

## **ECA Update March 18, 2016**

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## **Upcoming Events**

### **March 2016**

# 30

New Mexico Site Specific  
Advisory Board (NMSSAB)  
Meeting  
1:15 PM MST

### **August 2016**

# 9-10

Third Annual  
Intermountain  
Energy Summit  
Idaho Falls, ID  
[Visit website.](#)

### **September 2016**

# 14-15

DOE National Cleanup  
Workshop  
Hilton Alexandria Mark  
Center  
Alexandria, VA  
[Visit website.](#)

## Committee Leaders Press DOE's Moniz on Plans to Restart Yucca Mountain Project

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

March 17, 2016

WASHINGTON, DC – Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) and Environment and the Economy Subcommittee Chairman John Shimkus (R-IL) today sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz seeking information relating to DOE's nuclear waste management policy. The committee has been at the forefront of developing a comprehensive solution to dispose of spent nuclear fuel. The request follows a recent letter to the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office to examine what is necessary for DOE to fulfill its obligation to complete its work on the Yucca Mountain License Application.

In the letter to Moniz, the committee leaders write, "The Federal government must fulfill statutory obligations as soon as possible. Expediently resuming work on the Yucca Mountain License application would do just that."

Upton and Shimkus also underscore that the completion of the application is crucial to the committee's examination of a comprehensive nuclear waste management policy, and request further information from the department on several areas of concern:

- Yucca Mountain Support Activities
- Nuclear Waste Policy Act Compliance
- Consolidated Interim Storage
- "Standard Contract" for Nuclear Power Facilities
- DOE "Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel"
- Nuclear Waste Fund and Budget Requirements
- Disposal of Defense High-Level Radioactive Waste
- Transportation of Spent Nuclear Fuel

To read the letter online, click [here](#).

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# # #

## **Peters reacts to spent fuel delay**

Post-Register

March 16, 2016

[LINK](#)

Idaho National Laboratory Director Mark Peters reacted to the “disappointing news” of a crucial nuclear fuel research project being delayed, in a Wednesday message to employees.

A shipment of spent nuclear fuel for a key INL research project was delayed by at least six months, officials with the U.S. Department of Energy and Idaho Attorney General’s office told the Post Register this week. The two sides have been unable to come to an agreement over how to let the fuel into INL while also pushing DOE to get in compliance with a state agreement on nuclear waste cleanup.

“It is regrettable a satisfactory resolution on this critical research project has not yet been reached,” Peters wrote.

He said there was “no facility outside Idaho where this important work could be done. Nor is there another workforce capable of performing it, without significant, new and, ultimately, redundant taxpayer expenditures.”

December is now the soonest the 25 rods of spent nuclear fuel could be sent to Idaho from the Byron Nuclear Generating Station in Illinois, due to scheduling issues at the commercial power plant. The lucrative five-year research project was supposed to begin last year, but the lab has been unable to get its hands on the material.

Peters said he appreciated staff at the lab’s Materials and Fuels Complex, “which has spent long hours preparing to do the research and development work on the spent fuel shipments.”

Peters said he didn't want to "cede this expertise" at INL to a different laboratory. Lab officials are worried losing the shipment could hurt the lab's leading nuclear research reputation. An initial shipment from a different reactor was rerouted to a different national laboratory last year after it was also prevented from entering the state.

"Make no mistake; postponing this project has lasting national security implications as well as financial and capability consequences for the laboratory and the state of Idaho," Peters said. "And so it's vital that we continue working with state leaders to ensure INL has the tools needed to fulfill its mission as the nation's lead nuclear energy research laboratory for decades to come."

### **U.S. District Court resolves Hanford Nuclear Reservation case in Washington state**

Legal News Line

March 16, 2016

[LINK](#)

OLYMPIA, Wash. (Legal Newsline) – The office of Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced that a U.S. District Court judge has resolved the state's lawsuit against the federal government in the case of nuclear waste cleanup at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

"This ruling represents a big step in the right direction for our state. Cleaning up the legacy waste at Hanford is the federal government's legal and moral responsibility to the Tri-Cities community and the Pacific Northwest," Governor Jay Inslee said. "I have been repeatedly frustrated by the delays and lack of progress toward meeting key milestones in waste cleanup and treatment. We cannot consider any further delays, and I am pleased that the court clearly agrees. I hope this ruling commences a new level of and progress and collaboration in clean up."

Hard deadlines have been set for the three main components of the waste treatment plant's completion and operation. By 2023, a plant to treat low-activity waste must be completed. This is a crucial step in the cleanup effort. By 2031, a pretreatment facility to separate Hanford's tank waste into low-activity and high-level waste streams must start operations. By 2032, treatment must begin at the high-level waste facility.

"This ruling is a significant victory for the people of Washington," Ferguson said. "The federal government has long been more focused on excusing its delays than being a good partner in cleaning up the toxic mess they left behind at Hanford."

### **DOE selects Carnegie Mellon for environmental remediation training**

Eureka Alert

March 16, 2016

[LINK](#)

PITTSBURGH -- The Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management has selected Carnegie Mellon University to provide specialized training for graduate students in robotics to support environmental remediation of nuclear sites.

Deputy DOE Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall announced the selection during an appearance at Carnegie Mellon today (March 16).

The five-year agreement for the Robotics Traineeship program is valued at up to \$3 million and will provide full or partial support for as many as 20 Ph.D. and master's degree students in robotics, said Martial Hebert, director of Carnegie Mellon's Robotics Institute. To carry out the program, CMU will team with two DOE laboratories, Savannah River National Laboratory in Aiken, S.C., and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Wash. Like a fellowship, the traineeship will provide financial support for the students' education, said Nathan Michael, assistant research professor of

robotics. But it also will support the Robotics Institute's development of specialized courses and will provide research opportunities in association with the partner labs that will help extend the use of autonomous systems in remediation efforts.

The traineeship is available to students who have been admitted to an existing robotics graduate program and have expressed an interest in environmental remediation. Michael said the program is expected to begin in the fall.

The new program will address DOE's workforce needs in environmental remediation.

Those needs include: radioactive waste retrieval, treatment, processing, storage, transportation and disposal; stewardship of spent nuclear fuel and special nuclear materials; nuclear facility and infrastructure operations, maintenance and sustainment;

facility/infrastructure deactivation and decommissioning; worker safety; industrial and nuclear facility safety; and other activities related to the handling and management of high-hazard, high-consequence materials and waste.

The mission of DOE's Office of Environmental Management is to complete the safe cleanup of the environmental legacy created by five decades of nuclear weapons development and government-sponsored nuclear energy research.

**NNSA official says negotiations with Russia, legal issues remain should MOX close**

Augusta Chronicle

March 17, 2016

[LINK](#)

Despite plans to close SRS' mixed oxide plant, a top National Nuclear Security Administration official has said current regulations don't allow for the plutonium disposal originally destined for the site.

The federal government has also yet to have formal conversations with Russia regarding an alternative to MOX, designed to facilitate an agreement between the U.S. and Russia to dispose of 68 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium. The material covered under the agreement is enough to create about 17,000 nuclear weapons, according to the MOX project.

The U.S. is currently on the hook to dispose of more than 34 metric tons, seven of which are at Savannah River Plant with the rest in storage at Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas. At a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing Wednesday, Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz, NNSA undersecretary, said there are an additional six tons at SRS that aren't covered under that agreement.

Currently, the Department of Energy and the NNSA have statutory authority to dispose of all 13 tons in storage at SRS at a facility in New Mexico, but after President Obama proposed mothballing MOX, which would convert weapons-grade plutonium into fuel for commercial reactors, in favor of a dilute and dispose approach, Klotz said his agency would have to seek additional permission to dispose of the 34 metric tons.

"We expect that we would have to do some work on statutory authorities associated with that," he said.

Upon hearing this, U.S. Sen. Graham, R-S.C., rattled off a line of questioning and interrupted Klotz before he could complete his responses.

"So let's see if I got this," Graham said. "We're going to change the entire program, then we're going to go to the Russians to see if they're O.K. with it? Is that the plan?"

To which Klotz replied: "That is the plan."

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When asked what would happen to the MOX, which contractors say is about 70 percent complete, Klotz paused and again attempted to answer but was once again cut off by Graham.

Earlier this month, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said that he doesn't believe a stop work order will be issued for MOX in 2016, but language in Obama's budget proposal means that one could be issued in the following fiscal year if supported by Congress.

