

## ECA Update: August 27, 2015



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**Rep. Mark Amodei predicts House will revive Yucca**  
*Record Courier*

August 26, 2015

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Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., said on Tuesday he fully expects legislation reviving the Yucca Mountain nuclear dump project to be passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

“It’ll get 400 votes in the House in the 114th Congress,” he said in an interview on Tuesday. “It’s a bipartisan issue and it’s going to come out.”

But Amodei said he thinks the plan will stall in the Senate, at least through the tenure of Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., who will be in the Senate through the end of 2016.

He said the question for him is whether he wants to be one of the 35 “no” votes, without being able to make a difference in the outcome, or use that vote as leverage for some concessions that would benefit Nevada.

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August 22, 2015

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[Hanford EM SSAB](#)

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September 9-10

[DOE National](#)

## Cleanup Workshop

September 29th-30th,  
2015

*The Key Bridge  
Marriott  
Arlington, VA*

“At the top of the list would be reprocessing,” Amodei said referring to the potential economic benefits of converting that waste into something useful such as fuel.

He said to open Yucca Mountain as a dump, the land must first be transferred from Bureau of Land Management control to the Department of Energy. If the transfer can be made, he said, “here are some other lands you need to transfer.”

That, he said, would include releasing rights to the land needed to build Interstate 11 — the freeway that will eventually connect Las Vegas and Reno. And he called for the transfer of adjacent properties in a checkerboard pattern to state and eventually private control. And he said it would greatly help landlocked communities if federal lands restricting their expansion and growth were released.

“The state would still be north of 80 percent federal land,” he said. Rep. Crescent Hardy, R-Nev., of Pahrump also has indicated he could consider the dump if Nevada were given the appropriate incentives. He said Nevadans may never want the dump to open: “But if the dialogue changes and a discussion is had — and safety standards are overwhelmingly met — we should at least be up for an honest conversation,” he said.

Fresh from the annual Lake Tahoe Summit held Monday, Amodei said he’s leaning toward backing the bill by Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., that would provide \$150 million for environmental, transportation and other work in the Tahoe Basin. McClintock’s district includes the basin.

That is a much more modest request than the \$413 million called for in Sen. Diane Feinstein’s bill but, Amodei pointed out, she has brought that type of measure repeatedly with no success in getting it passed.

“I think McClintock is going to get his bill out,” Amodei said. “I’m encouraged that we’ve got a bill that can survive any scrutiny the House brings.”

As for Feinstein’s plan, he said: “If the Senate wants to pass a \$400 million bill and send it to the House, we’ll be glad to be on the spot.”

Contrary to media reports, Amodei said he's committed to running for re-election in 2016 to his current House seat, not some other office and may run again after that.

"If we are successful as we go through that next term, we'll see what doors are open," he said. "Do you want to stick around, want to keep going to D.C. for another two years. Do I want to go to the private sector or is there an opportunity for elected office at home (in Nevada)?"

He said in part, that depends on what Sen. Dean Heller and Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt have in mind.

"I have to look at all the doors that open in 2018," Amodei said. He said at that point, he'll have to "carefully evaluate: am I being effective at what I'm doing." If so, another re-election bid might be his decision.

But, Amodei said, "it's no secret that, at some point in time, I'm coming home."

### **Savannah River Remediation to battle heat with cooling vests**

*Aiken Standard*

August 23, 2015

[LINK](#)

Savannah River Remediation, the liquid waste contractor for the Savannah River Site, is taking steps to combat the summer heat for the safety of its workers.

Cooling vests are currently undergoing testing, and, so far, the technology has received positive feedback from workers who have tried it.

The vests have recently been used in non-radiological work environments at the Defense Waste Processing Facility to minimize the potential for heat stress injuries. The facility, also known as DWPF, is a key part of the system for processing and immobilizing the high-level waste stored at the SRS tank farms.

According to the contractor, the cooling apparatus requires a breathing air compressor, a belt-mounted climate control tube and light-weight vest. The heart of the system is the climate control vortex tube that can cool, or heat, incoming air by 30 degrees.

The contractor's Industrial Hygiene team is working with radiological control to integrate the use of the cooling vest into the personal protection equipment worn by workers to keep them safe.

Kerry Layton, an industrial hygienist, said using the cooling vests is the right thing to do because working in a hot environment with a chemical resistant suit, face shield and goggles "is not an easy task."

"As an added benefit from the cooling, we've also observed a decrease in fogging of the face shield and goggles," Layton explained.

David Stavru, the construction safety and health manager, added that they have had strong support from all of the parties involved in the technology.

"Trying new techniques or tools to reduce the risk of heat related injuries is everyone's goal," he said.

### **Idaho can protect environment and do nuclear research**

*Imtribune*

August 24, 2015

[LINK](#)

Those following the nuclear discussion in Idaho know we face an important decision in less than 30 days. The discussion is complex, challenging and interlaced with emotion scarred by tough historical, political battles.

Marty Trillhaase recently offered his perspectives and I couldn't help but respond.

The diverse voices who disagree on this issue drive an important dialogue we must work through to find the right answer.

Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, for example, is a good man and the final signature required for the waiver. He is honorably fulfilling his role to the state by withholding his signature. His job is to legally protect the state and uphold the 1995 settlement agreement.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter shares those same responsibilities but must also drive our economy forward and protect our major

employers. All are equal, imperative responsibilities we must resolve.

We all share another obligation - to protect our environment. Many don't realize the proposed 25 rods of research fuel are filled with small pellets of uranium metal, each about the size of a pencil eraser. When the 25 rods are dismantled and all the containment material safely disposed of, we will be left with small metal pellets that, together, can't fill two, gallon milk jugs.

Those pellets will never see the light of day. They will be handled by the nation's leading experts and will be stored behind 4-foot concrete walls. This is what the people of the Idaho National Laboratory do and they are good at it.

Using their experts and world-class facilities, those pellets will not be a risk to our environment.

The point that can't be overstated: This research is critical to Idaho.

This research is anticipated to bring about \$100 million to Idaho during the next five years. That is clearly a win, but the most important issue at stake is our leadership role in nuclear energy.

The research comes at a time when other national labs enviously watch our lead position. The competition between national labs is real and right now we are in the lead.

Why would we as a state want to risk that lead and jeopardize our fifth largest employer?

But many say the U.S. Department of Energy missed an important deadline. We need to hold an unequivocal stance.

They did miss a deadline but nobody was surprised when they missed it. The missed deadline involves constructing a complex \$700 million processing facility that has never been built before. It uses new technology that needs to be carefully tested before it processes radioactive material.

Suffice it to say, it is a project we have one shot at getting right. DOE is working carefully to meet its obligations. And it has a clear path forward.

Bottom line: The smartest thing we can do for our environment is not rush the DOE's efforts.

Holding the research opportunity hostage will not speed up the engineering solutions that are needed.

Instead, penalizing the lab's research mission damages the lab's national credibility, jeopardizes its ability to attract top scientific talent and, more importantly, jeopardizes its ability to secure future research funding. Funding that has to come from limited federal funds already stretched between universities and other national labs.

This is not a threat. It is simple reality that we hope Idaho citizens and leaders will consider.

There is a solution in this debate. And, as U.S. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, has said: "This can be done."

When the attorney general and I meet, I will have one question to ask: How can I help find a solution?

We owe that to the decades of battles fought for the INL. We owe it to the families of eastern Idaho who depend on those jobs. And we owe our support to an important employer and partner for our future.

This can be done.

### **National Guard training held at Savannah River Site**

*Aiken Standard*

August 24, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Savannah River Site continued its partnership with the military last month when the South Carolina National Guard used the site to conduct an annual training exercise.

The visit solved several labor needs at SRS, according to officials. For example, the National Guard removed a failing dam at the New Fire Pond, a former farm pond that was in place before the creation of the Site. The dam was in need of upgrades and is not part of Site mission needs.

The soldiers also improved a water runoff outfall by molding a sediment pond to natural grade and cleared debris caused by the 2014 ice storm.

David Bender, the director of the Department of Energy infrastructure and area completion division, said the project sites were not funded or on a critical needs list; however, they would have eventually needed to be performed.

He added that the state National Guard coordinated with various Site organizations to plan the training and worked closely with Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the site's management and operations contractor.

"They helped SRS by safely completing these projects for just the cost of the materials used," Bender said. "The feedback we received showed that it provided some great training for SCNG soldiers and high-quality work for SRS."

For the past few years, the U.S. military has been conducting specialized training at SRS under a Joint Standard Operating Procedure developed after a determination that the use of limited areas of the site would not cause harm to the environment.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions employees Robert Brown and Joe Ormand worked with officials to select the project sites. Brown and Ormand also worked with the Department of Energy and South Carolina National Guard to coordinate training.

"Because of the quality of their leadership, the exemplary skill of these soldiers and their incredible inventory of earth-moving equipment, SCNG has exceeded our expectations by completing this project ahead of schedule, while meeting the high standard we set for work performed on this site," Brown said.

### **Yucca Mountain repository hearings announced**

*Las Vegas Review-Journal*

August 23, 2015

[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Friday announced two public meetings in Nevada to discuss the latest environmental report on the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

A Sept. 15 meeting is set for the Embassy Suites Convention Center at 3600 Paradise Road in Las Vegas.

On Sept. 17, the commission will hear comments at the Amargosa Community Center, 821 E. Amargosa Farm Road, in Amargosa Valley.

Both meetings will run from 7 to 9 p.m., the agency said.

The agency is collecting public comment on the supplemental environmental report released this month on the proposed nuclear waste site 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

The report said particles of nuclear waste that might leak into groundwater from a Yucca Mountain repository would have only a small effect on health and safety.

The study has sparked a new round of debate over the project that was mothballed by President Barack Obama in 2010 but is the focus of revival talks among some congressmen.

Commission staff will hold a conference call from 11 a.m. to noon Wednesday to explain how to submit comments, with further information available on the its website.

A Sept. 3 meeting will be at commission headquarters in Rockville, Md., from noon to 2 p.m. PDT. The session will be webcast and a call-in line provided, the agency said. Further details are available at <http://meetings.nrc.gov/pmns/mtg>.

On Oct. 15, the commission staff will conduct a final public meeting on a conference call from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Further information will be posted to the its meetings website, it said.

### **Radioactive banking**

*Politico*

August 27, 2015

[LINK](#)

A new bank will open in Kazakhstan, taking deposits of nuclear fuel.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency will open a novel nuclear fuel bank in uranium-rich Kazakhstan this week where countries who build nuclear power plants will be able to make withdrawals of low-enriched uranium — hopefully removing the temptation to further enrich it for use in weapons.

Suspicions that Iran was using its ostensibly civilian nuclear program to develop nuclear-grade uranium led to international sanctions being imposed on Tehran. There are big questions now over whether the Kazakh bank, run under the aegis of the IAEA, will help dissuade countries from trying to set up their own uranium-enrichment programs.

The bank will allow any country to buy nuclear fuel in the event that its existing supplies are disrupted, and on condition that buying from the bank does not distort commercial markets.

“It’s a huge step forward,” said Andrew Bieniawski, vice president of material security and minimization at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a non-profit started by CNN founder Ted Turner and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn that works to reduce nuclear dangers. “The bank is a milestone that will enable countries to pursue nuclear energy without increasing the risk of nuclear proliferation.”

The bank boasts unconventional funding. Billionaire Warren Buffett provided the initial \$50 million to NTI on the condition that the IAEA find donors who would at least double his gift.

The IAEA did that, lining up an additional \$105 million from the governments of the United States, Norway, Kuwait and the UAE, as well as the European Union. The money will cover construction and operating costs.

“Of course we’re having discussions with the donors, and they have some influence on the enterprise,” Timur Zhantikin, deputy chair of Kazakhstan’s Committee for Atomic Energy at the Ministry for Investment and Development and a key negotiator in the establishment of the bank, told POLITICO. “But it’s an IAEA project and it’s run by the IAEA.”

IAEA nuclear fuel bank map\_Credit Konsulate.de That makes it the world’s first IAEA-operated fuel bank. IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano will inaugurate the Kazakh bank, which will be located at Ulba Metallurgical Plant in the northeastern city of Ust-Kamenogorsk. During Soviet times, Ulba supplied the USSR’s nuclear reactors with low-enriched uranium and its nuclear submarines with the high-enriched kind. Today it is owned by Kazakhstan’s nuclear corporation, Kazatomprom.

### **How it works**

The IAEA bank, which is expected to become operational within two years, will look nothing like your standard bank office. Indeed, most customers will never visit the bank, a specially guarded storage facility holding large metal cylinders containing the LEU.

Given that customers get to keep their goods, the bank should more accurately be called an LEU shop. The nuclear materials will first be enriched to 4.95 percent pure uranium, a level that is enough to power a light water reactor but not nearly enough to be used for a weapon. Just who will do the enriching will be decided in an open tender, said Terry Wood, the bank project manager. The fuel, in the form of a waxy solid, will then be stored in Ust-Kamenogorsk.

Upon payment by the customer, staff will send LEU-filled cylinders by train — via Russia or China — and then to the final destination. The IAEA will monitor buyers, ensuring that there is no attempt to turn the LEU into weapons-grade uranium.

“In the early 2000s a fuel bank was seen as a solution to Iranian enrichment,” said Olli Heinonen, a former deputy director-general of the IAEA who is now a fellow at Harvard University. “But launching a nuclear bank took a long time and the plans of offering it to Iran didn’t work out.”

An agreement signed in July by Iran and six world powers group allows it to develop nuclear fuel for civilian purposes under very strict international supervision. Those restrictions will remain in place from 15 to 25 years, so the fuel bank could be an incentive for Iran to limit expansion of its civilian nuclear program.

“Russia has a contract to provide fuel to an Iranian nuclear reactor until 2021, and will build several more reactors for the Iranians, so Iran may be interested in supplementing its own fuel with fuel from the bank,” said Thomas Pickering, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. “The Iranians have a natural distrust in sources of energy provided by individual countries and may place more trust in a fuel bank run by the IAEA.”

The bank also provides a welcome burst of positive publicity for Kazakhstan, which is often criticized for its dodgy human rights record and for the long-lasting rule of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has led the country of 17 million since 1989, before the collapse of the USSR. Earlier this year, he won his fifth consecutive election with a 97.7 percent share of the vote.

Nazarbayev has turned his oil and gas-rich nation into a poster-child of denuclearization.

Nazarbayev has turned his oil and gas-rich nation into a poster-child of denuclearization. As a Soviet republic, Kazakhstan hosted over 1,400 strategic nuclear warheads as well as tactical nuclear warheads, missiles, and missile launchers. But following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan and its fellow nuclear republics Ukraine and Belarus agreed to hand over their atomic weapons to Russia. By 1996, the three countries had delivered their entire nuclear arsenals to Russia.

Kazakhstan is the world's leading uranium producer, producing 41 percent of the world's uranium and exporting to a large number of countries including Russia, China, and Japan.

"Kazakhstan has significant experience storing and transporting nuclear fuel," said Bieniawski of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

### **No customers**

Although the IAEA has long pushed for a nuclear bank, the project is getting a mixed reception. Many non-nuclear states fear that the scheme will preclude them from developing their own nuclear enrichment programs, cementing in the advantage of existing nuclear states that have already mastered the nuclear fuel cycle.

The bank is also supposed to only be used in the event of a disruption in supply, and at the moment there is no problem in sourcing. "There's no shortage of nuclear fuel in the world," said Heinonen.

According to the World Nuclear Association, there is currently a global oversupply of nuclear enrichment capacity, with 13 countries possessing all or most of the technology required to enrich uranium. Zhantikin said countries currently "have no burning desire to use this bank, and we don't expect any customers in the near future."

However, he added, the Kazakh government expects interest to grow as more countries begin to pursue nuclear energy. "It's very expensive to develop nuclear enrichment technology," he said.

Other countries have political reasons for keeping control of their own nuclear fuel.

“It’s hard to see North Korea giving up its nuclear enrichment program in favor of loans from the fuel bank,” said Heinonen.

