. Look for Tri-Valley CAREs to oppose (and reverse!) this dangerous, wrong-way turn of events even as we continue to oppose the CMRR-nuclear facility.

We hope we have whetted your appetite to find out what’s in the Obama Administration’s FY2013 nuclear weapons budget request. The multi-volume document should be posted on the web at doe.gov soon after it is transmitted to Congress.

Moreover, Tri-Valley CAREs will produce, as we do each year, a concise, reader-friendly analysis of the budget request for nuclear weapons activities. Look for its publication soon!

In sum, we invite you to celebrate the (expected) victories in the budget request with us. And, know, too, that further cuts are possible as it wends its way through Congress. Indeed, check the article on page 1 to see some of what Tri-Valley CAREs is working on with Rep. Ed Markey and colleagues! Onward, together...

Stay in the know. Send us your email address and get our pithy, monthly e-updates. Easy.
What to Look for in the Budget Request for Nuclear Weapons

The fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget request for nuclear weapons will be released on February 13, one week late and several days beyond our print deadline. Fortunately, your team of “watchdogs” at Tri-Valley CAREs has been ever-vigilant, conducting dozens of meetings and interviews with the Dept. of Energy (DOE) and others regarding the costs associated with U.S. nuclear weapons programs.

Based on our research, here are some key items to look for in the DOE FY13 budget request to Congress for nuclear weapons. And, while prediction is an inexact science, we think there will be some good news for those of us who advocate for reduced spending on nuclear weapons programs.

Tri-Valley CAREs and scores of like-minded groups across the country have spent years opposing the DOE’s plan to construct and operate a new plutonium bomb factory, called the CMRR-nuclear facility, at the Los Alamos Lab in NM. Many of you have written letters, made phone calls and met with Members of Congress to stop this project. Look for the FY13 budget request for the CMRR-nuclear facility to be severely cut, if not eliminated.

If our prediction is correct, this will be a major victory. Moreover, the latest word is that DOE will not try to move forward with the CMRR-nuclear facility project until around 2022.

On the other side of the same coin is the oversized Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) that DOE wants to construct and operate at Y-12 in TN. Look for the budget request to speed up the construction schedule for the UPF.

Tri-Valley CAREs and many other groups will continue to oppose the UPF, as currently envisioned, because it is wrongly sized and missioned to enable increased production of new uranium “secondaries” for new nuclear weapons. Instead, the UPF mission should be focused on dismantling nuclear weapons secondaries and, as a nonproliferation step, downblending the highly enriched uranium so that it can’t be used in nuclear bombs again. So, look for Tri-Valley CAREs to issue an action alert on the UPF budget this spring.

Also rumored to be in for a trim in the FY2013 budget request is the DOE’s mixed oxide plutonium fuel (MOX) program at the Savannah River Site in SC. Look for the budget request to zero out funding for the Pit Disassembly and Conversion Facility (PDCF) intended to convert plutonium from a metal form into an oxide.

The PDCF had been DOE’s preferred method for providing the plutonium oxide that the MOX facility would then blend with uranium into fuel rods for nuclear power plants. If, indeed, the PDCF is knocked out of the budget request, look for DOE to shop for new furnaces (and use the existing ARIES

Continued on page 2
Community Meeting in Tracy
"Nuclear Weapons, Pollution and You"

You are Invited!

Thursday, Feb. 23
7:30 PM - 9 PM

Tracy Transit Center
Room 105
6th Street & Central Ave.
near the Grand Theater

More information
(925) 443-7148 or
(209) 836-0277

What you don't know about bomb tests at Livermore Lab's Site 300 can hurt you

Join your friends and neighbors at a special meeting to explore how activities at the Site 300 high explosives testing range on Corral Hollow Road affect the environment -- and what you can do to ensure cleanup and a healthy future.

Expert speakers will explain the mission and history of Site 300, its placement on the Superfund list of most contaminated sites in the nation, and what poisons Site 300 has released into the air, soils, groundwater and some surface waters near Tracy.

Environmental scientist Peter Strauss, Tracy resident and business owner Bob Sarvey, and Tri-Valley CAREs' executive director, Marylia Kelley will outline ways that community members can effectively work together to protect Tracy's health and environment. There will be lots of time for Q & A and roundtable discussion.

Snacks, drinks and great conversation will be provided! All that's needed is YOU!

Founded in 1983 • www.trivalleycares.org • (925) 443-7148
Site 300 Facts for the Community Meeting

Site 300 is Livermore Lab’s high explosives testing facility. It encompasses 11 square miles along Corral Hollow Road, just west of downtown Tracy and east of Livermore. Over the years, Tracy has expanded and major residential development is proposed next to Site 300.

Since its founding in 1955, Site 300’s mission has included open-air tests with high explosives and other materials used in nuclear weapons and mock nuclear detonations. Current operations at Site 300 include contained detonations and open-air blasts along with explosive and hazardous waste burning and storage. Prevailing winds blow contamination into the Central Valley, and, particularly, toward Tracy.

A Superfund cleanup site:
Site 300 activities have polluted the soil and groundwater with a dangerous mixture of chemical and radioactive wastes including solvents, high explosive compounds, radioactive gases and metals, and numerous toxic materials. Moreover, an off-site groundwater plume contaminated with solvents has migrated off Site 300, traveling under the main road and the nearby Corral Hollow Creek.

Another contaminant of concern at Site 300 is Uranium-238, also known as depleted uranium. U-238 is a radioactive metal that is toxic to internal organs and poses increased risks of cancer and other negative impacts if inhaled or ingested. At Site 300, U-238 was often used in open-air tests and buried in huge unlined dumpsites. It now contaminates soils and groundwater in multiple places, and, in some, it exceeds state and federal “maximum contaminant levels” by many hundreds of times.

An additional radioactive material used in explosive tests at Site 300 is tritium, the radioactive hydrogen of the H-bomb. It was also buried in huge unlined trenches. Now there is a tritium groundwater plume that is about two miles long, and its radioactivity is still moving slowly underground. Tritium concentrations have been measured at up to 1,000 times the “maximum contaminant level” set by state and federal agencies. Exposure to tritium is associated with cancers, immune system deficiencies, miscarriages, and birth defects, among other bad outcomes.

Because of the magnitude of this contamination, Site 300 was named in 1990 as a federal Superfund site, meaning it is listed by the EPA as among the nation’s most contaminated locations. Livermore Lab recently acknowledged that it is uncertain when cleanup at Site 300 will be completed, if ever. The Lab also estimates that its cleanup at Site 300 will cost $1.8 billion.

Big decisions coming up:
The cleanup at Site 300 is entering a new and important phase. Cleanup is starting at one of the open-air firing tables that was often used to detonate U-238. The area is called Building 812, and it encompasses about 200 acres in the east-central part of Site 300. The firing table is located almost directly over an earthquake fault. The hillsides, canyons and groundwater in this area are contaminated, as is a nearby spring. In soil samples taken 5 feet below the firing table, total uranium has been measured at a concentration of 22,700 picocuries per gram. For comparison, a recent U.S. Dept. of Energy (DOE) report lists the proposed soil cleanup standard for uranium at Building 812 as 3.1 picocuries per gram.

Some of Tri-Valley CAREs’ concerns:
There are serious, unresolved issues in the Building 812 cleanup. First, DOE contractors have issued a report that suggests that cleanup levels at Building 812 should be relaxed. This calls into question whether the cleanup will, in fact, be as comprehensive as possible. Second, the Lab plans to only clean up to “industrial” standards, which are more lax than residential standards. Third, Livermore Lab and DOE have not conducted enough outreach to the Tracy community, which will be directly affected if the Building 812 cleanup is not done properly.

Community involvement is needed:
Currently, the money for cleanup at Site 300 hovers at around 1% of the Livermore Lab’s annual budget. The budget for addressing the pollution at Site 300 should be adequate, stable and assured over the many decades it will take to complete the job. The Lab must not renege on its obligation to clean up the mess it has made. It’s time for the community to insist that the Lab prioritize, properly fund and complete the Site 300 cleanup.

A victory shows that winning is possible:
In 2006, Livermore Lab quietly set out to ramp up high explosive testing at Site 300. The Lab sought a new permit from the air pollution control district to increase the annual explosive limit at Site 300 eight-fold, from 1,000 pound blasts to 8,000 pound blasts. A Tracy business owner, Tri-Valley CAREs and colleagues at Earthjustice challenged the permit application. Our challenge resulted in an outpouring of public opposition to the permit. As a result, the air district demanded more information from the Lab. And, the outcome? Livermore Lab withdrew its permit application and closed several of the firing tables where the bigger, even more toxic, open-air tests would have occurred. Community involvement made a difference!