



# GAIN Microreactor Program Workshop

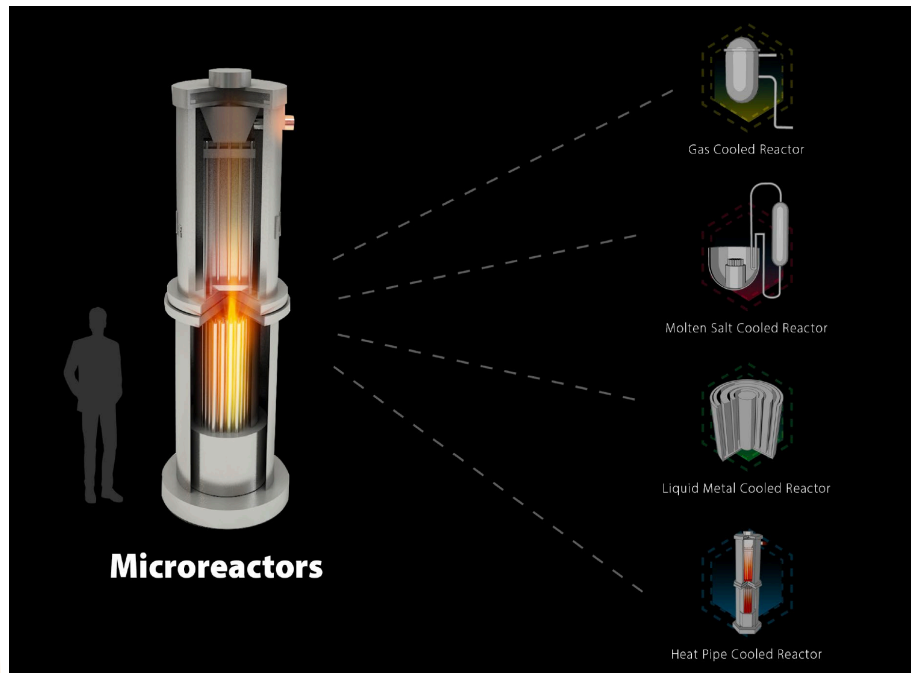
## MRP: Demonstration Support and Capabilities

Piyush Sabharwall, Ph.D.  
Microreactor Technical Area Lead  
US DOE – NE MRP Program  
May 13<sup>th</sup> 2021

# Technical Area Overview

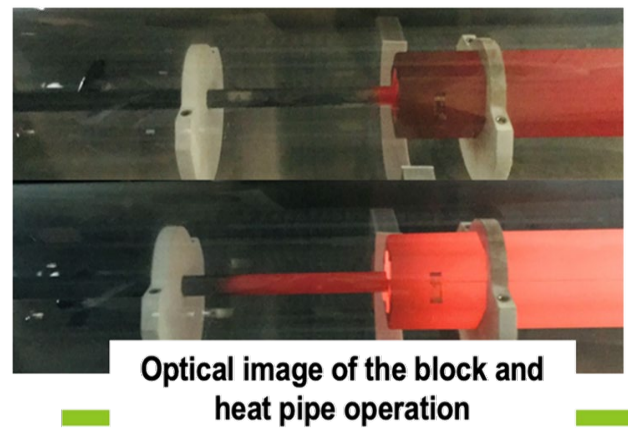
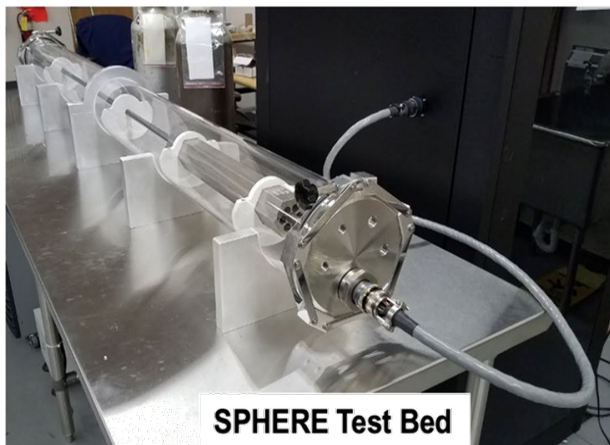
**Demonstration Capabilities Technical Area includes two major R&D activities:**

- 1. Non-Nuclear Testing and Demonstration:**
  - Single Primary Heat Extraction and Removal Emulator (SPHERE)
  - Microreactor AGile Nonnuclear Experiment Testbed (MAGNET)
- 2. Microreactor Applications Research Validation and Evaluation (MARVEL)**



# Single Primary Heat Extraction and Removal Emulator (SPHERE)

- Provide capabilities to perform steady state and transient testing of heat pipes and heat transfer:
  - Wide range of heating values and operating temperatures
  - Observe **heat pipe startup and transient operation**
- **Develop** effective thermal coupling methods between the heat pipe outer surface and core structures
- **Measure** heat pipe axial temperature profiles during **startup, steady-state, and transient operation** using thermal imaging and surface measurements



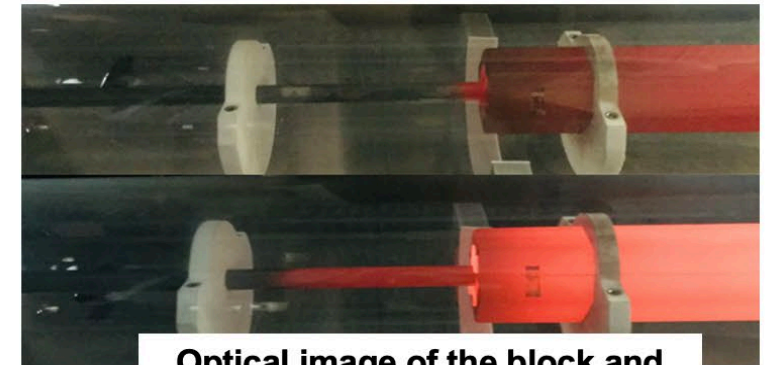
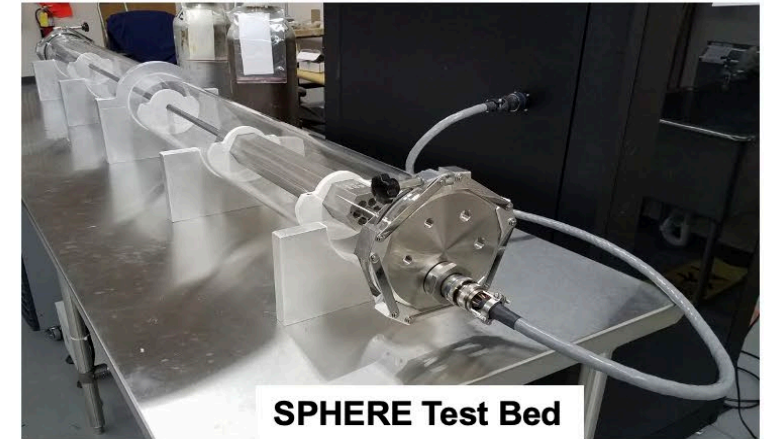
Parameter	Value
Length	243 cm
Diameter	15 cm
Tube material	Quartz
Connections	Flanged for gas flow and instrumentation feed through
Maximum power	20 kW
Max Temperature	750 C
Heat Removal	Passive radiation or water-cooled gas gap calorimeter



# Accomplishment

## Single Primary Heat Extraction and Removal Emulation (SPHERE) Completes First Test

- SPHERE is a heat pipe testing capability that allows for detailed testing of the operation and heat transfer for heat pipes to provide performance data and validation data for modeling and simulation.
- The initial testing consisted of vacuum operation of a sodium heat pipe. The temperature was measured at 10 evenly spaced points along the heat pipe.
- Additional exterior thermocouple measurements were also taken on the exterior of the heat pipe to confirm the similarity of thermowell temperatures to exterior heat pipe temperature measurements.
- The initial test was successfully completed, and results measured at INL are consistent with the data from the manufacturer.

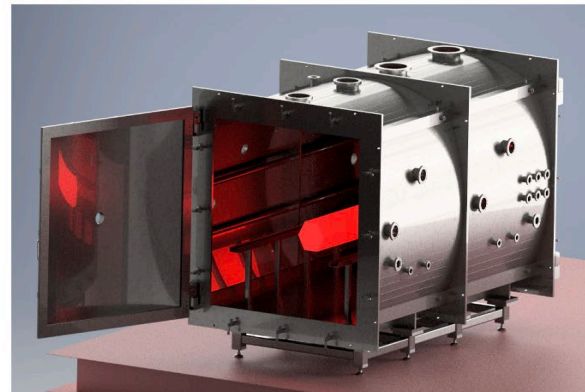
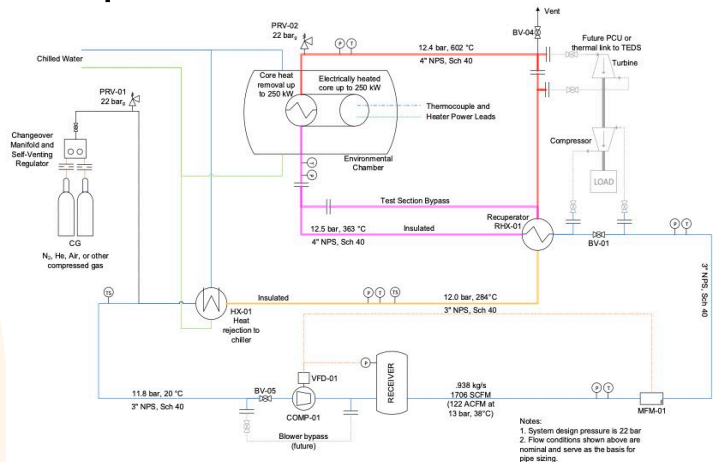




# Microreactor AGile Non-nuclear Experimental Testbed (MAGNET)

- General-purpose test bed for performance evaluation of microreactor design concepts (heat pipe, gas-cooled, other).
- Provide detailed reactor core and heat removal section thermal hydraulic performance data for prototypical geometries and operating conditions.
- Demonstrate interface of heat removal section to power conversion system for power generation.
- Provides for integrated materials, instrumentation testing
- Co-located with integrated energy systems R&D capabilities

Parameter	Value
Chamber Size	5 ft x 5 ft x 10 ft
Heat Removal	Liquid-cooled chamber walls, gas flow
Connections	Flanged for gas flow and instrumentation feed through and viewing windows
Coolants	Air, inert gas (He, N2)
Gas flow rates	Up to 43.7 ACFM at 290 psig
Design pressure	22 barg
Maximum power	250 kW
Max Temperature	750 C
Heat Removal	Passive radiation or water-cooled gas gap calorimeter

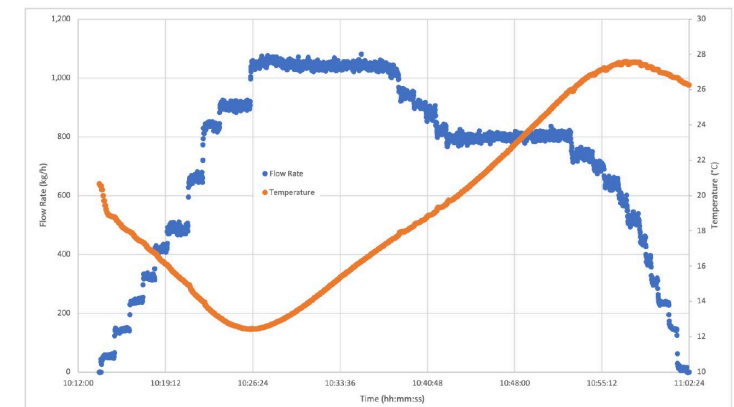


# MAGNET Accomplishments and Challenges

- On December 23, INL staff and members of the construction subcontractor team started MAGNET to **demonstrate system operation**
  - Pressurized system piping to 12 bar and started compressor at minimum speed
  - Ramped compressor speed in increments of 5 Hz to full speed
- On January 20, INL staff installed temporary ceramic fiber heater to system piping for final acceptance test
  - Pressurized system to 20 bar, energized heater, and started compressor
  - Heated system to 120 ° F and performed 30-minute system leak check
- INL quality engineer **accepted** the test
- Insulation installation started



## Demonstrating System Operability



System Operational Test Flow Rate And Temperature

# MARVEL – Microreactor Applications Research, Validation & Evaluation Project

- Project Goal: Rapid development of a small scale microreactor that provides a platform to research and development on unique operational aspects and integration with end use applications of microreactors
- Supported by the DOE Microreactor Program and National Reactor Innovation Center
  - **MRP**: Engage with microreactor end-user companies
  - **NRIC**: Develop and exercise capabilities to execute reactor demonstration projects
- Project Schedule: Planned operations by **late 2022 - early 2023**
- Anticipating applications testing:
  - Microgrid integration
  - Remote power and heat for computing, water, buildings, etc.
  - Currently engaging interested end users for testing activities



A conceptual rendering of the MARVEL fission reactor at INL's Transient Reactor Test (TREAT) facility.



# MARVEL Reactor Overview



Parameter	Value
Reactor Thermal Power	100 kW
Nominal Electrical Output	20 kWe
High-grade heat	~45 kWt at 450 C
Coolant	NaK, natural circulation
Fuel	UZrH
Reactivity control	4 control dums
Location	INL, TREAT Facility



# Single Primary Heat Extraction and Removal Emulator (**SPHERE**)

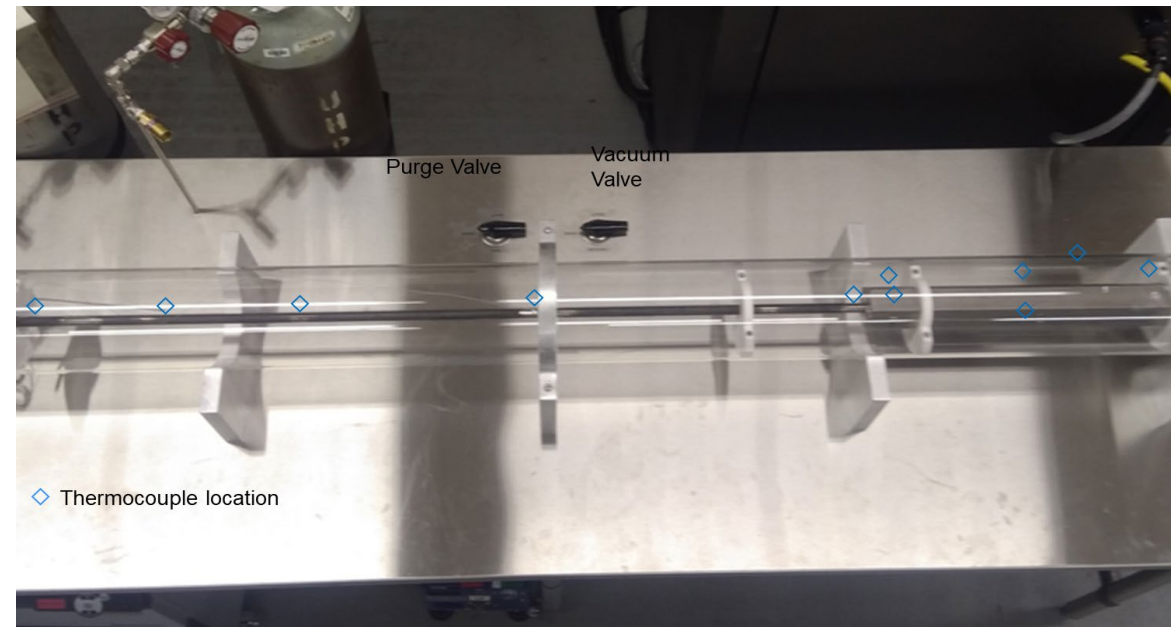
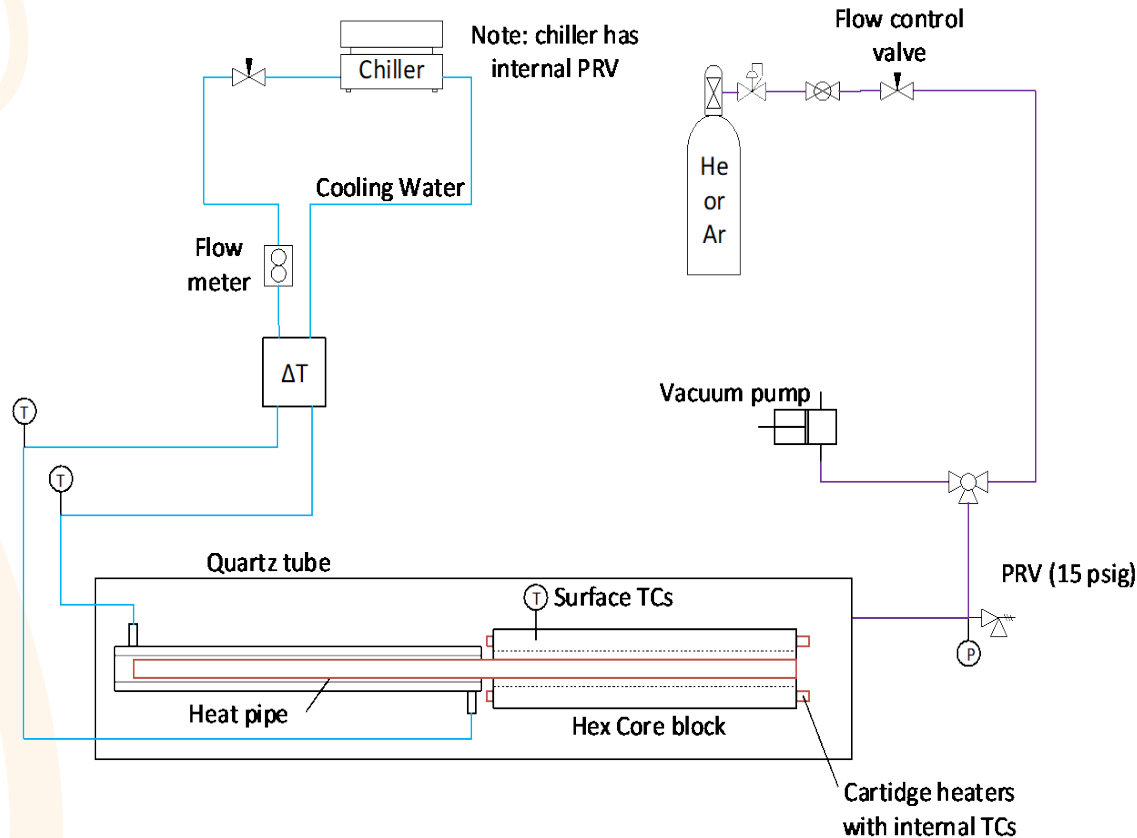
## GAIN Microreactor Workshop

May 13, 2021

**Jeremy Hartvigsen** | Research Engineer

# SPHERE System Design

- 6" diameter 8' long quartz tube
- Maximum power rating of 10 kW
- Vacuum, Helium, Nitrogen, or Argon atmosphere





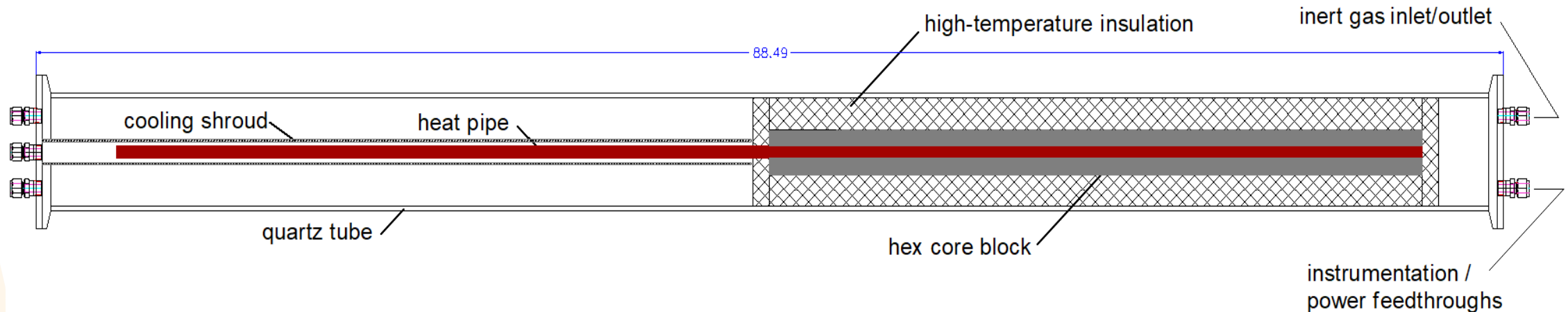
# SPHERE MAJOR EQUIPMENT LIST

- Ohio Semitronics, Model PC5-118X5Y25; single phase, 2-wire, 0–150 VAC, 0-25 A, 5-sec response for zero-crossing signal
- National Instruments PXI data-acquisition system
- Watlow Din-A-Mites, 100–240 VAC, 24 Amp, single-phase 4–20 mA control input
- Watlow RMC temperature controllers
- Watlow FIREROD cartridge heaters
- Flow Technology turbine flow meter, Model FTO-5NIXW-LHC-5 with linearization electronics, Linear Link RF input, 0–10 VDC output
- Small vacuum pump for removing air from test fixture (quartz tube enclosure), prior to back-fill with inert gas
- ThermoFisher Thermoflex TF 2500, 2.5 kW cooling capacity, up to 4 gpm water flow rate.



# SPHERE: Single Heat Pipe Experiments Objectives

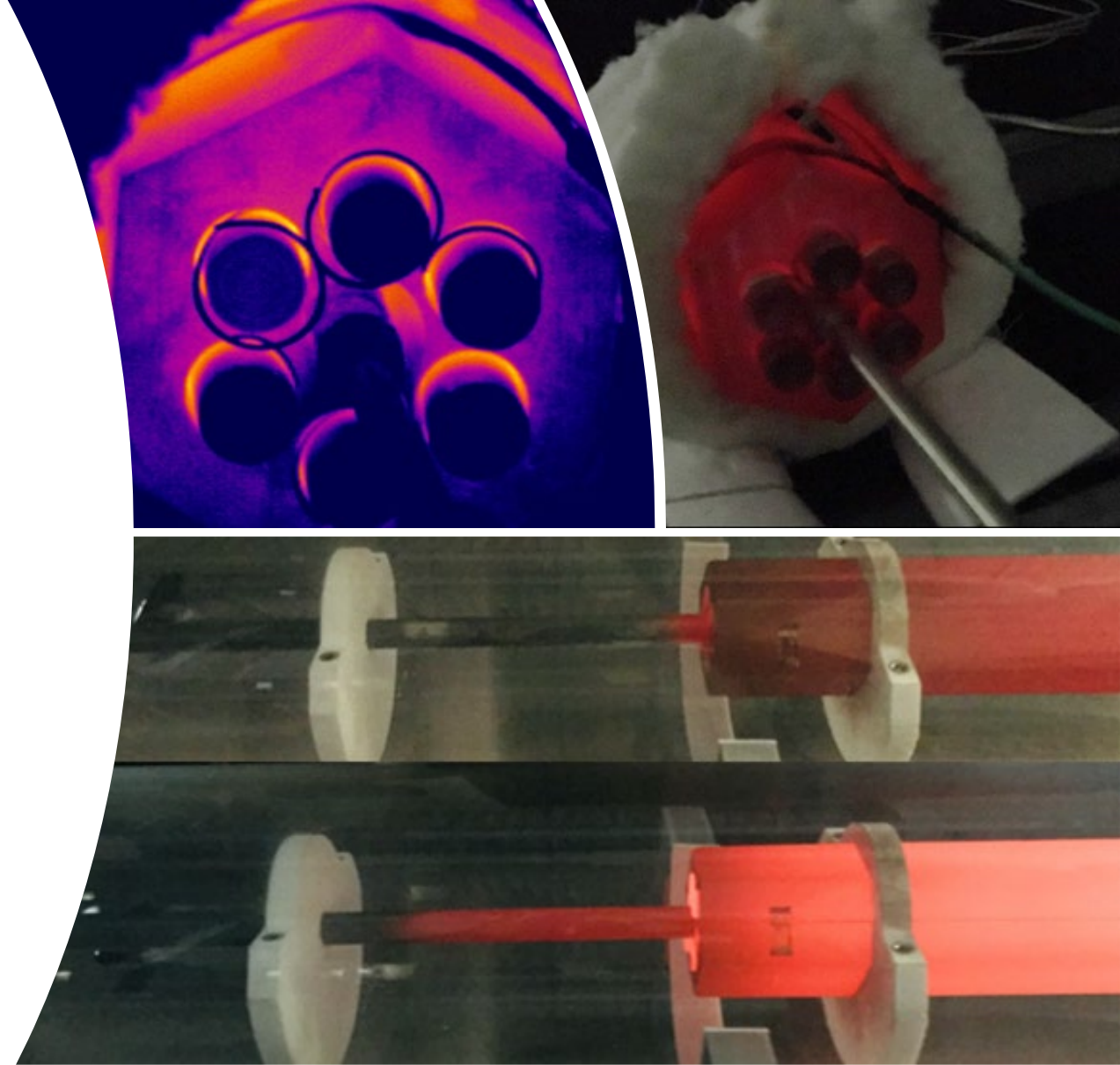
- Single heat pipe experimental capability has been established at BCTC
- Document **heat pipe thermal performance** under a wide range of heating values and operating temperatures
- Observe **heat pipe startup and transient operation**
- **Develop** effective thermal coupling methods between the heat pipe outer surface and the core block and between the cartridge heaters and the core block
- **Measure** heat pipe axial temperature profiles during **startup, steady-state, and transient operation** using thermal imaging and surface measurements
- **Measure** core block and heater temperatures during heat pipe operation
- **Measure heat removal rates** from heat pipe condenser and compare to total heater power input



# SPHERE: ACT Heat Pipe

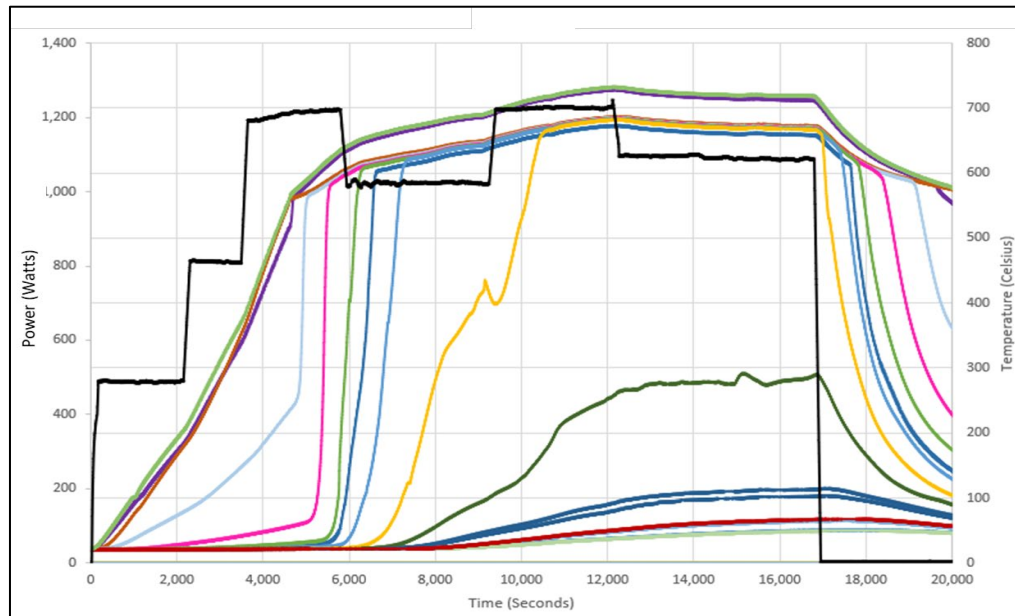
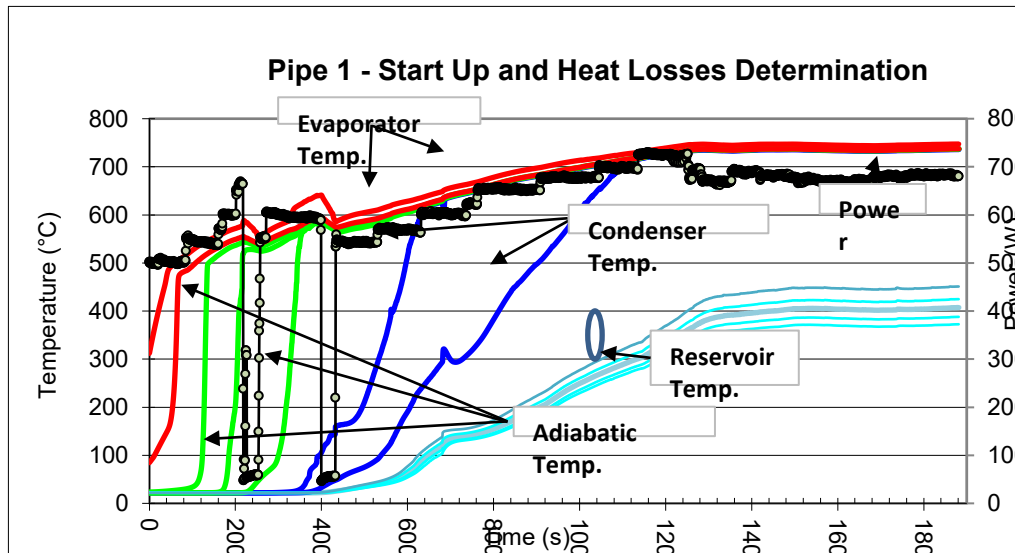
## ACT Heat Pipe

- Pipe material: SS 316
- Geometry: smooth-wall tube, proprietary wick
  - Wick: sintered stainless steel
- Length: 2 m, Diameter: 0.625-in.
- Working fluid: sodium, non-condensable inert gas
- Operating temperature,  $\sim 740^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Heat-removal rating: 1 kW





# Testing of Commercial Heat Pipe

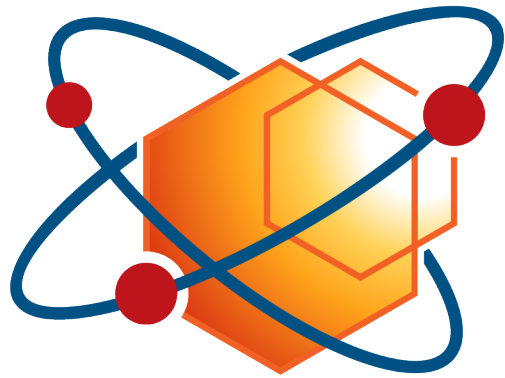


## Accomplishments

- Verify instrumentation and controls
- NEAMS and SOCKEYE use the data from the testing to validate and tune their models
- Experimental data correlates with manufacturer data
- Initial data from shakedown testing being used to help with tool validation

## Ongoing Activities

- Interlayer gap conductance testing
- Heat pipe orientation experiments



**MRP** Microreactor  
Program



# Microreactor **AGile** Non-Nuclear Experimental **Test Bed (MAGNET)**

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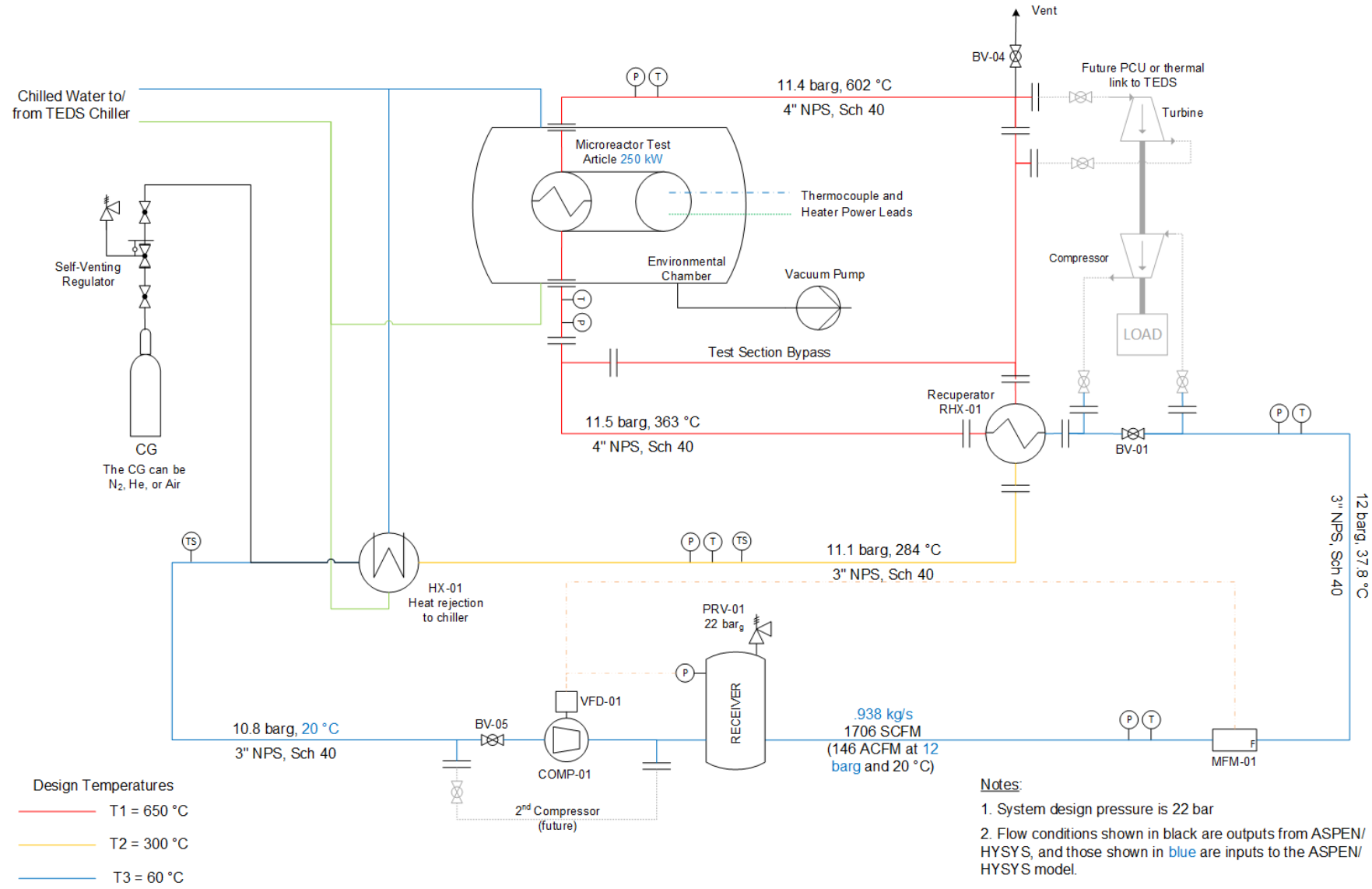
**T.J. Morton** | Engineering Lead



# MAGNET Objectives

- General-purpose, non-nuclear test bed for prototype microreactor design evaluation
- Provide thermal-hydraulic performance data
  - Test article and flow loop temperature and pressure data for start up, shut down, steady state, and transient operations
  - Displacement and temperature data for design performance verification and accompanying analytical model validation (V&V)
- Provide expansion capability to demonstrate an integrated power conversion unit (PCU)
- Identify, develop, and test advanced sensors for potential autonomous operation
- Enhance readiness of public stakeholders, particularly DOE laboratories and the U.S. NRC, to design, operate, test, and license high-temperature microreactor components

# MAGNET Process Flow Diagram (PFD)



# MAGNET Basic Design Parameters

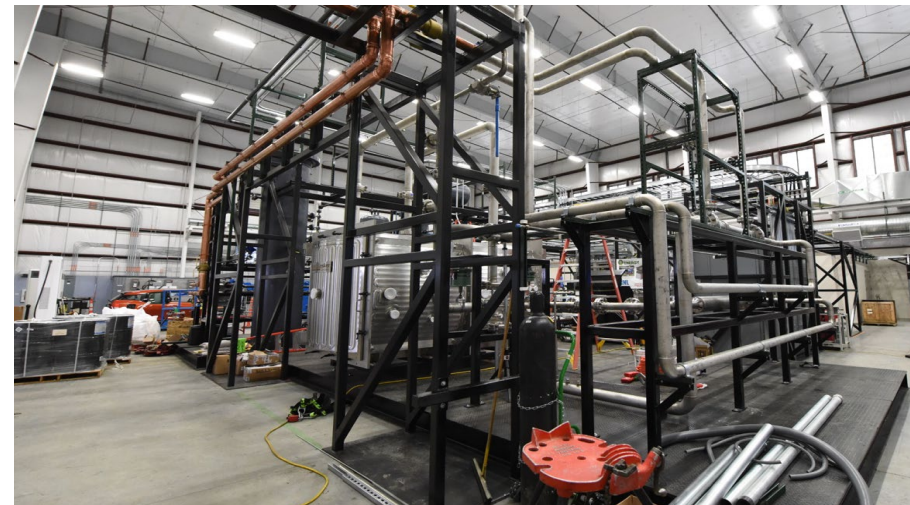
- Support electrically-heated test articles of  $\leq 250$  kW
- Support test articles with temperatures  $\leq 750$  °C
- Provide closed-circuit, inert-gas, coolant flow loop (N<sub>2</sub> or He)
- Flow loop design temperature: 650 °C (see PFD for more information)
- Flow loop design pressure: 22 bar<sub>g</sub>
- Ultimate heat sink: chilled water at 44 °F
- 350 kW recuperator (compact platelet heat exchanger)
- Environmental chamber for test article: vacuum ( $\sim 10^{-4}$  torr) or back-filled inert gas (atmospheric pressure) 5 ft x 5 ft x 10 ft long inside dimensions
- Expandable for integration of power conversion unit or other systems via heat exchanger
- National Instruments PXI data acquisition and control

# Construction Progress



Construction delays due to late arrival of recuperator and unforeseen problems with high-temperature thread sealant (instrumentation thread-o-lets) pushed start back to June of 2021

- December 2021 – pressurized system to 12 bar<sub>g</sub> and ran compressor for one hour to demonstrate system operability
- March 2021 – completed pneumatic test and inspection of all welded joints (test pressure 355 psi<sub>g</sub>)
- Insulation work ongoing in parallel with resolving instrumentation port sealing





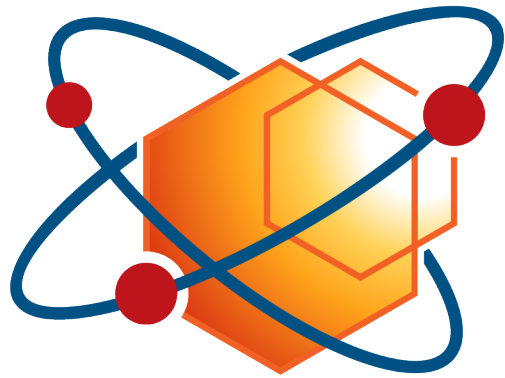
# Future Work

## MAGNET Experimentation

- Finish Engineering design for PCU integration: June 2021
- Complete single heat pipe test article campaign: September 2021
- Construction work to integrate TEDS with MAGNET\*: September 2021 - TBD
- Perform He component testing for commercial vendor: September 2021- March 2022
- Install 37 heat pipe test article in MAGNET: April 2022 – May 2022
- Complete 36 heat pipe test article test campaign: ~September 2022
- Design MAGNET upgrades based on operating experience: May 2022 – September 2022
- Resume He component testing for commercial vendor: September 2022 – TBD

\* - Funded by Cross-Cutting Technology Development Integrated Energy Systems (CTD-IES)





**MRP** Microreactor  
Program



# Microreactor Applications Research, Validation & EvaLuation (MARVEL) Project

GAIN Microreactor Workshop

May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Yasir Arafat** | MARVEL Technical and Project Lead

# MARVEL Project Goals and Objectives

## **Project Goals:**

- Rapid development of a small-scale microreactor that provides a platform to test unique operational aspects and applications of microreactors

## **Primary Objectives:**

- Project shall produce an operational microreactor in the most accelerated timeline possible
- Project shall result in an operational reactor that produces **combined heat and power (CHP)** to a functional **microgrid**
- **DOE Sponsor Programs:**



Create momentum, champion rapid technology maturation, and engage microreactor end-user companies.



Develop and exercise capabilities to execute reactor demonstration and demonstrate integrated energy systems and non-electric applications.



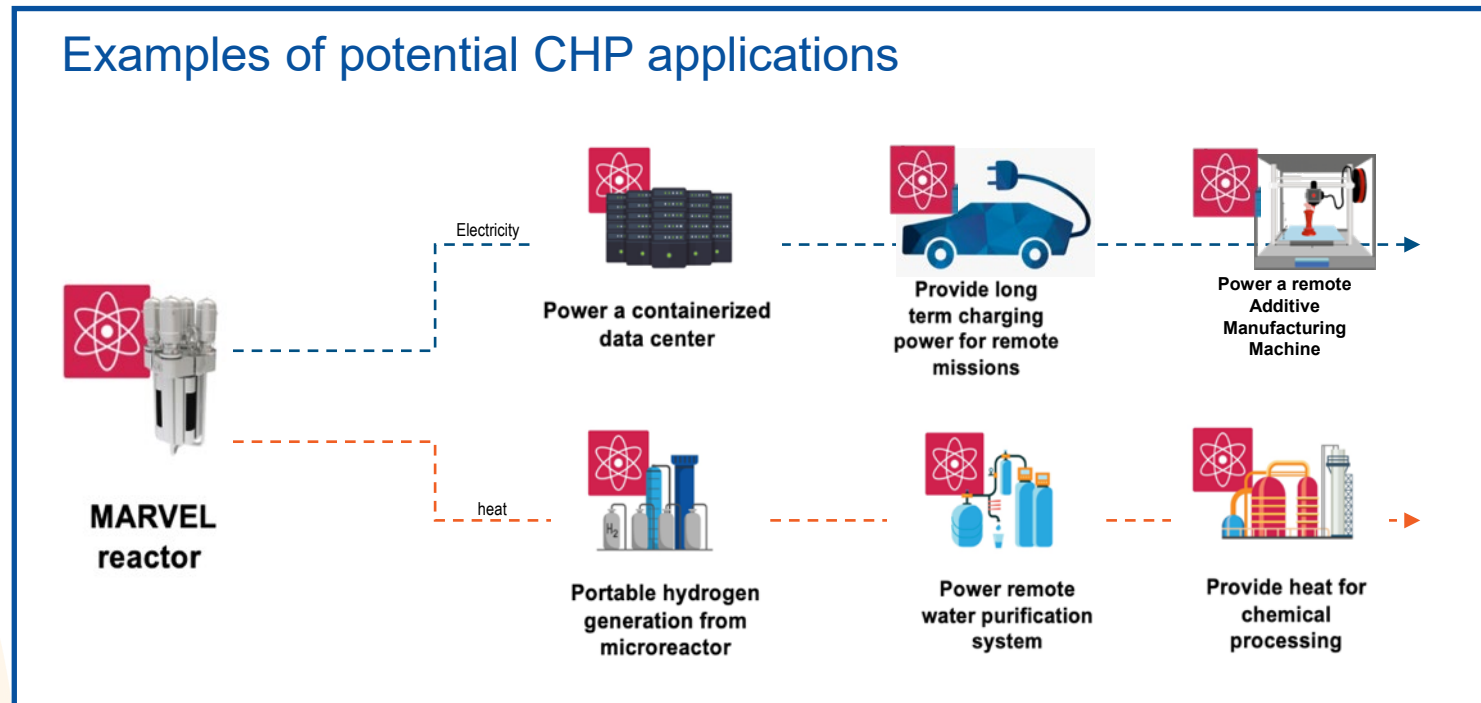
MARVEL Project Burndown = 11 months





# Microreactor Applications R&D

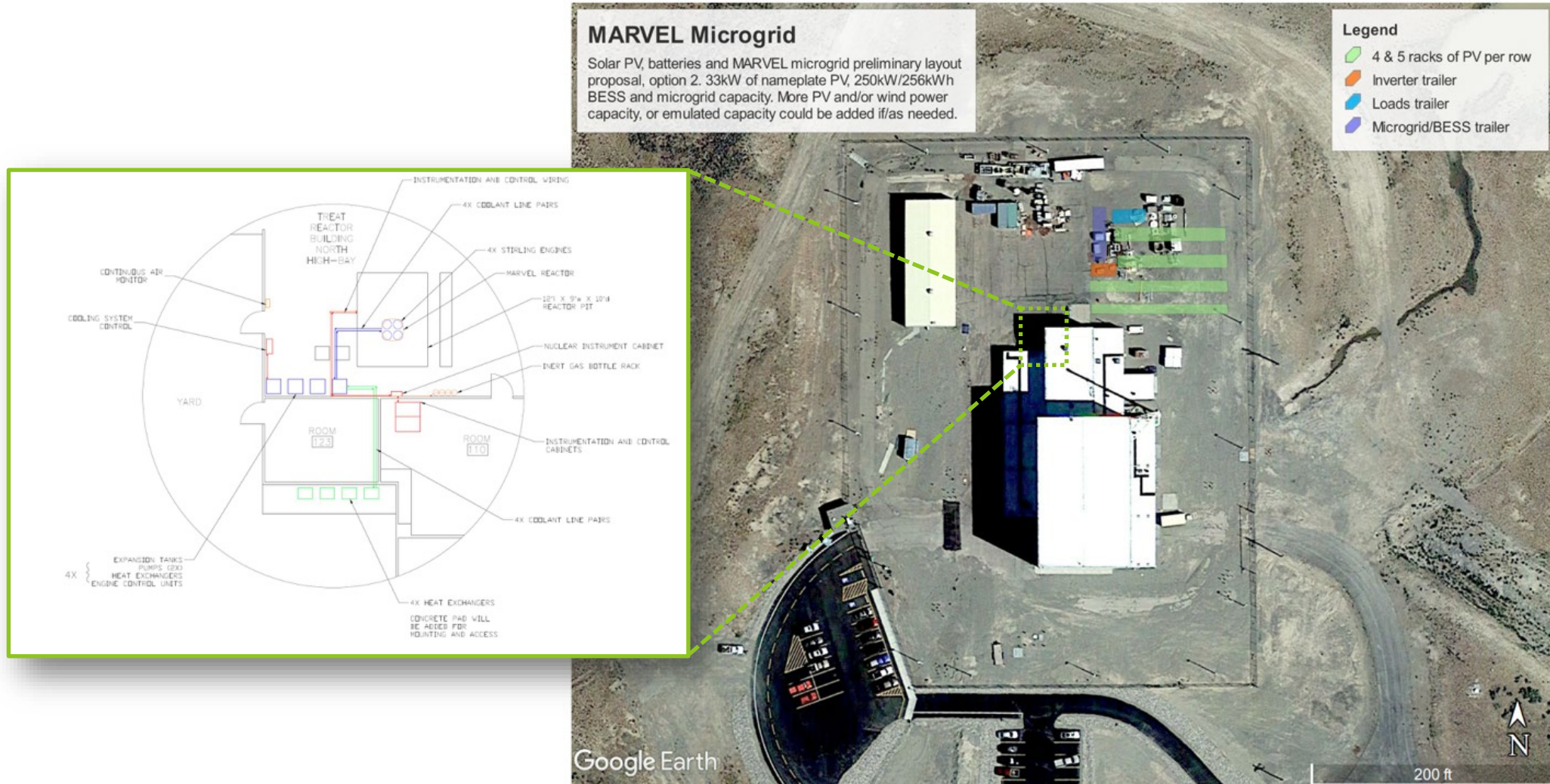
- Engage potential end user companies (B2B, B2C): interested in bringing application assets for testing and ultimate deployment
- End-users are actively being engaged to plan for integration tests: 20 companies



## List of companies engaged:

- ✓ Dell
- ✓ Tesla
- ✓ Electrify America
- ✓ Chargepoint
- ✓ ExxonMobil
- ✓ Oxeon
- ✓ Bloom
- ✓ Fuelcell Energy
- ✓ Envoy Public Labs
- ✓ Eastman/Kodak
- ✓ GSE
- ✓ Shell
- ✓ Chevron
- ✓ AVEC
- ✓ Idaho Power
- ✓ Southern Company
- ✓ Holtec
- ✓ Battery 500
- ✓ Proton Conduction H2
- ✓ LIFEPo4

# Integration of MARVEL with a Microgrid



# MARVEL Environmental Assessment (EA) to Pioneer Reactor NEPA

- **Pursuing EA** (not EIS) for DOE Authorization
- **Completed**
  1. NRIC submitted legal white paper to justify basis of EA for reactor to DOE-ID
  2. Environmental Assessment Determination received from DOE-ID
  3. Technical Studies and Evaluations
  4. Purpose and Need in Project Review
  5. Consultations with Tribal (Shoshone, Fort Hall) and State (Governor's Office, Congressional Staffers)
  6. Complete Draft EA and 10 technical ECARs (Jan 11)
  7. DOE review of Draft EA
  8. DOE release Draft EA for public comments
  9. Address Public Comment (Feb 9)
  10. DOE-ID drafted Final EA and FONSI



**Title:** "Draft Environmental Assessment for the Microreactor Applications Research, Validation and Evaluation (MARVEL) Project at Idaho National Laboratory"

**Link:** [DOE Office of Energy](#)

**Press:** [ANS Newswire](#); [Local News 8](#)

## Status *(blue = complete)*



**MARVEL is the first reactor to complete EA for NEPA Compliance**

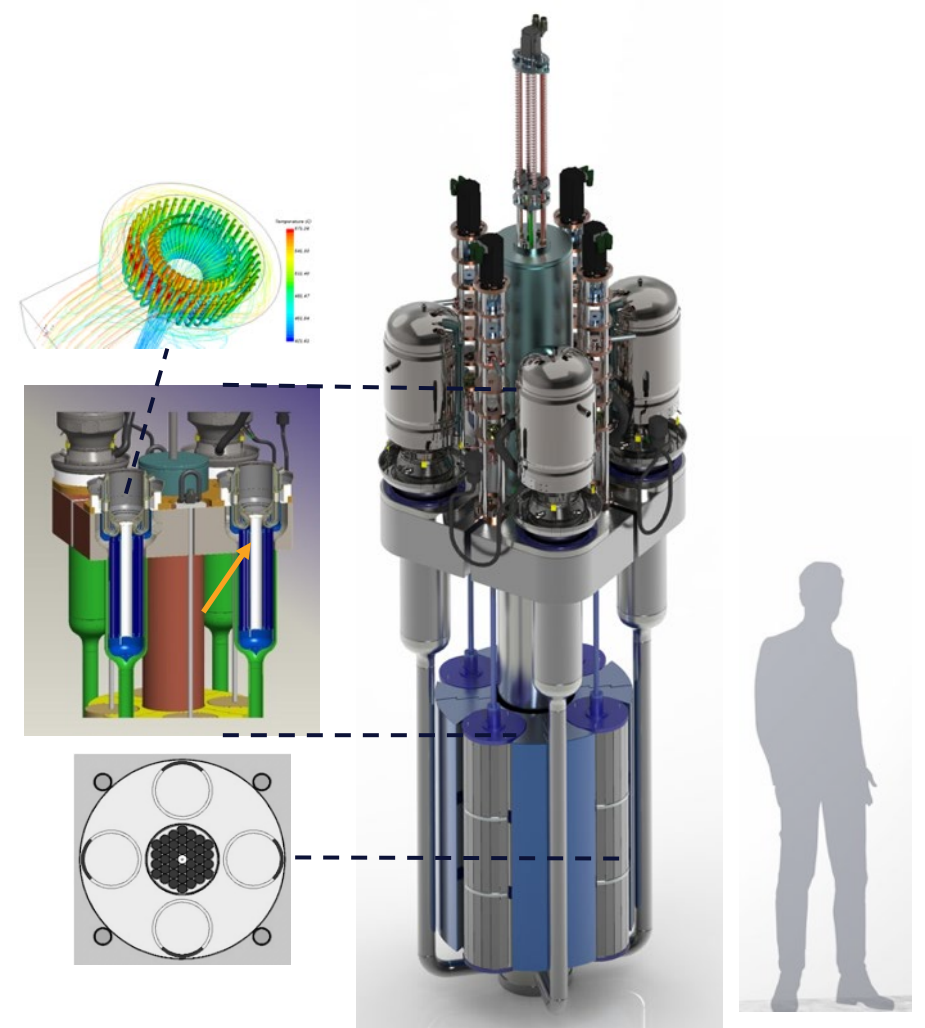


**MRP** Microreactor Program



# MARVEL Reactor Parameters

- **Inspired by** SNAP 10A core geometry: 37 pins
  - Thermal Power – 100 kWth
  - Four ex-core reactivity control drums
  - Modified TRIGA fuel-  $\text{UZrH}_{1.6}$
- **Primary Circulation** (natural convection) – NaK eutectic
- **Secondary Circulation** (natural convection) – PbBi eutectic
- **Four helium Stirling engines** @ 400–500 C inlet T
  - Electrical Output ~20 kWe
  - Max High Grade heat ~ 45 kWth @ 450°C
  - Max Low Grade heat ~ 75 kWth @ 50°C



Site: TREAT Storage Pit (8'x12'x10') and TREAT control room



Storage pit → T-REXC  
TREAT microReactor EXperiment Cell



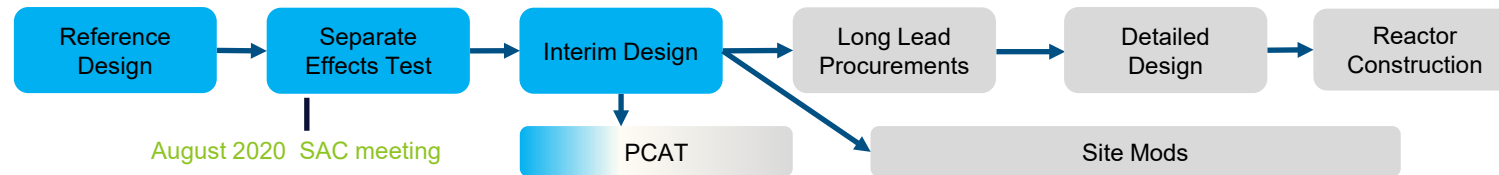
Control Room



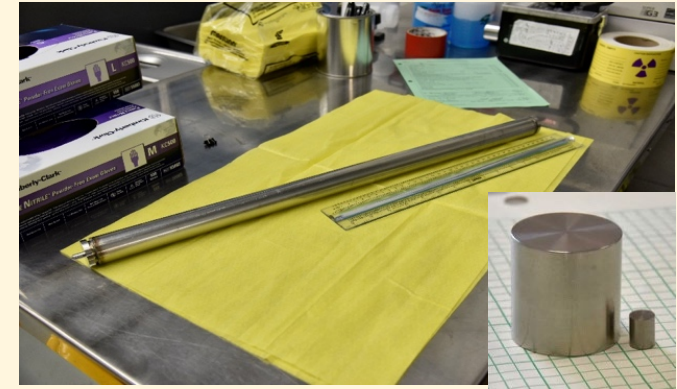
# Design & Testing Updates

- **June 2020:** Reference Design Completed
- **July–Sept. 2020:** Separate Effect Tests Performance
- **Oct. 2020–Jan. 2021:** Integral Effects Test (PCAT) Designed
- **Oct. 2020–Jan. 2021:** Interim Design Reports Archived

**Status** (blue = complete)

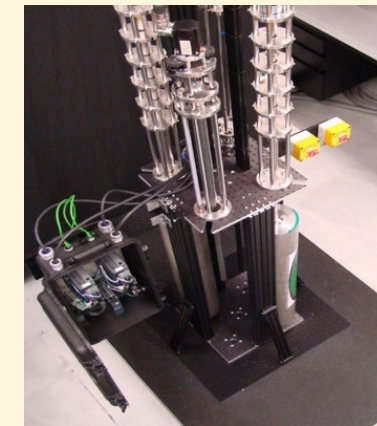


Fuel Pin Assembly



Loaded partial-length pin, Length: 65.38 cm (25.74"),  
17 surrogate fuel slugs, 2 surrogate reflectors, ~4.9g Na

MARVEL Control Systems



Control Drums prototype

Power Conversion System

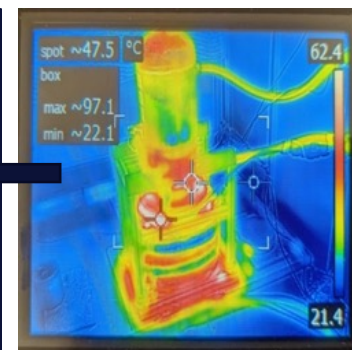
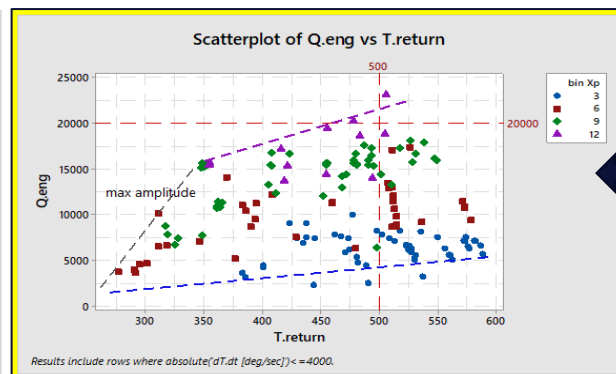
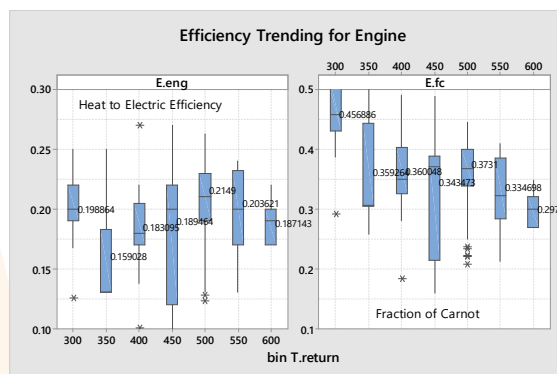
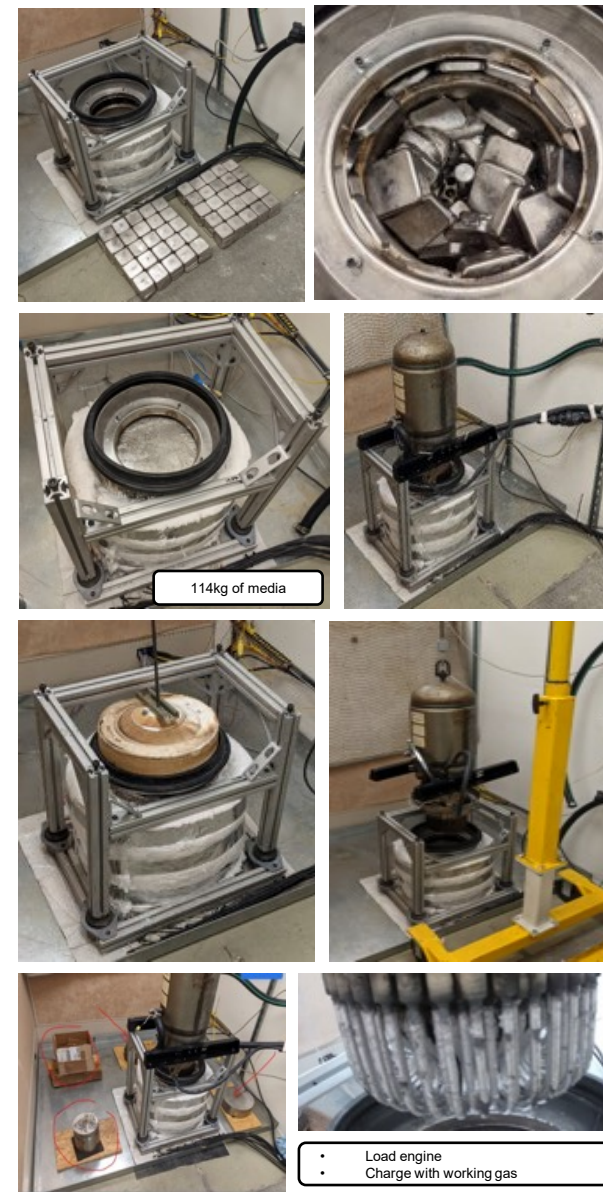


Stirling Engine

# Risk Reduction Tests

- **LBE-Stirling is Novel**
- **Stirling Interface Characterization**
  - Operate on QEC brake – no ‘customer’ load
  - Evaluate hot start and cold stop (140–180°C)
  - Load/unload convertor into fluid
  - Evaluate vibration transfer (qualitative) to fluid
  - Approximately confirm ROM convection coefficient
  - NDE – Review tubes for any evidence of attack (post-operation)

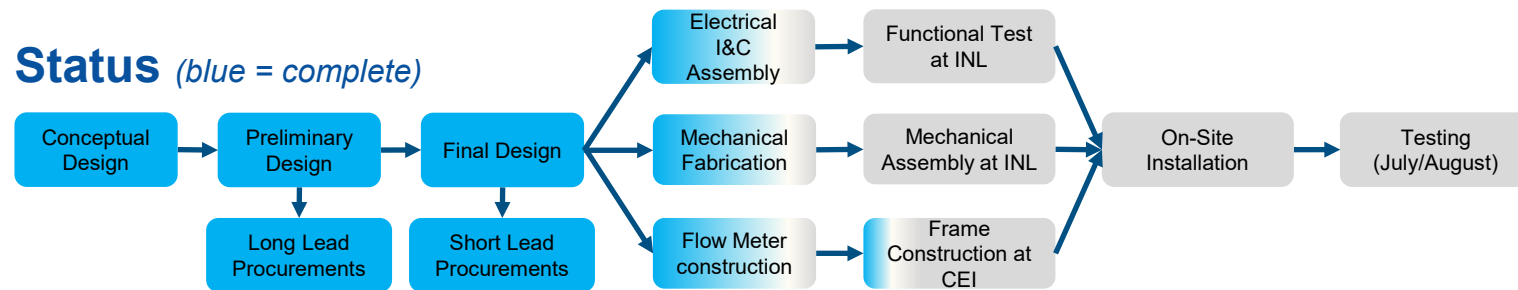
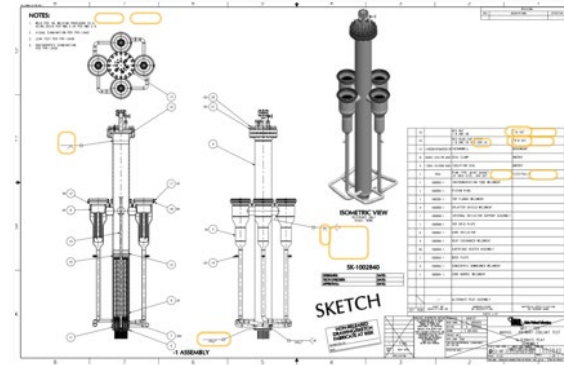
- Tank Loss  
~0.8 W/K
- Engine Conductance  
~2 W/K
- Circulating Convection  
~2 kW/m<sup>2</sup>.K
- Engine LMTD  
<100K
- Electric Power  
4-5kW
- Vibration MAX  
8-10Grms
- Correlations Approximate





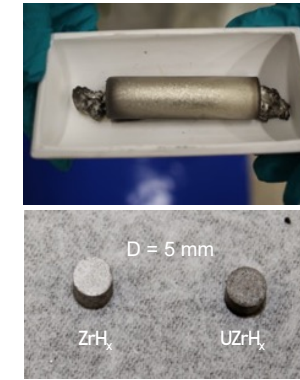
# Integral Effects Test “PCAT”

- **Primary Coolant Apparatus Test (PCAT)**
  - Non-Nuclear Prototype (i.e., physical twin of reactor)
  - Full-Scale, 100kWth
  - Build at INL
  - Tested at Creative Engineers, Inc. (in PA)
- **Objectives**
  - Flow and heat transfer characteristics
  - Benchmark modeling & simulation
  - Streamline manufacturing methods
  - Train operators

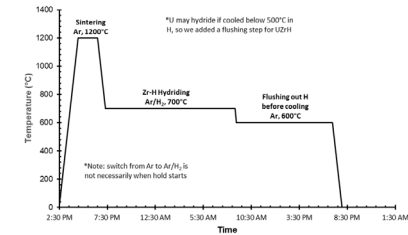


# Fuel Fabrication (INL, LANL)

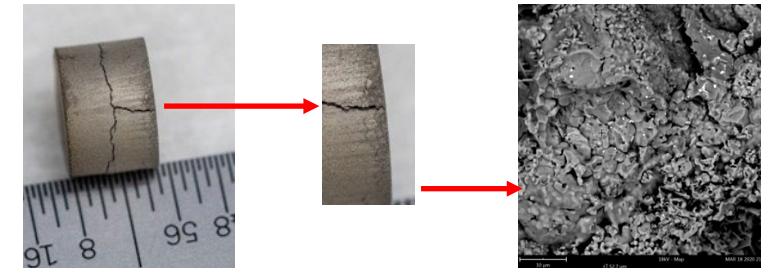
- Uranium Zirconium Hydride fuel fabrication
- Fuel R&D at INL and LANL
  - ZrH and DUZrH sintering demonstrated
    - Direct hydride, crush/grind powder, press, sinter
    - 30, 35, 40 wt% blend ZrH and UH
    - Analytical Chemistry: XRD, LECO
  - Challenge
    - Fuel Density
    - Oxygen content
- Fuel Fabrication entails both fabrication and schedule risks
  - Mitigation:
    - Direct hydriding R&D
    - TRIGA International procurement feasibility for fuel pellet supply
  - Decision point this FY



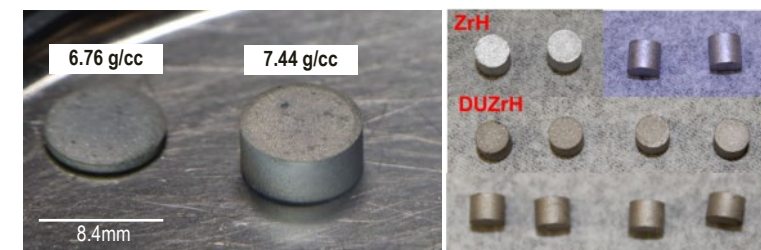
Sample Sintering Profile



Cracking of pellets likely due to the volume expansion during hydride formation



Sample 03152021-UZrH<sub>x</sub>, 1075°C, 5 hour (Ar), 625°C, 8 hours (9.4/0.6 LPM Ar/H<sub>2</sub>), Pressed at 450 Mpa 40 wt% U





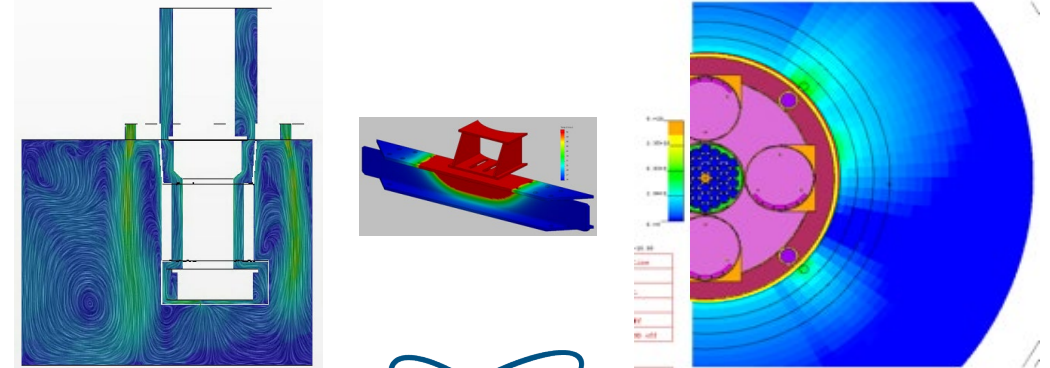
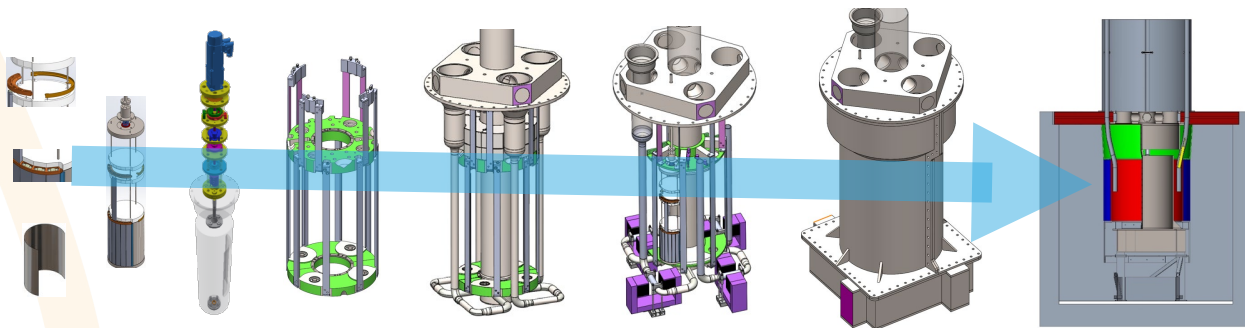
# Interim Design (~ Preliminary Design)

- **Engineering Verification Phase: Interim Design Reports, Rev 0 Complete**

- Fuel
- Nuclear Design
- Reactivity Control System
- Instrumentation & Control System
- Power Generation System
- High Grade Heat Extraction System
- Thermal Design
- Reactor Structure

- **Analyses (preliminary)**

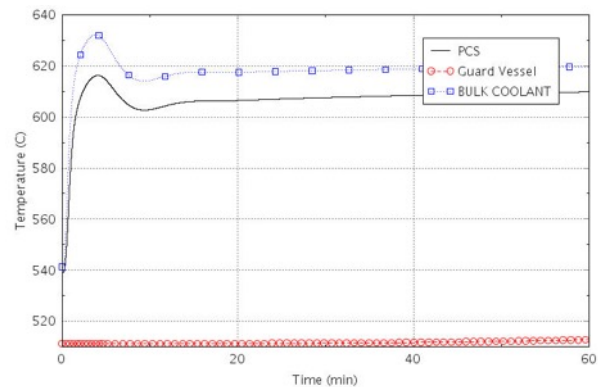
- Thermal performance simulation using RELAP5-3D
- Preliminary Accident Analyses using RELAP5-3D, BISON
- Reactor physics - shutdown margin, diff. control drum worth, xenon buildup, etc., using MCNP, SERPENT
- Flooding, Source term, activation, and personnel dose analyses
- Structural analyses: analytical and finite element analyses (FEA)
- Conjugate heat transfer model: T distribution and dP



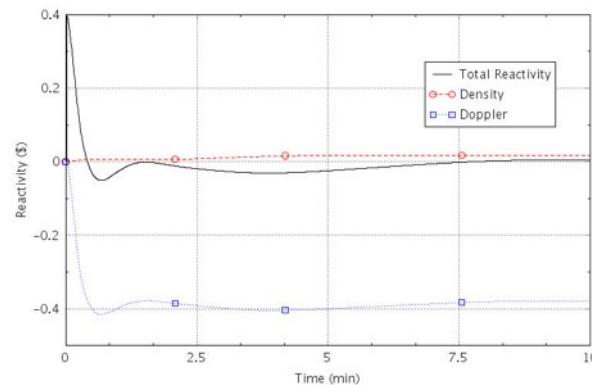
# Safety analysis – UTOP

- Transient Analyses: **Unprotected Transient Overpower**

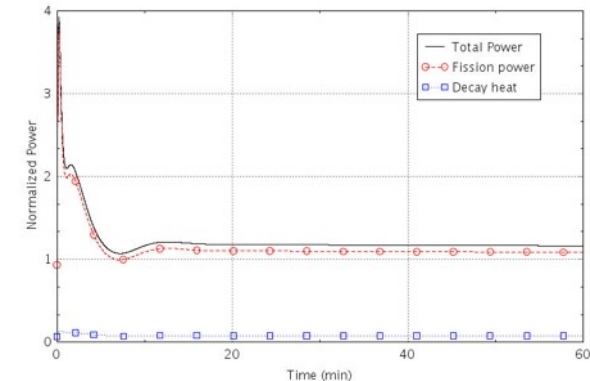
- Step reactivity insertion (0.4\$) → 1 CD out from critical position to the mechanical stops
- No SCRAM
- Includes Hot Channel Factors
- Reactor power peaks  $\sim 3.9 P_{\text{NOM}}$  at  $t = 24$  s
- Negative reactivity feedbacks counters the power surge → system back to a steady higher power ( $1.16 P_{\text{NOM}}$ ) and higher temperature by  $t = \sim 15$  min
- **No safety concerns** during 1 hr long transient – Manual Scram Terminates Sequence



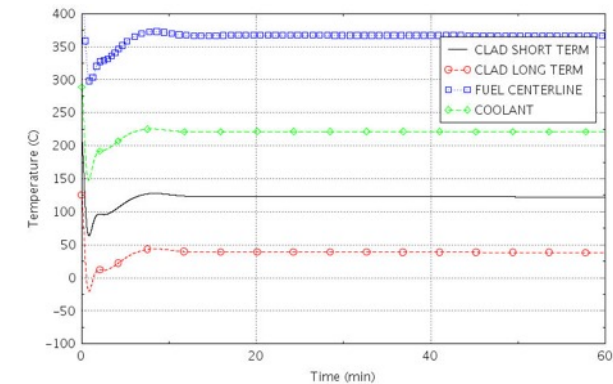
PCS & SCS Temperatures



Reactivity



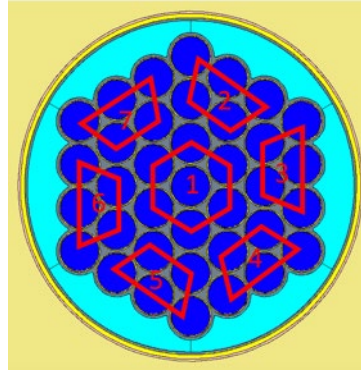
Reactor Power



Temperature Safety Margins

# Fuel Load and Startup: Validation

- **Fuel Load:** 1/M approach to critical will be used to prevent inadvertent criticality
  - BF3 startup channels used, along with neutron source
  - The loading of the fuel always begins by loading the fuel in the highest worth positions
- **Measure reactor physics parameters**
  - differential and integral control drum shim worths
  - critical drum shim position
  - the shutdown margin and excess reactivity are calculated and compared to the technical specifications
- **Perform heat balance calibration of the nuclear instruments**
  - Performed at Low temperature for accuracy
  - Temperature measurements will indicate heat losses in system → decay heat removal capability
- **Testing of Power Production**
  - Performed at high temperature, to start Stirlings
  - Measure power incrementally from 0-100%
  - Validate power produced, engine efficiency and system performance



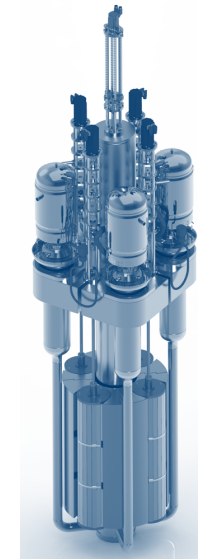
# Next Steps (months 11+)

## FY 2021-Q3

- PCAT Fabrication
- Preliminary Safety Analyses
- FONSI (approval for long lead procurement) by DOE-ID

## FY 2021-Q4

- Preliminary TREAT SAR Addendum
- PCAT Assembly
- Detailed Design for long lead procurement
- Fuel Fabrication Process Finalization



## FY 2022

Site Prep,  
Fuel Production,  
Reactor Construction

## FY 2023

Fuel Load,  
Criticality,  
MARVEL Microgrid



# Key Project Challenges

- Fuel R&D and fabrication risks
  - Fuel R&D may not achieve formulated specifications
  - Fuel schedule too long
  - External supplier limitations
- Lack of precedence makes it challenging for project estimation
  - Bottom-up cost estimate based on detailed schedule helps increase confidence
- Team Credit:



# Potential Areas Where Industry Can Leverage MARVEL

- Detailed Engineering
  - Reactivity Control Systems
  - Instrumentation & Control Systems
  - Fuel Design
  - Startup Plan
  - INL Engineering Job Process
- Model Based Systems Engineering (NRIC)
  - Requirements Management
  - Risk Management
- NEPA (for DOE Authorization)
  - EA Process
  - Technical Studies
- Safety Basis (for DOE Authorization)
  - Safety Design Strategy
  - Safety Analyses (design dependent)



# Thank You

- NEPA
- Reactor Site
- Microgrid and end users
- Design, Testing, Fuel
- Next Steps & Challenges

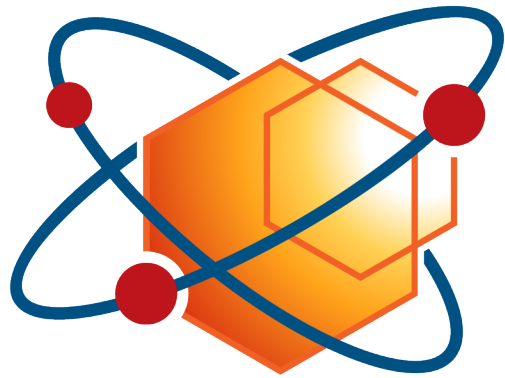


Contact Information

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MARVEL Technical & Project Lead

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**MRP** Microreactor  
Program





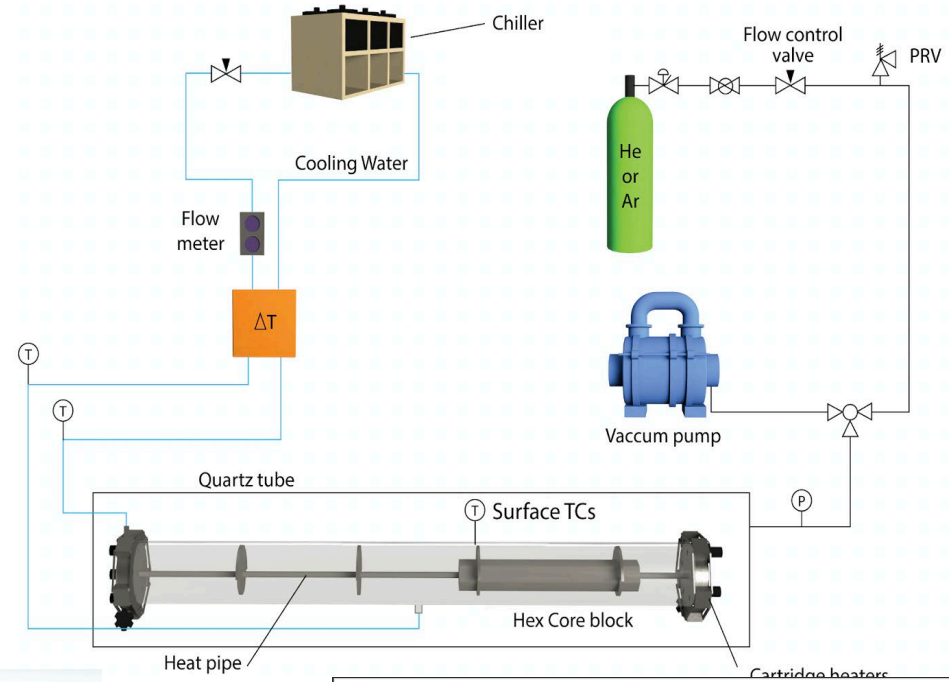
# Demonstration Capabilities Path Forward and Opportunities

**Piyush Sabharwall, Ph.D.**  
**Microreactor Technical Area Lead**  
**US DOE – NE MRP Program**  
**May 13<sup>th</sup> 2021**

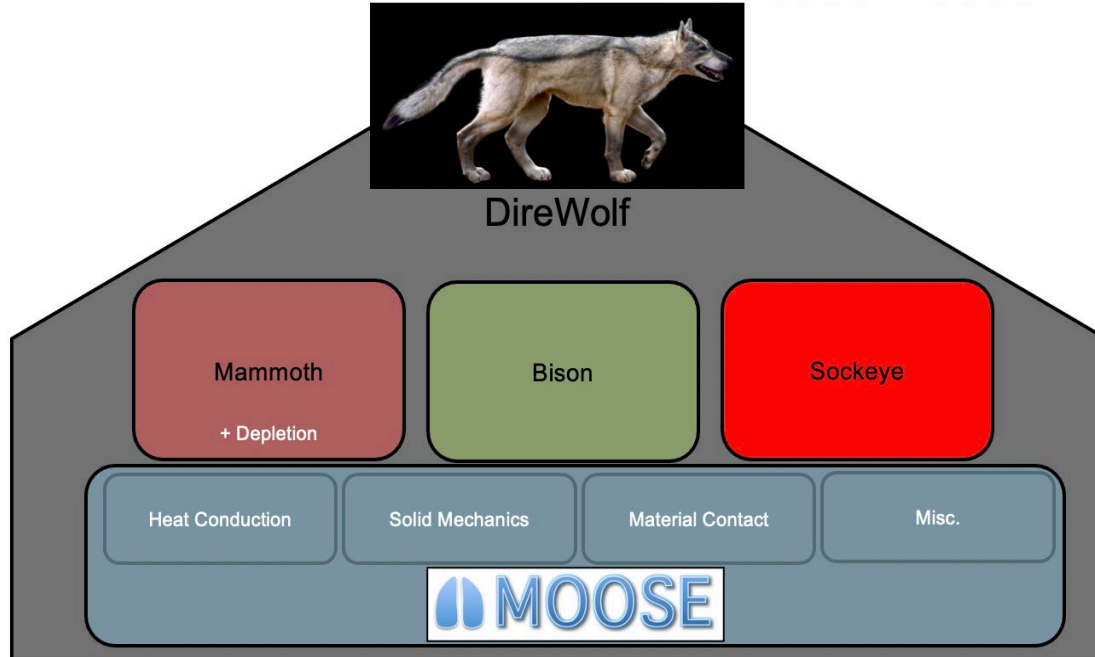
# Summary of FY-21

## SPHERE FY 2021

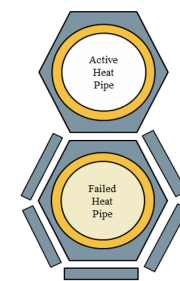
- Demonstrate Initial Startup (Shakedown Testing)
- Gap Conductance Testing Preliminary Safety Analyses
- Working Closely with DOE-NEAMS Prog to Jointly Support V&V Activities



DireWolf



## Heat Pipe Failure: Inter-can Gap Conductivity Testing



Temperature controlled walls

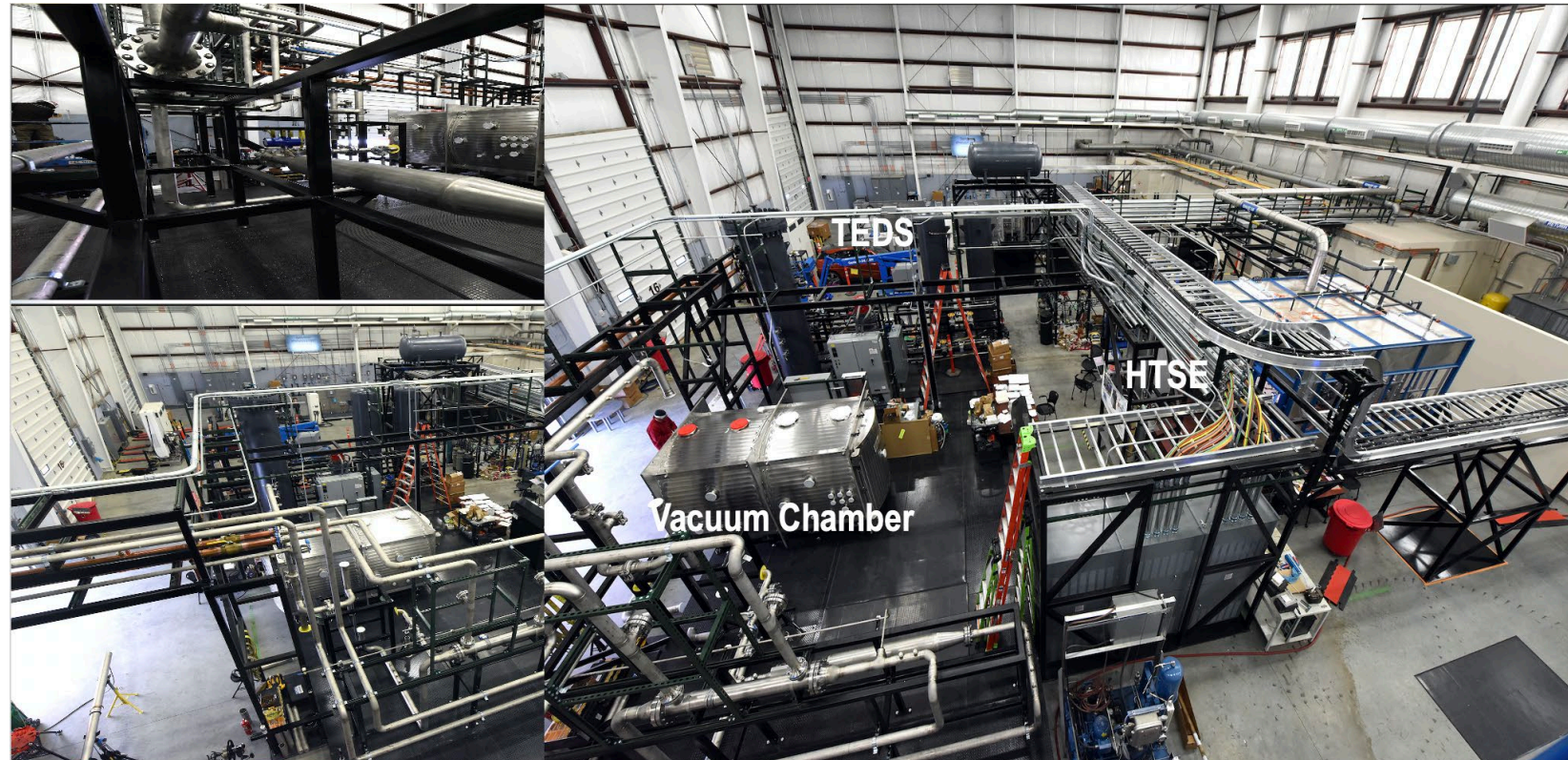
- One Heat pipe for testing
- Guard heaters to control heat flow
- Simulated fuel and layers
- Embedded sensors
- Pre and Post test imaging



# Summary of FY-21

## MAGNET FY 2021

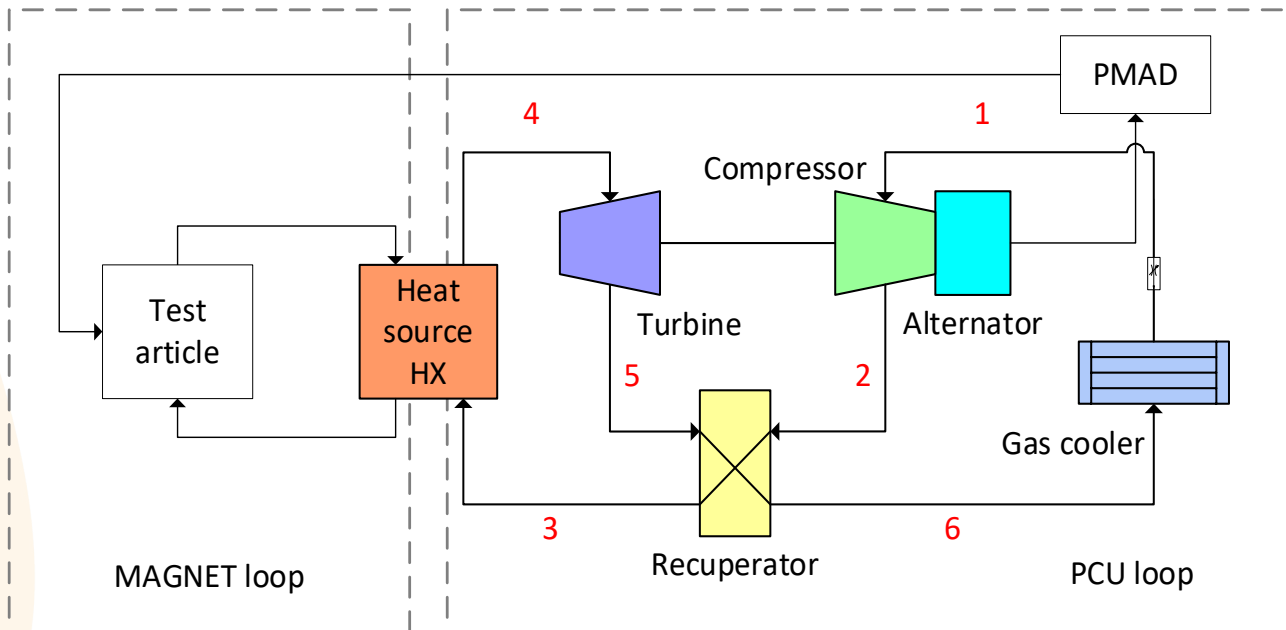
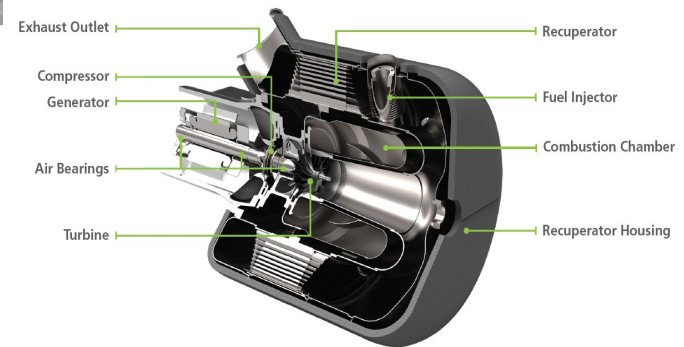
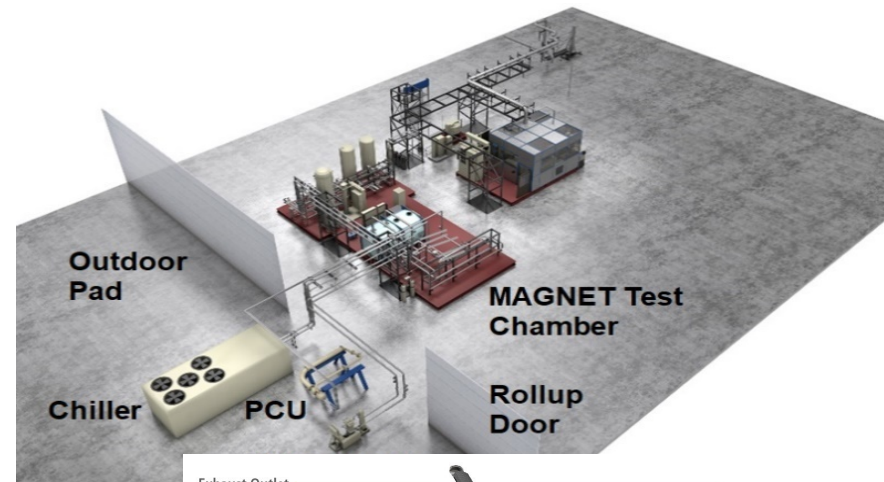
- Demonstrate Initial Startup (Shakedown Testing)
- Single HP Test Article
- Complete engineering design for PCU integration in MAGNET





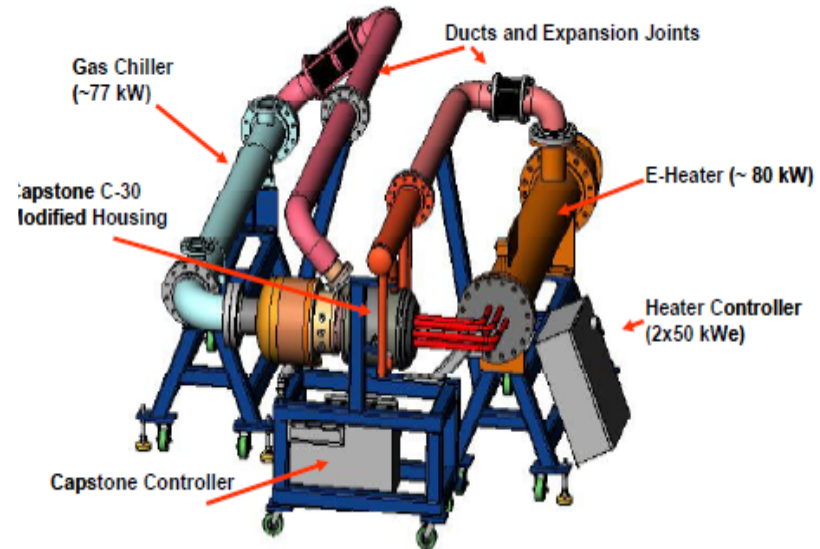
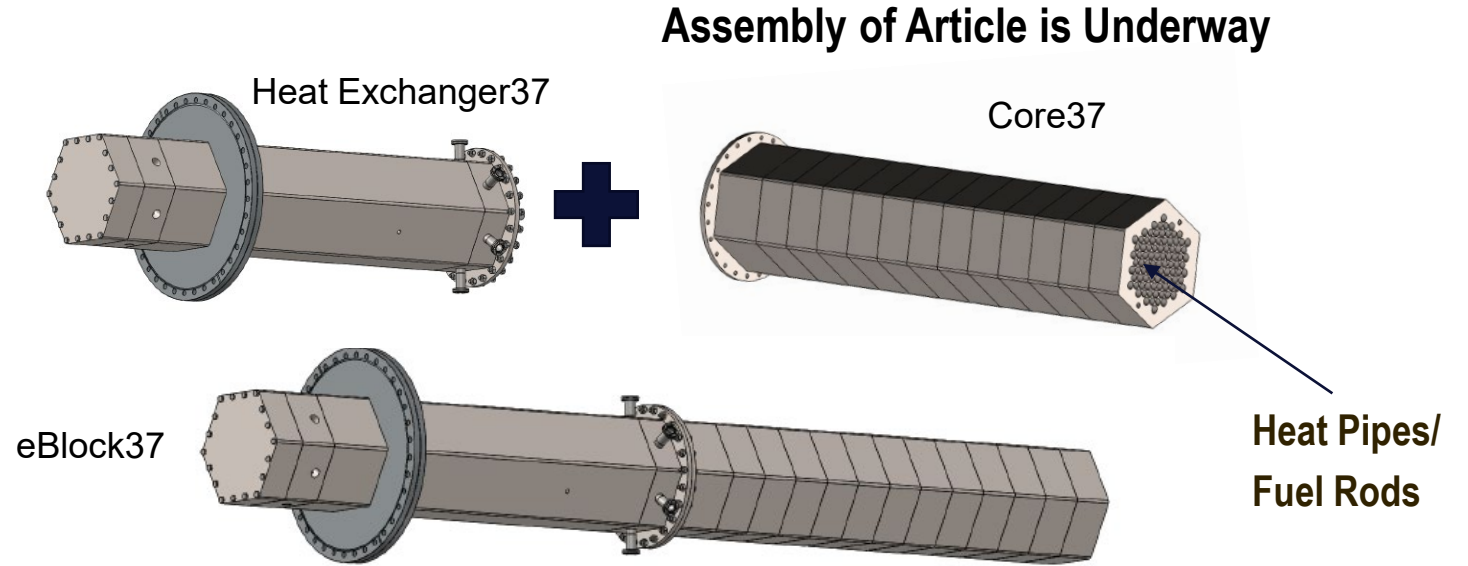
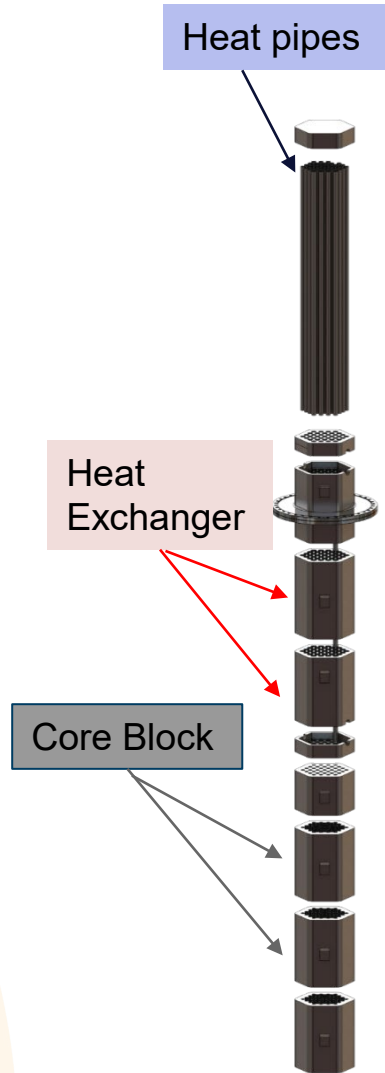
# Microreactor Power Conversion Integration and Testing

- Integration of a modified Capstone C30 turbine-alternator-compressor unit into MAGNET
  - Will provide researchers with the ability to evaluate the test article heat transfer under representative operating conditions with the transient system behavior associated with a closed Brayton cycle PCU
  - Eng'g design for installation underway





# 37 Heat Pipe Test Article Will Allow Us to Understand Heat Pipe to Heat Exchanger Interface

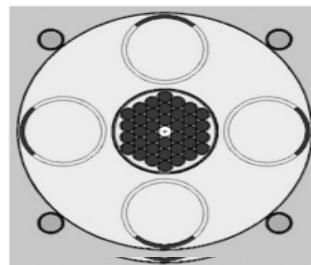
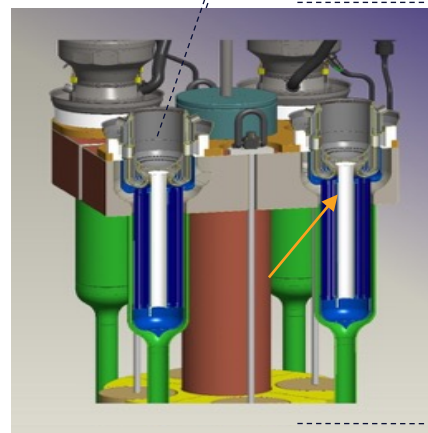
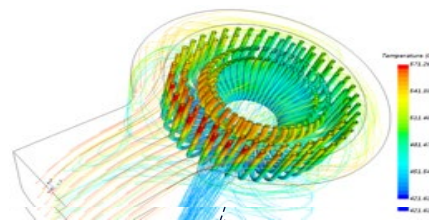


Modified Capstone C30  
Power Conversion Unit

# Summary of FY-21

## MARVEL FY 2021

- PCAT Fabrication
- Preliminary Safety Analyses
- Detailed Design for long lead procurement
- Fuel Fabrication Process Finalization

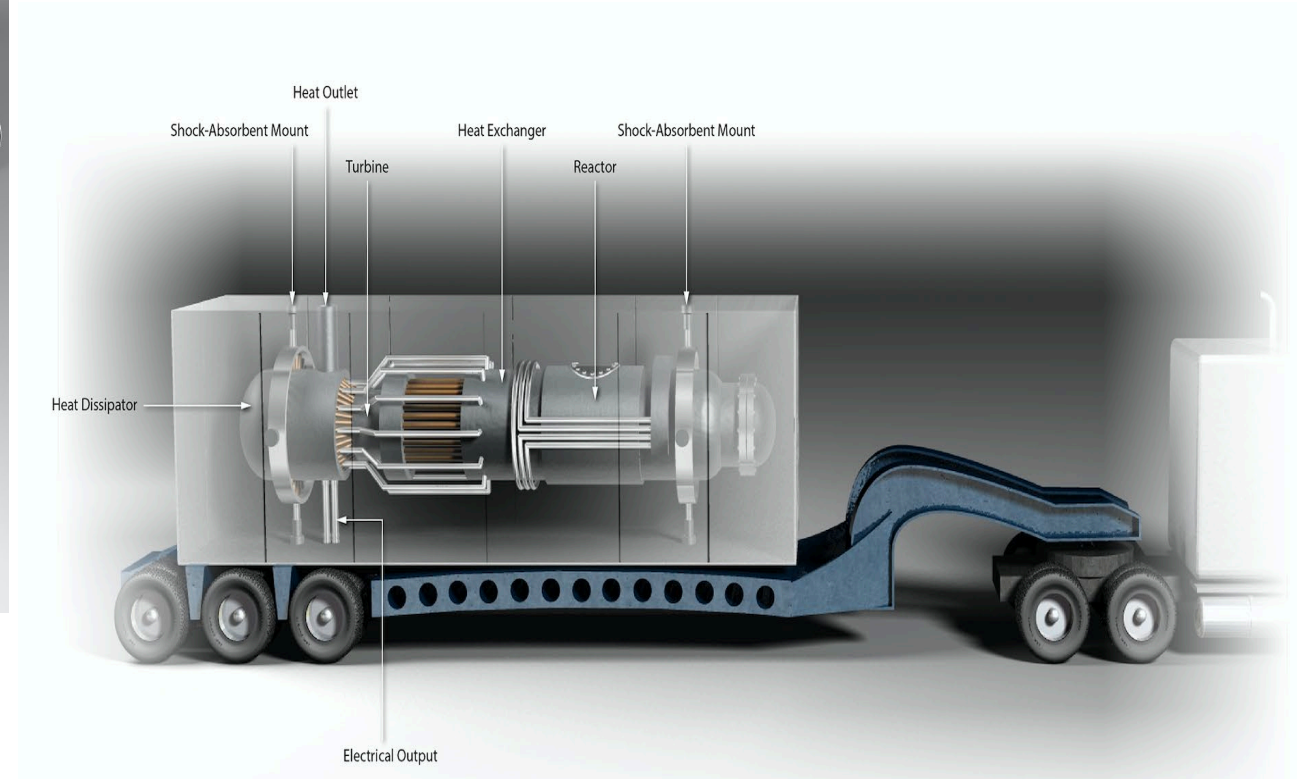
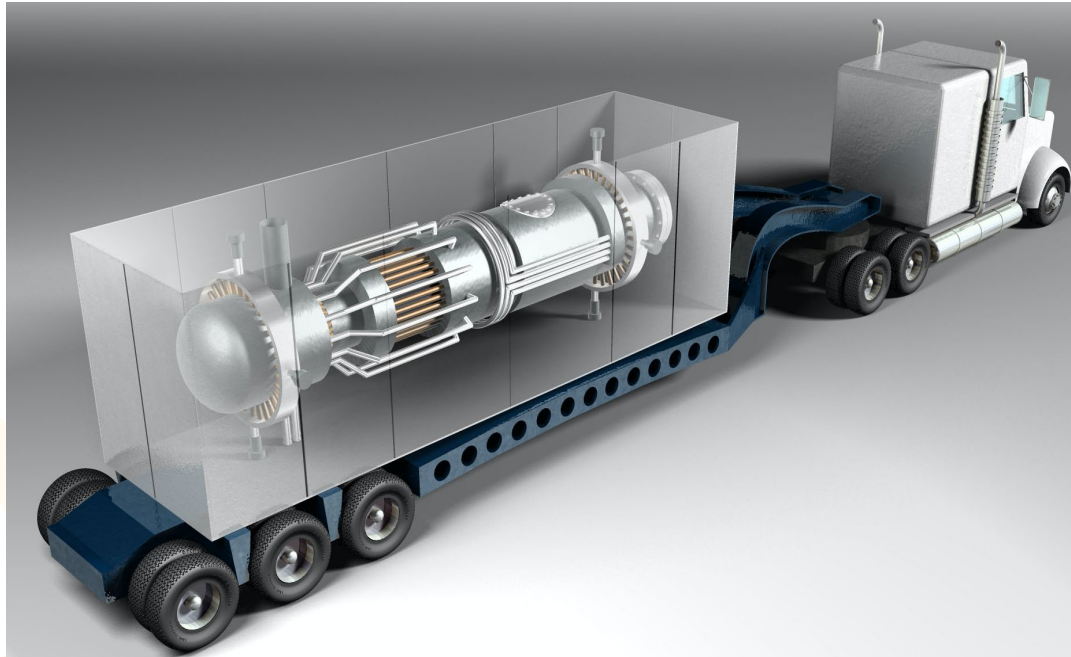


**MRP** Microreactor Program

# Potential Areas Where Industry Can Leverage SPHERE and MAGNET (Non-Nuclear Test Bed)

- Heat Pipe Thermal Performance
  - Startup and Shutdown
- Studying Cascading Failure and Its Effect
- High Temperature and Pressure Testing
  - Prototype microreactor design testing
  - Component Testing
- Instrumentation and Control
  - Advanced Manufactured Test Articles
  - Advanced Manufacturing Sensor Development
- Verification and Validation
  - Concepts with low TRL levels for better understanding
  - Addressing Technical Gaps and Data Requirement
- Interface and Coupling Different Systems
  - Heat Exchanger
  - PCU Integration
- Safety Basis
  - Design Margins





**MRP Technical Lead: [Piyush.Sabharwall@inl.gov](mailto:Piyush.Sabharwall@inl.gov)**

**Credit  
&  
Acknowledgement**

