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Reminder: DOE National Cleanup Workshop

Please join us for the first Department of Energy National Cleanup Workshop

**September 29th-30th, 2015
Washington, D.C.**

The Energy Communities Alliance (ECA), in cooperation with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Energy Facility Contractors Group (EFCOG) will hold the first DOE National Cleanup Workshop Sept. 29th-30th in Washington, D.C. The workshop will bring together senior DOE executives, officials from DOE sites, industry executives, and other stakeholders to discuss the progress DOE Office of Environmental Management is making to address the environmental legacy of the Manhattan Project and Cold War-era U.S. nuclear weapons program. Topics to be discussed include major cleanup successes planned over the next two years, improving contract and project management, efforts to

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July 27th-28th, 2015

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July 29th, 2015

[Nuclear Fuel Cycle Legislation Hearing](#)

August 4th, 2015

[DOE National](#)

develop new cleanup technologies, and more.

As the largest environmental cleanup program in the world, EM has been charged with the responsibility of cleaning 107 sites across the country, totaling a combined area equal to that of Rhode Island and Delaware.

If you are interested in being a sponsor or would like to request media credentials, please contact Ivana Brancaccio by email at Ivana@energyca.org, or by phone at (202) 828-2410.

If you have any questions with your registration, please contact Sharon Worley by email at sharon.worley@energyca.org, or by phone at (202) 828-2413.

REGISTRATION: To register for the workshop, please click [here](#).

REMINDER: Second Annual Intermountain Energy Summit

**August 18th-19th, 2015
Idaho Falls, ID**

The second annual Intermountain Energy Summit will be held August 18th-19th, 2015 in Idaho Falls, ID. Featured speakers will include Idaho Sen. James Risch, Rep. Mike Simpson, who chairs the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy, John Kotek, and a host of other experts and stakeholders throughout government industry and academia. More information on the summit and instructions for registration can be found online [here](#).

Llewellyn King: Obama again foils solution to nuclear waste

Providence Journal

Friday, July 24th, 2015

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When the Obama administration came into power, one of its first actions was to end work on the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in Nevada. In so doing, it delivered a shuddering blow to the U.S. nuclear industry, trashing the project when it was nearly

Cleanup Workshop

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ready to open. The cost to taxpayers was about \$15 billion.

Now the administration is going through the motions to suspend another costly nuclear waste investment when it is about 67 percent complete. Money expended: \$4.5 billion. Shutdown cost: \$1 billion.

The object of its latest volte face is the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) on the Department of Energy's Savannah River site in South Carolina. Work started on the facility in 2007, with a 2016 startup envisaged.

But unlike Yucca Mountain, few people outside of the nuclear industry know about the genesis and purpose of the MFFF project.

The project was initiated as a result of a 2000 agreement with the Russians, later amended, in which both countries agreed to dispose of no less than 34 metric tons of excess weapons-grade plutonium - the transuranic element that is the key component of a modern nuclear weapon, and remains radioactive essentially forever.

The DOE's plan was for the facility to mix the plutonium with uranium to create a fuel for civil nuclear reactors to produce electricity. This recycling technology, developed in the United States originally, has been used in France since 1995.

The DOE has not yet taken a wrecking ball to the MFFF, but it is taking the first steps toward demolition. On June 25, the DOE issued a press release that the industry read as a precursor to a death warrant. The department announced that it was creating a "Red Team," headed by Thom Mason, director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tenn., to review "plutonium disposition options and make recommendations."

The DOE statement said the team would "assess the MOX [mixed oxide] fuel approach, the downblending and disposal approach, and any other approaches the team deems feasible and cost effective."

Industry sources say the choice is between the MOX approach and so-called downblending. In that application, the plutonium is not burned up but is spiked and mixed with a modifier that makes it unusable in weapons. Then it would be disposed either in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, N.M., or in a new repository, if one is commissioned.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has

been pushing the downblending option. But it is using numbers that many believe to be extremely speculative. They come from a private consulting firm hired by the DOE, Aerospace Corporation.

The first number is that the life-cycle cost of the MFFF would be \$30 billion, while the life-cycle cost for downblending would be only \$9 billion. These numbers are contested by the contractor building the facility, a joint venture between the construction firm Chicago Bridge & Iron Company and the French nuclear technology giant Areva. They point out that plutonium has never been downblended and that the WIPP in New Mexico has had its own problems. On Feb. 5, 2014, the plant closed after a salt truck caught fire; there was an unrelated radiological release nine days later. The plant is still closed.

Guest Opinion: INL mission for research needs to move forward

Idaho Statesman

Thursday, July 23, 2015

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Critics of a plan to ship a relatively small number of spent-fuel rods to the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) for use in research claim that it would violate federal law and a state agreement made in 1995 not to bring more nuclear waste into Idaho. Banning the shipment, they argue, would demonstrate Idaho's resolve not to become an alternative to Nevada for the storage of spent fuel from the nation's nuclear power plants.

But without a complete understanding of what INL's examination of high-burnup spent fuel already provides to Idaho — and the United States — how can we know whether to junk it in favor of something else?

First, research on high-burnup spent fuel is precisely that — a way to examine the fuel rods after years of irradiation, not the first step in shifting the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain project to Idaho. High-burnup research at INL's hot cells — the world's best — is more like an investment program whose purpose is to ensure the safety of fuel rods stored in concrete-and-steel dry casks at scores of nuclear plant sites around the country. Currently there are about 75,000 metric tons of spent fuel in storage, and the amount is increasing by 2,000 tons annually.

Critics maintain that, however small, the planned fuel-rod

shipments will be followed by more in the future. This argument unfairly discounts the hard-won gains from decades of INL research on fuel rods and threatens the heart of the laboratory's nuclear program: the commitment to developing safer and more efficient fuel designs.

The Department of Energy calculates the value of the two spent-fuel shipments — each totaling about 110 pounds — to be as much as \$10-20 million a year for perhaps the next decade. But the total value of maintaining INL as the nation's premier laboratory for nuclear research and development would total in the billions of dollars.

Second, INL research on fuel rods is critically important due to the increasing need for zero-carbon nuclear energy in the battle against climate change. Many operating nuclear plants are nearing the end of their lifetimes, and a new generation of reactors using better fuels is on the horizon. While I support renewable energy sources, the fact is that without nuclear power, the United States would fall short of its goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to safe and acceptable levels.

The planned spent-fuel shipments are consistent with the type of work that INL's Materials and Fuels Complex has conducted over the past four decades. Accordingly, the potential impact of the research is covered by an Environmental Impact Statement that was done previously to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The DOE has recently prepared an analysis that reaches that conclusion. The INL should be allowed to proceed with its research without having to submit any additional NEPA documentation for this proposed action.

True, DOE has missed a deadline for converting liquid high-level waste from the defense program into a dry form and shipments of waste to a repository in New Mexico have been temporarily suspended. While the problems can't be ignored, both are being addressed, and DOE has said they will be resolved soon.

Thus, as this debate continues, let us agree that INL's research and development work on nuclear fuel cannot always be problem-free, and that when it comes to benefits, the lab's work remains central to national security and contributes substantially to Idaho's economy and protection of the environment. We shouldn't give up a critical nuclear fuels program for no program at all. And we shouldn't let politics interfere with the shipment of spent fuel to INL.

Roger Mayes is a retired INL scientist and manager with advanced degrees in environmental and radiological sciences who lives in Idaho Falls.

New revelations shake-up EPA jurisdiction of St. Louis radioactive site

Examiner.Com

Wednesday, July 22nd, 2015

[LINK](#)

In a bipartisan letter made public today, U.S. Senators Roy Blunt and Claire McCaskill of Missouri have called attention to the West Lake landfill which contains tens of thousands of tons of radioactive material generated during the top-secret Manhattan Project of World War II. The site has never been included in the appropriate Federal clean-up program and the bipartisan congressional delegation have called for a reevaluation of its status.

Addressed to Ernest Moniz, a nuclear physicist and head of the U.S. Department of Energy, the statement touches on what's emerging as a civil rights issue based on environmental justice—the fact that out of numerous radiologically contaminated sites in North St. Louis County, only one site has been excluded from the Federal program tasked with cleaning-up nuclear weapons-related waste.

Located in Bridgeton, Mo., the site that's been left behind is the West Lake landfill, which also happens to rest dangerously next to an underground fire burning at an adjacent site—the Bridgeton landfill.

After McCaskill and Blunt's letter was made public, a spokesperson for Exelon Corporation provided new revelations to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that “there's some evidence that there could be other waste streams there.”

Sadly, this new information may confirm the worst fears of nearby residents—it may indicate that the Bridgeton landfill also contains radioactive substances, which, it would seem, are now on fire.

“...new concerns have been raised by a PRP (potentially responsible party) that non-Cotter affiliated material may be present at the West Lake and Bridgeton sites.”—Sen. McCaskill, Sen. Blunt, Rep. Clay, and Rep. Wagner in a letter to the DoE regarding the dangers of unknown radioactive material at the West

Lake landfill

Exelon inherited the liability of the private company (Cotter) that illegally dumped the radioactive waste at the West Lake site and is most likely the party mentioned by the Missouri congressional delegation's letter: "...new concerns have been raised by a PRP (potentially responsible party) that non-Cotter affiliated material may be present at the West Lake and Bridgeton sites."

The new information from Exelon only confirms data included in a 2013 white paper, *The West Lake Landfill: A Radioactive Legacy of the Nuclear Arms Race* by Robert Alvarez, Senior Scholar for the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington D.C. Alvarez's paper details the fact that many more tons of contaminated material sourced from the Latty Avenue site made its way to West Lake under the deceptive rubric "clean-fill." The evidence of more dense contaminants was later confirmed by soil samples taken at West Lake which show the presence of Uranium and Thorium—common "daughter products" associated with nuclear weapons development.

"The situation here is one of the most graphic illustrations of the enduring costs paid by an American community for its participation in the cold war."

The radioactive material littered across North St. Louis County all stems from the war effort during World War II to build the first nuclear weapons before Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan could develop or acquire the technology. St. Louis played a pivotal role in the defense of our nation and ever since has been paying an insidious price.

As the New York Times reported 25 years ago, "The situation here is one of the most graphic illustrations of the enduring costs paid by an American community for its participation in the cold war. For 24 years, St. Louis was a vital link in the chain of production for atomic weapons because of a chemical process that the Mallinckrodt Chemical Works developed for purifying large quantities of uranium. The company, one of the city's oldest industrial concerns, produced the uranium used at the University of Chicago on Dec. 2, 1942, to sustain the world's first nuclear chain reaction and for the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945."

For various reasons including corporate malfeasance, national security and secrecy, and a general misunderstanding of many of

the health dangers involved, the nuclear waste from WWII and early Cold War years was dumped at numerous sites in North St. Louis County and at a nearby Mallinckrodt production facility located at Weldon Spring, Mo. which was listed as a Superfund site in 1987.

“The DoE came to St. Louis in 1990 and determined that the radioactive downtown Mallinckrodt site, radioactive airport site, and radioactive Hazelwood Latty Avenue site qualified under FUSRAP,” explained Heather Navarro, Executive Director of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, at a press conference today hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

FUSRAP or the “Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program” was launched by Congress in 1974 to specifically clean-up areas contaminated by nuclear-weapons related radioactive material and contamination.

“The DoE intentionally left West Lake landfill off of the FUSRAP list even though the radioactive materials dumped at West Lake came from the Hazelwood Latty Avenue site,” continued Navarro. “The DoE’s refusal to include West Lake as a FUSRAP-designated site led to it becoming an EPA site later in 1990. This is why we appreciate the letter today asking the DoE to reevaluate this decision and we hope that it will lead to a FUSRAP-designation for West Lake as it should have been designated in 1990.”

The pertinent radioactive and cancer-causing substances that were stored out in the open at the St. Louis Airport sites and Latty Avenue are uranium, thorium, radium, and their radioactive decay products. Through freedom of information requests, archival documents unearthed by Just Moms STL, Harvey Ferdman, Ed Smith, and Kay Drey show that at least 50,000 tons of the nuclear-weapons radioactive waste was illegally dumped at West Lake.

"How can we assess the real threat when no-one has performed a thorough testing of both the West Lake and Bridgeton sites? We don't know exactly what's there, but we know people are dying."— Dawn Chapman, Just Moms STL

“But no one really knows what’s been dumped there because the site has never been fully ‘characterized’ or analyzed,” said Dawn Chapman of the group Just Moms STL, which has been organizing community meetings to call attention to the site and to find a “safe and permanent solution” for the threat of the radiotoxic material. “How can we assess the real threat when no-one has performed a

thorough testing of both the West Lake and Bridgeton sites? We don't know exactly what's there, but we know people are dying."

Dr. Helen Caldicott, one of the world's preeminent experts on the health impacts of radiation poisoning, last May had reviewed the archival documents and current health studies concerning the site, and proclaimed it "an acute medical emergency" which needs to be cleaned-up "this year."

Joined by U.S. Reps Lacy Clay (D) and Ann Wagner (R), Sens. McCaskill and Blunt state the "people of St. Louis have had to live with this burden for generations, and we believe it is incumbent upon the Federal government to find a clear path forward for all the sites either through removal of the RIM [radioactive material] or effective containment."

What's key about this development is the tacit bipartisan acknowledgment that all the contaminated sites must be dealt with in an equitable and holistic manner. There have been cancer clusters, auto-immune diseases, and deaths associated with the presence of the radioactive material which was stored in open and uncontained locations for decades leaching into the ground water, nearby Coldwater Creek, and polluting the air. Some of the cancers that have expressed themselves are extremely rare forms such as appendix cancer of which there are more than 50 documented cases.

"...we believe it is incumbent upon the Federal government to find a clear path forward for all the sites either through removal of the RIM [radioactive material] or effective containment."—Sen. Blunt, Sen. McCaskill, Rep. Clay, and Rep. Wagner

Equal protection under the law

The ongoing dangers due to the uranium, thorium, radium, and radioactive decay products at West Lake may be violating the civil rights of nearby residents in Bridgeton and Maryland Heights. There is an emergence of a civil rights case based on the unequal application of law.

The argument is as follows: What is it about West Lake area residents that are undeserving of the same level of protection afforded to people that live near the Latty Avenue site or other St. Louis radioactive sites which are all being cleaned-up by the FUSRAP program?

The radioactive contaminants at both West Lake and Latty are identical and were created at Mallinckrodt as part of the Manhattan Project and U.S. nuclear weapons program and yet Latty has been designated for FUSRAP clean-up while the material at West Lake is ignored. Same radioactive material, same source, same health threat. Folks not only deserve equal protection under the law, it is their constitutional right.

"It's going to be a long, complicated process, but a journey of 1000 miles starts with one step."—Councilman Jerry Grimmer, City of Bridgeton

“This is a regional and even national issue that’s finally receiving the attention that it deserves. We need to get busy and clean it up like every other site [in St. Louis] because the reality is West Lake has been ignored,” commented Jerry Grimmer, Councilman for the City of Bridgeton. “The EPA, although well-intentioned, has written report after report but nothing gets done. This letter is a positive step of taking some action. It’s going to be a long, complicated process, but a journey of 1000 miles starts with one step. Finally, folks here have some vindication for what we’ve been fighting for.”