

News from Around the Complex

January 2008

January 30, 2008

Commissioners delay financial assurance rule for disposal site, *Houston Chronicle*

LUBBOCK, Texas — State environmental officials delayed a decision Wednesday on what type of financial assurance Texas will use to govern a uranium byproduct disposal site to ensure money is available when it closes. The decision by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in Austin won't affect Dallas-based Waste Control Specialists' bid to receive its final license to bury the Cold War-era radioactive waste in West Texas near the New Mexico border. A preliminary license came in October; no disposal is yet allowed and final approval could come next month. The staff at the commission will develop financial assurance rules that could include a parent company guarantee or place the burden on the company. A final decision isn't expected until later this year.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/5500098.html>

January 30, 2008

Nuclear clean-up bill £12bn higher than predicted, *The Independent (UK)*

Environmental campaigners and Tory MPs said the costs of decommissioning – likely to reach £73bn - were now "out of control". They called for an urgent clean-up at the Sellafield recycling plant in Cumbria after the report by the public spending watchdog, the National Audit Office (NAO). The NAO reported that decommissioning costs for the existing 19 nuclear plants had risen by 18 per cent – about £11.7bn between 2005 and 2007 – and are expected to reach £73bn but could go higher. Part of the reason for the rise is that previous plans failed to include the cost of cleaning up the ponds and silos at Sellafield, and the method of decommissioning was changed from manual to remotely operated work to reduce risks to staff.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nuclear-cleanup-bill-16312bn-higher-than-predicted-775603.html?r=RSS>

January 29, 2008

Report: Cost of building Black Rock reservoir exceeds benefit, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

YAKIMA, Wash. -- The costs to build and operate a massive reservoir in central Washington's Yakima River basin exceed the benefits more than previously thought, according to a draft environmental impact statement released Tuesday by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The report doesn't immediately spell doom for Black Rock reservoir, which was studied along with two other storage proposals for improving water supplies in the drought-prone basin. But the results are likely another strike against a proposal that has already drawn criticism for its high cost and potential threat to the nation's most contaminated nuclear site. * * * Earlier this year, the Bureau released a report that showed the reservoir could seep so much it would significantly raise the water table at the neighboring Hanford nuclear reservation, increasing the risk of spreading radioactive and toxic contaminants to the Columbia River. John Osborn, a board member of the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, called Black Rock a "nuclear time bomb" for the Columbia River and said the risk of catastrophic failure is too high.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap_wa_yakima_river_storage.html

January 28, 2008

State has no waste answer: Officials may soon have to make plans to store radioactive material, *Standard-Speaker (Pennsylvania)*

Ararat Township resident Katherine Shelly remembers the rush started almost as soon as Pennsylvania agreed two decades ago to build a disposal facility for low-level radioactive waste. Within a few years, more than 190,000 acres in Susquehanna County – a third of the total land area – would be placed into agricultural security areas. Intended to encourage farmland preservation, the state designation came with a bonus: Agricultural security areas were expressly off-limits to the waste facility. Although no one ever formally fingered northeastern Pennsylvania as the preferred site for the disposal facility, Shelly said anyone who viewed the maps could see which areas of the state were largely excluded and which were not...Pennsylvania still has no permanent solution for the low-level waste produced within its borders – nearly 58,000 cubic feet in 2006, the last year for which figures are available.

http://www.standardspeaker.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6660&Itemid=2

January 28, 2008

Nuke fuel recycling project a 'spectacular success' so far, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The first phase of an experimental project for recycling nuclear fuel has been a "spectacular success," according to a top official at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Dana Christensen, ORNL's associate lab director for energy and engineering sciences, said the lab was able to quickly assemble the expertise and resources for the work last year and make significant accomplishments within a matter of months. The Oak Ridge laboratory is processing small quantities of spent reactor fuel. Workers use remotely operated manipulators at shielded "hot cells" to chop up highly radioactive materials and evaluate the fuel composition and off-gases. They also test the capabilities to chemically dissolve the fuel mixture, extract certain elements and reformulate the different streams.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/jan/28/nuke-fuel-recycling-project-a-spectacular-so-far/>

January 26, 2008

WIPP funds enhance infrastructure, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*

CARLSBAD — The bulk of the WIPP acceleration money the city of Carlsbad has recently received will go toward road improvements and other infrastructure needs, according to city records. WIPP acceleration funds are federal earmarks given to the area for the earlier-than-expected closure of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant due to an increase in the rate of shipments of transuranic waste. The earmarks, obtained by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., are controlled by the city of Carlsbad, with the Department of Energy overseeing to make sure spending meets DOE guidelines. The city's been receiving funds since the 2002-2003 federal fiscal year. To date, the city and other local institutions have received a total of \$14.7 million in funds. Of that, about half has gone to infrastructure, much of it toward road improvements.

http://www.currentargus.com/news/ci_8089457

January 26, 2008

Cleanup near Moab given 2019 deadline, *Salt Lake Tribune*

Cleaning up an immense pile of radioactive waste that flanks the Colorado River near Moab just got a new deadline. Under a provision Rep. Jim Matheson pushed into the defense spending bill enacted this past week, the U.S. Department of Energy must

finish the entire project by 2019. Trucking radioactive tailings and contaminated soil from the 435-acre former Atlas Uranium Mill site 30 miles to Crescent Junction is expected to take five years. And that means the DOE has to get to work, Matheson spokeswoman Alyson Heyrend said. "That's what the law is now," she said. But the Energy Department appears confused about what it is doing to bring water to Crescent Junction for construction and maintenance of the new dump site. A proposal crafted by Salt Lake City waste-disposal company EnergySolutions, chosen in 2006 to do the project, says the water would be conveyed 21 miles through a 6-inch pipeline from the Green River to Crescent Junction. Grand County officials and a Green River rancher stepped up with requests to piggyback on the water delivery.
http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_8083740

January 25, 2008

DeMint pushes Yucca storage of nuclear waste, *The State (South Carolina)*

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint and five other Republican senators introduced legislation Thursday to break the deadlock over the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump and ease limits on opening new nuclear power plants. Progress on the stalled waste depository, designed to be built deep within Yucca Mountain 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, is critical for South Carolina: More than half of S.C.'s electricity comes from nuclear power, and millions of pounds of highly radioactive waste are in temporary storage around the state at seven commercial reactors and the Savannah River Site nuclear weapons complex near Aiken.

<http://www.thestate.com/local/story/296263.html>

January 25, 2008

New rule could open WIPP to more waste, *KOB News (New Mexico)*

A vote in the House to loosen storage regulation at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant has anti-nuke advocates up in arms. Legislation on its way to the state Senate would change federal rules so that the WIPP site could store more waste with higher radioactivity levels. While the type of waste still falls under the category of "low-level," anti-nuke advocates say its storage poses a risk. They say the loosening of federal rules could allow nations like Pakistan to transfer their waste to the salt mines of Eddy County. However, Democrat John Heaton argued the WIPP site is only used for U.S. waste storage and that it is the best place to keep the nuclear material.

<http://kob.com/article/stories/S326895.shtml?cat=519>

January 23, 2008

Secretary Bodman Meets with Egyptian President Mubarak to Highlight Energy Cooperation: Underscores Egypt's Support for GNEP and Encourages Policies that Attract Energy Investment, *DOE Press Release*

CAIRO, EGYPT – U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today met with Egyptian President Muhammad Hosni Said Mubarak where he reaffirmed the two nations' long-standing economic and energy partnership on his final stop in the Middle East of a ten day, six-nation swing through the Middle East and Europe. During his meeting with President Mubarak, Secretary Bodman highlighted the importance of Egypt's participation in the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and acknowledged Egypt's efforts to promote nuclear safeguards and secure radioactive material.

<http://energy.gov/news/5871.htm>

January 21, 2008

Government set to go nuclear, *The New Anatolian (Istanbul)*

Turkish Energy & Natural Resources Minister Hilmi Guler reiterated that the government was resolute to go ahead with its nuclear energy project. Guler participated in the Nuclear Energy Arena meeting organized by the Strategic Technic & Economic Research Center (STEAM) in Istanbul, late Friday. * * * In a related news a U.S. government official said Turkey has been asked to join Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). GNEP has 19 members including Australia, Poland, Italy, Canada, South Korea and Jordan. Turkey is on observer status in GNEP. US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy Ed McGinnis, also in charge of developing GNEP, said that Turkey, in September, 2007, was proposed to be a member of GNEP which aims to accelerate development and deployment of advanced fuel cycle technologies to encourage clean development and prosperity worldwide. McGinnis noted that they encourage all of the observer countries for "full membership" to GNEP, adding that membership would mean partnership with not only the United States but also 19 countries. McGinnis said that the United States strongly supports Turkey's expanding safe and secure nuclear energy.

<http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-30802.html>

January 21, 2008

Department of Energy Increases Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes to Neighboring Counties of Savannah River Site, Department of Energy Press Release

AIKEN, SC – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Under Secretary Clarence "Bud" Albright, Jr. today announced DOE will increase its Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) from \$3.5 million to \$6.2 million to Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties. PILT provides financial assistance payments to the counties in lieu of taxes for the land on which the Savannah River Site (SRS) sits. Under Secretary Albright made this announcement at a community leaders' reception in Aiken and was joined by U.S. Representative J. Gresham Barrett, SRS's Manager Jeffrey M. Allison, and officials from Aiken and Barnwell County Councils.

<http://energy.gov/news/5868.htm>

January 17, 2008

Reactor debris cleaned, Tri-City Herald

Hanford workers have finished digging up and hauling off more than 600,000 tons of contaminated debris buried as early as World War II near the B and C reactors along the Columbia River. "Removing the hazards posed by these burial grounds is a key component in protecting the river," Joe Franco, Department of Energy assistant manager for Hanford cleanup along the river, said in a statement. The 39 burial grounds and waste sites also have been backfilled and replanted, meeting a deadline under the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement for the areas near two of Hanford's nine production reactors. The burial grounds near the B and C reactors were the first associated with reactors to be tackled. However, that doesn't quite complete work on burial grounds near the two old reactors as a few more waste sites were found during the cleanup that began there in 2004. The area also has some other issues, including soil contaminated by chromium.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/sections/closure/story/9577277p-9489479c.html>

January 17, 2008

USEC project keeps up recycling: Cleanup yields more uranium, Chillicothe Gazette

PIKETON - At the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant, where cleanup of former uranium enrichment processes is expensive, cleanup efforts in one large building yields valuable uranium deposits. At the process building, known to USEC as building X-333, cleanup of gaseous diffusion equipment includes the harvesting of valuable

uranium deposits. "We recover the uranium deposits for health and safety reasons," said Facility Operation Manager Jack Snyder. "But it is also very valuable." Gaseous Diffusion operations in the X-333 building were placed on 'Cold Shutdown' in 2006, by the U.S. Department of Energy, who own the site. Gaseous diffusion is a process by which uranium hexafluoride is separated into enriched (uranium-235) and depleted (uranium-238) uranium by passing the gaseous uranium hexafluoride through semi-permeable membranes.

<http://www.chillicothe Gazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080117/NEWS01/801170301/1002>

January 12, 2008

Nuclear waste to travel through North Alabama over next 2 years, *The Huntsville Times*

FORT PAYNE - Law enforcement personnel are preparing for nuclear waste to be hauled through DeKalb County and other North Alabama counties over the next two years. Interstate 59 or the railroad through Northeast Alabama will be used to haul the waste from Oak Ridge, Tenn., to New Mexico beginning in May, DeKalb County Undersheriff Ron Ogletree said Thursday. "We don't anticipate any problems," he said. "But you never say never because accidents do occur." The waste will include contaminated clothing with "very low levels of radiation," said Megan Barnett, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Energy. Barnett also said other material includes transuranic wastes. According to the Argonne National Laboratory, transuranic wastes mainly pose a hazard if ingested. They are handled separately from other low-level radioactive wastes, says the lab, because the hazards of long-lived alpha emitting radionuclides "warrant more stringent handling and disposal concentrations."

<http://www.al.com/news/huntsvilletimes/index.ssf?/base/news/120013295228550.xml&coll=1>

January 11, 2008

Search for somewhere to bury nuclear waste, *The Financial Times*

One key question remains unanswered despite the go-ahead for further nuclear power plants: what to do with the waste they will generate. UK policy is to build a long-term underground storage facility – so-called geological disposal – for future waste as well as that already produced from past and current nuclear sites. Most of this is stored "temporarily" at Sellafield in Cumbria, the country's biggest and dirtiest nuclear site, now devoted to reprocessing rather than power. It has been assumed that a site at or near Sellafield could be favoured for long-term waste burial, not least to avoid moving waste across the country again. However, the government is proceeding cautiously towards an inevitably controversial decision, determined that the choice of a burial site should be arrived at with as much consensus as possible.

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/72227cfa-bfd3-11dc-8052-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_check=1

January 10, 2008

Hanford workers prepare for high-risk excavation of waste, *Tri-City Herald*

Hanford workers are preparing to start next week digging up radioactive and chemical waste that could spontaneously catch fire when exposed to air. "We're planning for the worst case," said John Darby, project manager for the Department of Energy's contractor, Washington Closure Hanford. The 618-7 Burial Ground was used from 1960 to 1973 for waste from the Hanford nuclear reservation's 300 Area just north of Richland where fuel was made for Hanford's reactors and research was conducted. "Burial grounds like this don't have a lot of documentation," said Stacy

Charboneau, DOE deputy assistant manager for Hanford cleanup along the Columbia River. When the waste was disposed of, it was not expected to be retrieved to meet future environmental standards. But Washington Closure has developed a list of the hazardous items it needs to be prepared to handle there, starting with hundreds of barrels of metals in liquids to keep out air that could start a fire. It expects to find drums of depleted uranium chips likely left from research work. Workers also will be on the lookout for drums of zircaloy or beryllium shavings, both metals used in the cladding or capping of N Reactor fuel.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9563486p-9475861c.html>

January 9, 2008

MOX funding should follow new shipments, *The Aiken Standard*

The announcement by the National Nuclear Security Administration that another shipment of plutonium has been moved to Savannah River Site will likely help stabilize annual funding for the proposed MOX facility. Congress has made initial investment in the Mixed Oxide fuel fabrication facility at SRS that will turn weapons grade plutonium into fuel that can be used in nuclear power reactors. With construction already under way, it will be up to Congress to continue funding of the multi-billion dollar project in order for the plutonium to be turned into fuel. The most recent shipment of plutonium to SRS announced by NNSA came from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. It is part of the nation's plan to consolidate nuclear weapons material at five sites around the United States, providing greater security for the material. It is now up to Congress to keep its end of the bargain as relates to SRS and the disposition of plutonium. Funding to complete the MOX facility should be approved by Congress over each of the next few years to ensure that the plant can begin operating and turn the weapons material into fuel that can be used to create electricity for Americans.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/2007redesign/news/290710472769915.php>

January 8, 2008

YUCCA MOUNTAIN: DOE lays off 63 workers, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Energy on Monday disclosed it was dramatically scaling back at Yucca Mountain, laying off dozens of workers and shutting down nearly all activity at the nuclear waste site in response to deep budget cuts. "The tunnel is closed for all intents and purposes," DOE spokesman Allen Benson said. Barriers may be placed at the mouth of the 25-foot-diameter exploratory tunnel that represented more than a decade of activity at the nuclear waste site 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. DOE officials described a new round of layoffs as a "restructuring" forced by budget shortfalls and a way to conserve money. They told members of Congress that they will continue to work in Las Vegas offices to move forward in building a construction license for a waste-handling complex and underground repository. But officials did not rule out other layoffs and delays, including possible decisions to put off plans to file for a license by the end of June.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/13522217.html>

January 8, 2008

Disposal of nuclear waste is uncertain, *The Tennessean*

The country may be "at a tipping point" on making a decision about how nuclear waste is disposed of, Frank L. Parker, a Vanderbilt University professor and nuclear waste management pioneer, said Monday. The confluence of events includes an attempt to license Yucca Mountain in Nevada to take the highly radioactive remains from nuclear power plants and rising concern over the pollution that results from coal-fired creation of electricity. Many point to carbon dioxide from coal burning as a

contributor to speeding up global warming. The nuclear industry has gotten a recent boost through federal incentives that could spur the construction of new commercial nuclear plants. That would mean more nuclear waste. A look ahead — with all options on the table — is needed for the right solution, said Parker, Distinguished Professor of Water Resources and Environmental Engineering. He and scientists from around the country are taking part in a two-day symposium focused on the uncertainty in long-term planning for disposal of highly radioactive refuse.
<http://www.rctimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080108/NEWS01/801080362/1006/MTCN0301>

January 7, 2008

WIPP receives 100th remote-handled waste shipment, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*
CARLSBAD — Less than a year ago, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant received its first shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste. On Saturday, the 100th such shipment safely arrived at the Department of Energy site near Carlsbad for permanent disposal. Two categories of nuclear waste are disposed of underground at WIPP: contact-handled and remote-handled waste. Remote-handled waste has a higher dose rate at the surface of the disposal container, requiring it to be shielded and remotely handled by workers. "Years of preparation went into the (remote-handled waste) program before the first shipment ever arrived at WIPP," said Dave Moody, Carlsbad Field Office manager. "Thanks to the diligent efforts of the RH team, the program has been a success and we've made great progress." To date, all remote-handled waste shipments to WIPP have come from the Idaho National Laboratory, one of the nation's larger nuclear waste generator sites and a prime shipper to WIPP.
http://www.currentargus.com/ci_7907232

January 5, 2008

DOE reconsiders use of nuclear recycling, *The Herald News (Chicago)*
The U.S. Department of Energy is taking a step back in its effort to sell recycling spent nuclear fuel rods to the public and is now focusing on whether this process should be done in the country at all. In February, the DOE announced a proposal to design, build and operate three facilities: an advanced fuel cycle research facility (laboratory), a nuclear fuel recycling center and an advanced recycling reactor, which would destroy long-lived radioactive elements in the new fuel, while generating electricity. * * * Since then, the DOE was supposed to be researching the environmental impact of the 13 possible sites for this technology, which includes General Electric Co. in Morris. The decision was supposed to be made by this summer, but in October the DOE announced this would be delayed. And now the DOE has changed the plan. "We're changing direction," said Brian Quirke of the DOE. "We're no longer looking at the environmental impact of the sites for the recycling (center) and reactor. What we are doing is looking at the larger public policy question of whether we should be recycling spent fuel from commercial nuclear power plants."
http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/heraldnews/news/727283,4_1_JO05_NUCLEAR_S1.article