

ECA Update January 27, 2016

In this update:

US public views sought on waste siting consent

World Nuclear News

DOE review finds deficiencies in safety-systems management at Y-12's uranium storehouse

Knox Blogs

One Year Report on Consolidated Interim Storage Effort

The Rod Report: Waste Control Specialists (Blog)

Booker Joins Bipartisan Senate Bill Supporting Clean Nuclear Energy

Cape May Herald

New Demolition Phase Begins at Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant

WKMS.Org

Manhattan Project National Park news

Knox Blogs

US public views sought on waste siting consent

World Nuclear News

January 26, 2016

Upcoming Events

February 2016

09

FY17 Budget Request

September 2016

14-15

DOE National Cleanup
Workshop
Hilton Alexandria Mark
Center
Alexandria, VA

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The US Department of Energy (DOE) has invited public comment by 15 June on a consent-based approach to siting facilities for the storage and disposal of used commercial nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

An Invitation for Public Comment was issued in the US Federal Register on 23 December and the first of a series of public meetings was held in Washington DC on 20 January.

A Blue Ribbon Commission was tasked with developing alternative strategies after the US administration shelved the program to develop a national repository for used fuel at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. A strategy for the USA's management and disposal of used nuclear fuel and high-level waste was then drawn up.

The strategy outlines an integrated waste management system starting with the development by 2021 of a pilot interim storage facility to accept used fuel from reactors that have already closed. This would be followed by the development of a larger interim storage facility by 2025. Finally, one or more long-term geologic repositories would be developed by 2048. A consent-based approach to siting the facilities is to be taken throughout the decision making process.

The current consultation process aims to seek public input to help to decide how to define "consent". The DOE has asked specifically for input on how it can best ensure that the site selection process is fair. It has also asked for input on which models and experience it should use in designing its process - consent-based models for siting nuclear waste facilities are being used in Canada, Finland and Sweden - and who should be involved in the site selection process. It also asks what information the public and communities feel they would need to enable them to participate in the site selection process.

The initial meeting was chaired by undersecretary for science and energy, Lynn Orr, and involved a keynote presentation, panel discussion, question-and-answer sessions and poster session. Public meetings are due to take place in Chicago in March and Atlanta in April, with further meetings to be announced.

Two private sector proposals for interim storage solutions - a consolidated interim storage facility in Texas, led by Waste Control Specialists, and an interim used fuel storage facility proposed by Holtec International and the Eddy-Lea Alliance of New Mexico - are also being developed.

DOE review finds deficiencies in safety-systems management at Y-12's uranium storehouse

Knox Blogs

January 24, 2016

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The Department of Energy's Office of Enterprise Assessment last month completed a "targeted review" of safety systems management at the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility — which houses the nation's largest stockpile of bomb-grade uranium — at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. The safety systems would be important in the event of a fire and possible dispersion of nuclear.

The DOE team had some good things to say, noting that Consolidated Nuclear Security — the government's managing contractor — is operating and maintaining the storage facility's "safety significant" Secondary Confinement System and the safety significant Power Distribution System in accordance with the documented safety analysis and technical safety requirements. "For the most part, systems are acceptably maintained and capable of performing their safety functions when needed," the report's executive summary stated.

However, the DOE team also identified a number of “significant deficiencies” during their review.

Among the problems:

- Technical safety requirements “contained several errors.”

- the Y-12 contractor has not been performing the semi-annual “bearing lubrication” for the two cooling fans that support the Secondary Confinement System.

- CNS was not demonstrating the necessary efficiencies for maximum air-flow through filters that are required by safety criteria for the storage facility.

The 30-page report contained detailed analyses of the systems at the HEUMF and also looks at the oversight work by the National Nuclear Security Administration’s Production Office.

One Year Report on Consolidated Interim Storage Effort

The Rod Report: Waste Control Specialists (Blog)

January 20, 2016

[LINK](#)

One year ago today – January 20, 2015 – the Andrews County Commissioner’s Court unanimously adopted a [resolution](#) encouraging Waste Control Specialists (WCS) to initiate efforts to license a consolidated interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel. This resolution – after months of meetings and discussions – made it crystal clear that our host community of Andrews County, Texas was ready to begin accepting high level radioactive waste at WCS in a storage facility designed to hold the material for decades. Andrews County is very familiar with our 14,000 acre facility where we currently operate two separately licensed low-level disposal facilities; the Texas Compact Waste Facility and the Federal Waste Facility.

Armed with that support, WCS filed its Notice of Intent to seek an interim storage license with the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#) on February 5, 2015.

We presented an aggressive timeline when unveiling our plans at the National Press Club almost a year ago – stating among other things that we would submit our license application in the spring of 2016 and be in position to begin accepting waste for storage by the end of 2020.

One year later, I am pleased to report to the community of Andrews, the state of Texas and the nuclear energy industry that we are right on schedule for submission in April. It's been a very busy year, but along with our partners at [AREVA](#) and [NAC](#) we have made great progress on the license application. The pre-licensing meetings with the NRC have been helpful and instructive and we are confident that we will have a topnotch application.

So, what does this mean exactly? It means we should be the first in line at the NRC. It also means that we are serious about our proposal to build a state of the art facility to store spent fuel. Our plan is to build it in eight phases. Each of the eight storage systems will be able to accommodate 5,000 metric tons of heavy metal (MTHM) waste for an eventual capacity of 40,000 MTHM.

Keep in mind, there is currently approximately 70,000 MTHM in the country and more is generated annually. This means we are a compliment to a geologic repository, but we are not the entire solution.

Specifically, we are applying for an initial 40-year license with opportunities for 20 year renewals thereafter. The [Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future](#) prioritized decommissioned nuclear power plants with stranded spent fuel to be among the first to benefit from a consolidated interim storage facility. We agree and have designed our first phase to hold the spent fuel from the ten stranded plants noted in the Blue Ribbon Commission report.

The other targets on the timeline include obtaining the license by June 2019 (allowing NRC the standard three year review), beginning construction in September 2019 and completing construction of Phase 1 by the end of 2020. WCS remains committed to meeting this timeline as long as DOE can contract with us for storage and take title to the waste on that timeline.

Consent-based consolidated interim storage for spent fuel, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Nuclear Energy, is an integral component of the Department of Energy's Integrated Waste Management program. No one argues that a facility to handle the permanent disposal of this waste is decades away and that safe and secure consolidated storage is necessary.

We needed it yesterday. Put in those terms, our timeline doesn't seem so aggressive after all. But it is a realistic timeline.

The federal government is moving forward as well. This week the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) (DOE) is beginning a series of hearings in Washington, D.C. designed to put a framework around the phrase "consent-based." I hope they take a look at what we've accomplished with Andrews County – first with our low-level radioactive waste disposal facilities and now with consolidated interim storage – to see what "consent-based" looks like in practice.

Booker Joins Bipartisan Senate Bill Supporting Clean Nuclear Energy

Cape May Herald

January 22, 2016

[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Private-sector innovators in nuclear energy and government researchers will work hand-in-hand to create the next generation of clean, advanced nuclear power, under bi-partisan legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate.

Sens. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) have introduced the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act (NEICA). The legislation, S. 2461, directs the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to prioritize partnering with private innovators on new reactor technologies and the testing and demonstration of reactor concepts. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) would report to Congress on any barriers that would prohibit the licensing of new reactors within a four-year time period.

“Whether your priority is addressing the threat of climate change or ensuring greater American energy independence, the United States needs to promote new energy technologies that are safe, clean, and sustainable,” said Booker. “This bipartisan bill will promote public-private partnerships and help accelerate innovation that will enable advanced nuclear energy to play an important role as we transition to a carbon-free energy future.”

“There is bipartisan agreement in the Congress that nuclear energy and nuclear research have been underutilized as a reliable, safe, clean and efficient part of our national energy portfolio,” said Crapo. “We are working to eliminate barriers to innovation within the private sector and strengthening collaboration with our national labs to maintain American preeminence in nuclear energy.”

“Long-term energy stability will require creative solutions,” said Whitehouse. “That’s why Democrats and Republicans are working together to help spark the development of our next generation of advanced nuclear reactors. Collaboration across the private sector, academia, and the federal government is crucial to the successful testing, developing, and licensing of these advanced reactor concepts. Bringing these technologies online will help move us away from the carbon-intensive energy driving global climate change and potentially provide a solution to the management of hazardous nuclear waste.”

“America’s commitment to an ‘all-of-the-above’ energy strategy requires that we pursue clean nuclear energy that provides the needed base load power for our homes and businesses,” said Risch. “Idaho’s history in advanced nuclear technology and the INL’s position as the nation’s preeminent nuclear energy research lab makes us a natural leader in this public-private endeavor, and this legislation will do great things to encourage research and partnerships that lead to the next generation of reactors.”

“This critical legislation will help keep the United States at the forefront of advanced nuclear technology,” said Hatch. “It would help encourage new domestic investments in the nuclear industry and incentivize robust public-private partnerships in developing advanced reactors.”

This measure will strengthen the abilities of national laboratories to partner with private industry to prove the principles behind their ideas.

Specially, the Idaho National Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and Argonne National Laboratory are expected to benefit from NEICA. The NEICA legislation also has a companion bill in the U.S. House.

Representatives Randy Weber (R-Texas), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), and Lamar Smith (R-Texas) saw their version of the bill clear the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

New Demolition Phase Begins at Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant

WKMS.Org

January 26, 2016

[LINK](#)

Contractors at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant have kicked off a new demolition phase, clearing the first of 12 facilities to be removed in coming months.

The 72,000 square foot warehouse built in the 1960s previously stored old equipment and hazardous materials. Other facilities to be torn down include a fuel oil storage tank, acid tanks, waste storage facilities, and a 50 ton truck scale building. An estimated 1,600 cubic yards of demolition waste will be disposed at an on-site landfill.

More than 500 facilities will be addressed during site cleanup, 32 of which have already been cleared. Paducah Mayor Gayle Kaler says cleanup will take 20 to 30 years.

Manhattan Project National Park news

Knox Blogs

January 25, 2016

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An earlier meeting for people interested in becoming Oak Ridge volunteers for the Manhattan Project National Laboratory has been reset for 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Midtown Community Center in Oak Ridge.

Meanwhile, the National Park Service and the Department of Energy are planning public meetings in the near future at each of the three park sites — Oak Ridge; Los Alamos, N.M., and Hanford, Wash. — to get input on plans for the park's future.

The Oak Ridge meeting will be held Feb. 1, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Oak Ridge High School (in the food court).

The Los Alamos meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Feb. 8 at the Los Alamos County Council Chamber in the Municipal Building. The Hanford session will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 4 at the Richland Library Gallery.