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9-10

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

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Extension of Comment Period; Invitation for Public Comment To Inform the Design of a Consent-Based Siting Process for Nuclear Waste Storage and Disposal Facilities

Federal Register, Department of Energy

March 22, 2016

[LINK](#)

The U.S Department of Energy (DOE) is extending the comment period provided in the notice entitled “Invitation for Public Comment to Inform the Design of a Consent-Based Siting Process for Nuclear Waste Storage and Disposal Facilities” that appeared in the Federal Register of December 23, 2015. That notice announced that DOE is planning to design a consent-based siting process to establish an integrated waste management system to transport, store, and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste and requested comments by June 15, 2016. DOE is extending the comment period to July 31, 2016.

OPINION: Deep Borehole Project could end up being more than a test

AgWeek

March 21, 2016

[LINK](#)

RUGBY, N.D. — I am writing in response to Rob Port’s and Ed Shafer’s columns about a proposed deep borehole drilling project near Rugby in Pierce County, N.D. (Agweek, Page 4, March 14.)

My brother and I rent the land from the North Dakota land department and surrounding landowners. Our farm is a mile away from the project, and I think the residents of Pierce County and surrounding counties need a voice.

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The University of North Dakota Energy and Environmental Research Center, Batelle Memorial Institute and Schlumberger are proposing to drill a hole deep enough — 16,000 feet — to learn the characteristics of rocks at those levels. Researchers are hoping to better understand the impacts of deep storage systems for nuclear waste.

The objection is not about the science project. It is about people realizing if they dig a hole with federal funds, the president's signature could make it a place to put nuclear waste.

We want to go along with science and be educated, but it takes specific planning to come up with this site. Preferably, the project would have a remote site with highway access, at least 75 miles from active oil activity.

Second, Rugby is 60 miles from major towns of more than 10,000 people. Ideally, the project would require 8,000 to 10,000 feet of drilling to reach the prized rocks, enough to isolate the most dangerous nuclear waste they are trying to find a home for. They need only one, 1-kilometer hole to store the most immediate waste that needs to be disposed.

Another plus for the disposal site is, according to the state geologist, the rock in this small area seems to be more dense than other areas of North Dakota. Before we are mocked for putting our heads in the sand, it should be understood that this is our backyard, and if they really wanted to just test the rocks and leave, do you really think they wouldn't do it in the eastern part of the state where the rocks could be reached at much shallower depths?

In the east, the rocks could be reached at a depth of 1,000 to 5,000 feet, instead of 16,000.

The U.S. government needs a spot to dispose of waste, and needs it quickly after the shutdown of the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Site in Nevada.

Do you really think they would conduct tests and not use the land later?

There are plenty of residents who moved here from Las Vegas over the years, and everyone comments that this is how the Yucca Mountain site started — as a test site and science project.

Editor's note: Klein is a resident of Rugby, N.D.

Letter outlines spent nuclear fuel disagreement

Post-register

March 21, 2016

[LINK](#)

A March 11 letter shows where negotiations stalled out to ship spent nuclear fuel from an Illinois reactor to Idaho National Laboratory for research purposes.

U.S. Department of Energy officials and Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden could not reach an agreement before a March 11 deadline that would have allowed the DOE to ship 25 fuel rods in June. Now, the soonest the DOE could ship the controversial radioactive material to Idaho is December, because of scheduling issues at Byron Nuclear Generating Station in Illinois.

The letter was sent from Wasden to Frank Marcinowski, DOE's deputy assistant secretary for waste management. It detailed an emailed proposal Marcinowski made to Wasden the day before, and described why Wasden could not accept the proposal.

If Wasden would grant a waiver to allow the spent fuel, Marcinowski wrote in the email, the fuel would be shipped to INL this summer — but “the fuel rods will be kept intact until treatment of radioactive liquid waste stored in the Idaho tank farm facility commences.”

Wasden has said the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit, a facility built to treat the radioactive liquid waste, must be operational before the spent fuel is

allowed into the state. The start up of the facility, Wasden said, is important to getting DOE back into compliance with the 1995 Settlement Agreement, which laid out deadlines governing nuclear waste cleanup in the state.

Marcinowski's proposal would have allowed the DOE to ship the fuel sooner, and hopefully begin research on the fuel sooner, with the hope that the problem-prone treatment facility is able to begin operations in the next couple months.

The DOE proposal may have helped avoid further setbacks for a lucrative INL research project that originally was scheduled to begin last year. The project, which involves foreign research partners, is tied to fuel recycling and the development of safeguard technologies for nuclear fuel cycles.

Marcinowski wrote that if it turned out treatment of the radioactive waste wasn't able to begin by Dec. 31, 2018, "the 25 spent fuel rods will be removed from the State of Idaho within six months of that date."

In his letter, Wasden said he was "encouraged" by the "flexibility" in Marcinowski's proposal that would have meant shipping the fuel this summer but holding off on conducting research until the treatment facility was running.

"However, your offer falls far short of giving Idaho assurance that if DOE fails to get the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit operational, the Byron (spent fuel) will leave Idaho," Wasden wrote. "Your proposed remedy only gives Idaho the power to stop future shipments, not to compel the Byron fuel's removal."

Wasden said he would hold firm to his requirement that he wouldn't allow the spent fuel into Idaho until the facility was treating radioactive waste and the DOE had agreed to an "enforceable shipment schedule" of sending transuranic waste out of the state.

“My proposal provides certainty to DOE, while protecting the integrity of the 1995 Settlement Agreement, and I look forward to continuing this discussion with you,” Wasden wrote.

Idaho’s Sen. Davis clashes with attorney general over nuclear lab

The Idaho Statesman

March 21, 2016

[LINK](#)

The strained relationship between some lawmakers and the attorney general is no longer an open secret, and the dispute could possibly reshape how the state handles its legal counsel.

Until recently, lawmakers’ frustrations with Wasden generally had been given public voice by only the Legislature’s most conservative members. Last month, for example, Rep. John Vander Woude, R-Nampa, introduced a bill that would kick Wasden off of the Idaho Land Board through a constitutional amendment.

But Wasden’s decision to deny a second shipment of spent fuel rods to Idaho National Laboratory — after the U.S. Department of Energy missed state cleanup deadlines — has increased the tension and broadened it to corners of the Legislature that previously had remained quiet.

Last week, Rep. Jeff Thompson, R-Idaho Falls, introduced a resolution calling on Wasden to issue a waiver and allow in a spent fuel shipment. The resolution passed out of committee and is headed to the House floor.

And Senate Majority Leader Bart Davis, R-Idaho Falls, pulled the Idaho Attorney General Office’s budget off the schedule last week, leaving it in limbo as the session winds down. He says the budget is going to come back soon, and he doesn’t anticipate the Legislature will make any big changes this year.

Davis said unresolved issues with parts of the budget dealing with a task force on Internet sex crimes against children and a few hikes were behind pulling the budget. But Davis also said he was “disappointed” with the AG and his office over decisions concerning the spent fuel shipments.

“That is an issue that is critical not just to my community. ... These are issues of national security,” he said. “It’s not like the first shipment the attorney general turned away, where another lab could step forward and do (the research)...”

“But this next shipment wasn’t about the Idaho National Laboratory and competition with another lab. This is something that, as I understand, only Idaho can do. That’s very troubling to me.”

The AG’s office said Davis’ complaint was new to them. “The senator has not taken the time to make contact with our office and discuss these concerns,” spokesman Todd Dvorak said.

At the same time, Davis raised the prospect of a sweeping change that would dramatically reduce the power of the attorney general: reversing the 20-year-old policy of a consolidated Attorney General’s Office.

The threat of undoing consolidation is a dagger pointed at the budget, power and prestige of the attorney general. If it were pursued, it would amount to a total restructuring of that office.

The office was consolidated in 1995 under Attorney General Alan Lance. Before that, state agencies were generally represented by their own hired counsel.

Attorney to take over state's Hanford cleanup program

AP:Herald Courier

March 22, 2016

[LINK](#)

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — Officials have named a Port of Seattle attorney as the new manager of the Washington state office that helps regulate cleanup efforts at the Hanford nuclear reservation.

The Tri-City Herald reports (<http://goo.gl/7oqyPS>) that the Department of Ecology's deputy director said in an announcement Monday that attorney Alex Smith would take over for Jane Hedges, who retired at the end of February.

Smith will start the job as manager of the department's Nuclear Waste Program in Richland on April 18.

She will receive \$110,000 a year and manage a staff of about 90 employees.

The state has been in charge of the cleanup of the Hanford site, which includes 56 million gallons of radioactive waste stored in underground tanks and the vitrification plant being built to treat it.

Registration opens April 5 for popular Hanford cleanup tours

Tri-City Herald

March 21, 2016

[LINK](#)

Online registration for all 2016 sitewide tours of Hanford will open at 9 a.m. April 5 at www.hanford.gov.

The sitewide bus tours will give visitors a look at the extensive environmental cleanup program on the 586-square-mile nuclear reservation once used for plutonium production for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Registration for two other sets of tours with a historic focus — B Reactor and the communities that were seized by the federal government for the secret Manhattan Project — have yet to be announced. There will be no stop at B Reactor for the sitewide tours this year.

The Department of Energy has scaled back cleanup tours to just 15, down from 40 tours last year and 60 in 2010.

DOE is concerned there may be less interest in the tours now that B Reactor has been removed from the cleanup tour after becoming part of the new Manhattan Project National Historical Park, with tours of park areas offered in collaboration with the National Park Service.

However, DOE points out that the number of Hanford tours overall has continued to increase, when historic Hanford and B Reactor tours are included in the total.

DOE may consider adding more sitewide cleanup tours to the 2016 schedule if demand remains strong without a stop at B Reactor.

In many past years the cleanup tours have filled quickly. Those interested in the sitewide tours should be at their computers when registration opens to ensure a seat. Only online registration is offered.

The route for this year's tours has not been set, but it likely will include a last look at the Plutonium Finishing Plant, where plutonium in a liquid solution was made into metal pucks. The high-hazard work of cleaning out the plant is in its late stages and it likely will be torn down before the 2017 tours.

Visitors also are taken most years to the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, a 107-acre, lined landfill in central Hanford for low-level radioactive and hazardous chemical waste.

DOE also is considering a look at the Hanford vitrification plant campus. The treatment plant is being built to convert up to 56 million gallons of radioactive waste into a stable glass form for disposal. Construction has been underway since 2002, with the start of treatment of some low-activity radioactive waste possible by 2022.

Participants in the sitewide tours must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age.

Government-issued photo identification is required and must be presented prior to receiving a security badge to board the tour bus.

Tour participants from some states, including Washington, may be required to provide two forms of ID to meet the security badging requirements.

All seats are filled on a first-come, first-served basis through the online registration system.

Tours will be offered May 3, 11, 17, 24 and 25; June 1, 7, 15, 21, 28 and 29; and July 12, 13, 26 and 27. Tours are offered on weekdays so visitors are more likely to see work being done.

Tours begin at 8 a.m. and last about four hours. Visitors will board a bus at the HAMMER federal training facility at 2890 Horn Rapids Road, Richland. There is no cost.

Another uranium overload at Y-12

KnoxNews

March 22, 2016

[LINK](#)

According to the report, the sample weighed 197 grams — almost double the nuclear safety limit.

Highly enriched uranium has to be handled according to strict procedures to prevent an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction.

The overloaded sample was reminiscent of an incident last summer in which Y-12 mistakenly sent 10 times the intended amount of enriched uranium to a New York firm, resulting in a \$33,620 fine from the Department of Transportation for shipping violations.

However, Y-12 spokeswoman Ellen Boatner said the two incidents were different.

The incident last summer was blamed on human error, while the more recent concern was the mostly the result of the complexity of procedures, she said.

"Operators did not apply all aspects of a complex set of rules," Boatner said via email. "Actions have been taken to clarify this rule set and preclude recurrence."

The entire process of shipping uranium, either in-house or outside the plant, has reportedly drawn additional oversight at Y-12 over the past year.

Consolidated Nuclear Security ordered a number of actions in the wake of the latest incident, including direct oversight of sampling activities and a temporary suspension of uranium samples to the analytical lab. A standing order enacted by the contractor also prohibits operators from performing the sampling-and-transfer procedures by memory.