

# Blue Grass exchange

# exchange

A Partnership for Safe Chemical Weapons Destruction

## New Name, New Challenges, Continued Commitment

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Fall 2003

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## Chris Midgett leads the Bechtel Parsons Team

Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass was selected by the Defense Department's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program to design, build, systemize, test, operate and close a plant to destroy the chemical weapons stockpile stored at the Blue Grass Army Depot.

The Blue Grass program is a multi phase project spanning a decade of work, with an estimated life-cycle cost of about \$2 billion. Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass is a joint venture of Bechtel National, Inc., of San Francisco, Calif., and Parsons Infrastructure and Technology Group, Inc., of Pasadena, Calif. The joint venture has four teaming subcontractors: Washington Demilitarization Company, Battelle Memorial Institute, General Physics, and General Atomics.

Chris Midgett, the Project Manager for Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass, brings to the Blue Grass project a wealth of expertise in chemical weapons disposal and effective leadership on large, complex projects. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Midgett served as the deputy project manager for the construction, startup and testing of the Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal

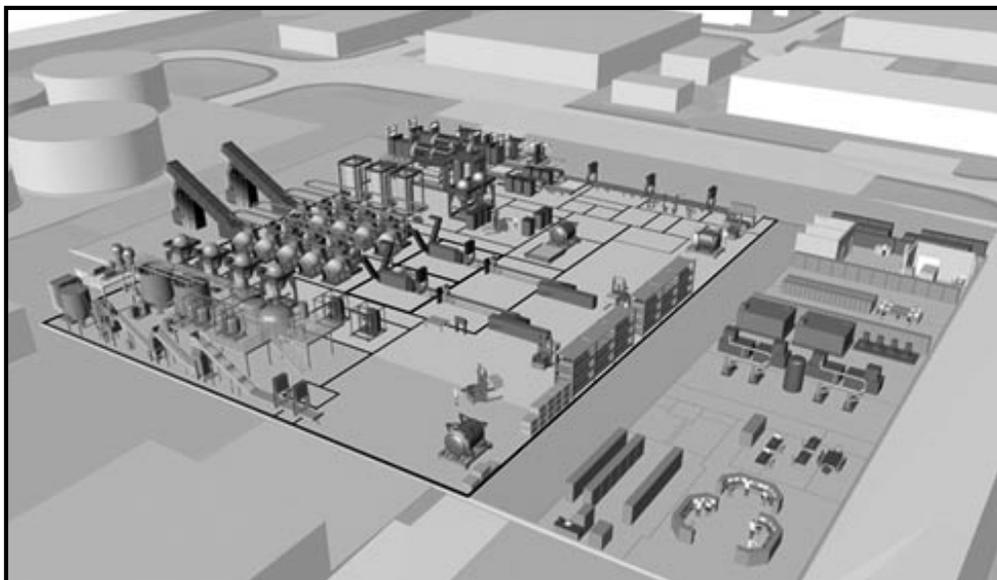
Facility in Alabama. The *Blue Grass Exchange* spoke to Midgett about his first few months on the job.

***Blue Grass Exchange (BGE):*** The Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass Team has been on the project for more than three months. Can you tell us in what kind of activities the team has been engaged?

*Midgett:* The first task required under the contract was to develop and submit a Design Build Plan for Government acceptance. This document details all the requirements and processes we will use to both design and construct the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP). This plan was submitted to the government on August 15, three days ahead of our milestone commitment. In addition we have been working on other project documents such as a management plan, a quality plan, and a detailed schedule for conduct of the project. Other activities have included the opening of Project Offices in Richmond and Pasadena,

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### Conceptual drawing of the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Plant Pilot



Graphic courtesy of Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass

# Chris Midgett leads the Bechtel Parsons Team continued from page 1

Calif., starting a series of special studies to reduce the technical risk associated with performing the design work, and establishing the business systems necessary to run a project of this magnitude.

**BGE: What does the Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass Team offer in terms of experience and expertise?**

*Midgett:* The Team brings significant experience to this project. All 13 “key” managers proposed to the Government in our bid proposal have chemical demilitarization experience, averaging over 12 years per person. These individuals are on the project now and working together as a team. From a company perspective, our team of companies has been involved, in some form or the other, on each of the eight chemical weapons demilitarization sites presently under contract with the U.S. Army. Because of that we are able to take lessons learned from those projects and apply them to BGCAPP.

**BGE: We understand that you have been meeting with the public and community leaders. What are some of the things you have heard and how does the Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass team intend to respond to citizen concerns?**

*Midgett:* The primary issue we heard immediately after contract award was about jobs. There was an expectation that we would be hiring “thousands” of employees immediately. We worked hard to get the word out that the first task is to perform the design work, which would take two and half years and would occur in Pasadena. Therefore, a lot of jobs in Richmond would not be available until we start construction in the 2005 time frame. The other thing we heard was related to the need to continue the open communications between the project and the community that ACWA had established during the technology testing phases and during the contract acquisition phases. We have made a commitment, as a team, to open and honest communications with all stakeholders, which includes the community and public in general. This includes full public participation in some of the key decisions that will need to be made as the project moves forward.

**BGE: What do you want to share with the community regarding the project’s commitment to safety and public health?**

*Midgett:* Our team goal is to ensure safety and maximum protection to the public in all we do. We are also committed to destroying the

is that zero accidents is our unwavering goal. Parsons and our teaming partners have the same commitment to safety. We take this commitment seriously.

**BGE: Can you tell us about what kind of staff you have brought on board and where the design is taking place?**

*Midgett:* As I indicated earlier, the design will be performed in Pasadena at the Parsons corporate headquarters. This is the most cost effective and efficient method for us to perform this phase of the work. In Richmond, I have established an office that includes my business manager, Kim Irwin and some members of her staff dedicated to getting our business processes in place. This includes Devon Farnstrom, who is our small business advocate. Also based out of this office are Leo Weitzman, the project environmental manager and his staff. Last but not least we have Mickey Morales, my public involvement manager. The community will be seeing a lot of Mickey over the years as he interfaces in his public outreach and public involvement roles.

**BGE: Since most of the design is taking place at the Parsons headquarters in Pasadena, what is the local hiring outlook?**

*Midgett:* The hiring profile will change over time as the facility design becomes more mature and when all of the construction requirements are finalized. We are now in the design phase of the project which is expected to last approximately two to two and half years. During this time the majority of the staff will be located in Pasadena. At the end of the construction phase, we will initiate mobilization for the construction phase of the project. Construction of the plant will last approximately three years and the anticipated staffing levels will peak between 600 to 1,000 employees. During construction, we have set an internal goal of hiring 75-80% locally. Based on our knowledge and experience at the other chemical stockpile destruction facilities in the United States, we estimate that between 600 to 700 employees will be required for the remaining phases of the project.

Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass Team	
<i>Joint venture systems contractor</i>	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Business services</li> <li>• Safety and quality</li> <li>• Procurement/subcontracting</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Process and facility design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process equipment fabrication</li> <li>• Support to systemization through closure</li> <li>• Environmental compliance</li> <li>• Public involvement</li> </ul>
<i>Teaming subcontractors</i>	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systemization</li> <li>• Pilot testing</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laboratory management</li> <li>• Science and technology support</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design support</li> <li>• Technology support</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On- and off-site training</li> <li>• Training documentation</li> </ul>

# The end of the beginning at Johnston Atoll

The year 2003 has had a series of firsts for the U.S. Army's chemical weapons disposal program. Notable among those firsts is the closure of the U.S. Army's first full-scale chemical weapons disposal facility, the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System (JACADS). The closure of JACADS is the end of the beginning.

The United States leads the world in disposing of chemical weapons. The Army began its mission of disposing of the entire U.S. stockpile of chemical weapons, with those located on a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

From the time JACADS was built in 1986, thousands of men and women have lived and worked less than a mile from the chemical weapons stockpile. These dedicated men and women helped the Army achieve its goal of safe disposal of the stockpile.

On Nov. 29, 2000, JACADS completed disposal of the Johnston Island chemical weapons stockpile, and in early 2001, JACADS became the first U.S. facility to officially enter closure. This was all

*Unidentified JACADS worker supervises demolition of the explosion containment rooms at the JACADS facility.*



accomplished while protecting the workers and the environment.

Johnston Island is home to hundreds of species of birds and fish. Working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, JACADS has protected the environment while disposing of the chemical weapons. In fact, according to independent surveys and studies, the fish and bird populations are prospering. The coral reef that is Johnston Atoll is one of the few thriving reef systems in the world.

In May 2003, after finishing processing the secondary waste, the last furnace at JACADS was shut down—another first for JACADS and the program. JACADS activities on Johnston Atoll will end in late 2003.

Because each of the eight disposal sites in the continental U.S. eventually will go through closure, program personnel are paying close attention to JACADS to ensure that valuable experience and insight from that site is shared.

The year 2003 is also a year of firsts for several other U.S. stockpile sites. The Army was



File Photograph

*JACADS during chemical weapons disposal operations.*

assigned responsibility for full-scale pilot testing of neutralization technologies to destroy the chemical weapons stockpiles at Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado, and Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky, under the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program.

The experiences at JACADS are being used to improve the processes and facilities at the other sites as they prepare to come on-line. The Army constantly strives to update their proven safe disposal methods through research, new technology and the experiences of each disposal site. Working with agencies such as the EPA and the National Research Council, the Army ensures that the community and the environment are protected.

This year, 2003, has been a banner year for the Army's chemical weapons disposal program. The firsts have been many, and with JACADS completing closure, the beginning of U.S. chemical weapons disposal has truly come to an end.



**New Name,  
New Challenges,  
Continued Commitment**

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The Program Manager Assembled Chemical Weapons **Assessment** (ACWA) team is shifting its focus from assessing chemical weapons disposal technologies to implementing full-scale pilot testing of alternative disposal technologies in Kentucky. ACWA now stands for Assembled Chemical Weapons **Alternatives**, to better reflect current program goals. For more information, please see the enclosed insert.

## Community Advisory Board to meet October 22

October 22 will mark the inaugural meeting of the newly-formed Chemical Destruction Community Advisory Board.

As representatives of the community, board members and their respective organizations have been selected to provide advice on major policy issues regarding all aspects of the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant.

Board member representatives were selected throughout a series of community forums and meetings earlier this year. The continuation of community interest and participation will be a key factor in the successful launch of this board.

In its draft mission statement, board members have identified the following primary activities:

- Promoting the safe, expeditious destruction of the weapons,
- Ensuring the protection of the community and facility workers,
- Encouraging sustainable economic development of the community,
- Articulating community priorities regarding the facility, and
- Guiding public outreach and information sharing with the community.

Board members will meet from 2:00-5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 22, at the Madison County Extension Office located on Duncannon Lane in Richmond. The meeting will be open to the public. For more information, please contact the Blue Grass Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office at (859) 626-8944.

# Welcome to the *'exchange'*

The *'exchange'* newsletter replaces the **REACH** newsletter, which had been the primary source for chemical weapons disposal information in Madison County since 1996.

The new look and new name reflect recent changes in the chemical weapons disposal program.

The Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA) program is now in charge of overseeing the destruction of chemical weapons stored at Blue Grass Army Depot. The ACWA program is well known for its strong public involvement program. Utilizing both national and local dialogues, ACWA has set a new standard for public involvement.

The *'exchange'* newsletter is just that, an exchange with the communities of Richmond, Berea and surrounding areas. Although this newsletter is a vehicle for keeping the community informed, it is only the first step in a dialogue — a dialogue that encourages citizen input and involvement.



Photo by Dr. Robert Bagby

In August, Chris Midgett and Col. Martin Jacoby provided a luncheon presentation to the Richmond Rotary Club. Mr. Midgett is the Project Manager for the Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass Team. Col. Jacoby is commander of the Blue Grass Army Depot.

Please feel free to contact the Blue Grass Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office with your ideas, questions and concerns. We welcome your exchange of ideas.

Along with the name change, we have created a new and improved public web site that has been designed to provide up-to-date information pertaining to:

- Disposal plans
- Upcoming program activities
- Opportunities for public involvement

Visit [www.pmacwa.army.mil](http://www.pmacwa.army.mil) to learn more about the chemical weapons disposal program for Blue Grass Army Depot.

## Contact Information

If you have questions about ACWA, or its new name and web site, contact:

- **Program Manager Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Public Affairs Office**  
at (410) 436-3398.
- **Blue Grass Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office**  
at (859) 626-8944, or visit us at 370 Highland Park Dr., Suite 2, Richmond, KY 40475.
- **Blue Grass Army Depot**  
Dave Easter, Public Affairs Office  
Blue Grass Army Depot  
2091 Kingston Highway Richmond, KY 40475  
(859) 625-6221
- **Blue Grass Chemical Activity**  
Richard Sloan, Public Affairs Office  
Blue Grass Chemical Activity,  
2091 Kingston Highway Richmond, KY 40475  
(859) 625-6897

# Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program

## Background

Congress established the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment Program (ACWA) in 1997 to safely test and demonstrate at least two alternative technologies to the baseline incineration process for demilitarization of the nation's stockpile of assembled chemical weapons. Assembled chemical weapons are configured with fuses, explosives, propellant, chemical agents, shipping and firing tubes and packaging materials.

After successfully demonstrating three technologies in 1999 and three more in 2000, the ACWA program determined that four of them were viable for pilot testing:

- neutralization/biotreatment,
- neutralization/supercritical water oxidation,
- electrochemical oxidation with silver and nitric acid, and
- neutralization/transpiring wall supercritical water oxidation/gas phase chemical reduction.

Congress authorized ACWA to manage the development and pilot-scale testing of these technologies in 1999. In 2003, ACWA was assigned responsibility for full-scale pilot testing of neutralization technologies to destroy the chemical weapons stockpiles at the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado and Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky.

This required the ACWA team to shift its focus from assessing chemical weapons disposal technologies to implementing full-scale pilot testing of alternative technologies at these sites. As a result, the program changed its name to Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives, to better reflect its new program goals.

## Public Involvement

The ACWA program attributes its success in identifying safe and effective alternatives for chemical weapons destruction to a commitment to meaningful stakeholder input and involvement. Public involvement efforts began in 1997 when ACWA program leaders implemented an innovative, open and fully participatory public process called the ACWA Dialogue. The ACWA program continues to work closely with stakeholders by implementing community forums at each site to:

- share next steps with the community regarding chemical demilitarization,

- facilitate communication between ACWA and the community,
- assist the community in notifying ACWA of areas of interest, and
- determine mechanisms to allow the community and ACWA to work together effectively.

## Blue Grass Army Depot, Kentucky

Blue Grass Army Depot is located in east central Kentucky, southeast of the city of Richmond and approximately 30 miles southeast of the city of Lexington. The depot stores approximately 2 percent of the nation's chemical weapons. The ACWA program has worked together with the community in selecting neutralization/supercritical water oxidation, known as SCWO, as the technology to destroy the chemical weapons stored there. A systems contractor will be selected to perform the work, including design, construction, operation and closure of the pilot-test facility.

Here is how neutralization followed by SCWO works:

- Munitions are disassembled by modified reverse assembly. Agent and energetics are separated. Agent and energetics are separated. Agent and energetics are chemically decomposed and neutralized by caustic or water hydrolysis. The resulting chemical compounds are known as hydrolysates.
- The agent and energetic hydrolysates are destroyed using SCWO units. SCWO subjects the hydrolysate to very high temperatures and pressures, breaking them down into carbon dioxide, water and salts.
- Metal parts are thermally decontaminated by heating to 1000 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of 15 minutes.
- Solid effluents are recycled or tested prior to disposal in permitted landfills. Gas effluents are recycled or filtered before released to the atmosphere.