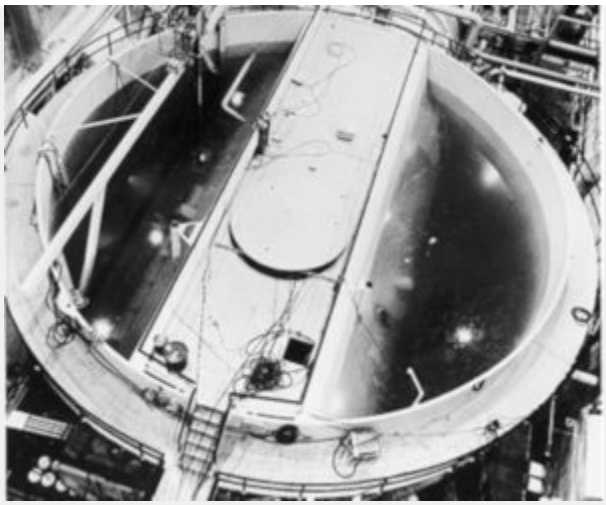
California company lands INL naval spent fuel project subcontract

By: Catie Clark April 28, 2020 0



The now dismantled USS Nautilus Mark 1 reactor mock-up at the Naval Reactor Facility at the Idaho National Laboratory site. The facility currently inspects and stores spent naval nuclear fuel. Declassified photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Fluor Marine Propulsion LLC, the contractor for the new Naval Spent Fuel Handling Facility at the Idaho National Laboratory site, has awarded a $245 million subcontract to Granite Construction Inc. of Watsonville, California, for concrete placement construction.

In 2017, officials broke ground for the new Spent Fuel Handling Project at the Naval Reactor Facility (NRF) at the INL site in the Arco desert. FMP took over management of the NRF in 2018 when the firm won a competitive bid for the operation of Naval Nuclear Laboratory facilities.

According to the National Nuclear Security Administration, the new spent fuel facility will be 213,085 square feet. The building portion of the project was allocated a construction budget of $500 million in 2017.

Granite's scope of work will include providing all labor, equipment and materials to backfill the excavation site from the basalt bedrock up to the elevation that will support super-structure foundations. The backfill will include approximately 10 million pounds of rebar and 300,000 cubic yards of concrete.

"Because we self-perform site work on the majority of our projects, we possess the expertise needed to execute a complex project of this type," said Granite President and Chief Executive Officer James H. Roberts. "Given our in-house experts, our team is well-positioned to achieve outstanding results under strict quality standards."

Construction is already underway and Granite expects to complete the subcontract work by summer 2021. The entire facility will be complete by 2024.

Granite Construction has been in business since 1922. It started as an offshoot of the tiny Granite Rock Company, which operated a quarry in Watsonville, California, and employed a teenaged John Steinbeck in the building boom after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Since then, the company has expanded from a small local firm to a large corporate construction business with global reach that is traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Fluor Marine Propulsion LLC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fluor Corporation. Its purpose is the support of the U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. FMP manages the Naval Nuclear Laboratory, which includes the Bettis and Knolls Atomic Power Laboratories, the Kenneth A. Kesselring Site for naval reactor training in West Milton, N.Y., and the NRF at the INL Site.

Fluor Corporation is an American multinational engineering and construction firm headquartered in Irving, Texas. It is the largest engineering firm in the Fortune 500 and is traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Another wholly-owned subsidiary, Fluor Idaho LLC, has managed the Idaho Cleanup Project at the INL, including the closure operations at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex.

The U.S. Navy has had a physical presence at the current INL site in the high desert between Arco and Idaho Falls since World War II when the few dry farms in the area and the hamlet of Scoville were acquired through eminent domain to create a bombing and naval artillery range. The area was turned over to the management of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1949 to become the National Reactor Testing Station, a forerunner of INL, though the USN has always maintained facilities at the site.

The USN built the Naval Reactor Facility in the early 1950s to house the prototype of the “Submarine Thermal Reactor – Mark I” for the first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus. From that time until 1989, the NRF was used for naval reactor operator training. In addition, the facility has received and inspected all of the USN’s spent nuclear fuel from 1957 to the present.