

Stakeholders React to DOE Used Fuel Management and Disposal Strategy

January 11, 2013

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Nuclear Energy Institute, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition welcome the release of the U.S. Department of Energy’s strategy to address the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future recommendations presented to the Secretary last January.



NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE



NWSC
Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition

The DOE’s report recognizes the need to establish a sustainable, integrated program to safely and efficiently manage used nuclear fuel from nuclear energy facilities and high-level radioactive waste from our nation’s defense program. On behalf of nuclear energy producers and suppliers, state public utility commissions, and other public and private sector organizations, the three groups advocate meaningful reform of policy that guides America’s nuclear fuel management program and look forward to fully analyzing DOE’s proposed strategy. NEI, NARUC, NWSC and others stand ready to work with Congress and the administration on legislative proposals that contribute to the development of a sustainable used fuel management program for this country.

The Energy Department endorsed several used nuclear fuel management principles outlined by the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future. Many of these concepts have long been supported by our members and other experts. We believe that Congress and the administration should place high priority on the following:

- assured access by the nuclear waste management program to the revenues generated by consumers’ continuing fee payments and to the balance in the Nuclear Waste Fund
- prompt efforts to develop one or more consolidated storage facilities at volunteer sites with priority given to the used fuel from decommissioned reactors
- a new, congressionally chartered federal corporation dedicated solely to implementing the waste management program and empowered with the authority and resources to succeed.

If implemented, these elements would create a solid foundation on which to build a sustainable used fuel management program while development of a permanent repository is pursued.

After two years of BRC deliberations and an additional year for DOE to develop its strategy, it is essential that the nuclear waste fee be used solely for its intended purpose—to cover the cost of used fuel management and disposal. The fee (one-tenth of a cent per kilowatt-hour of electricity) paid by consumers of electricity from nuclear power plants, which totals about \$750 million each year, is effectively unavailable for its intended purpose.

We believe actions can be taken to encourage and achieve consolidated storage in a willing host community within the next 10 years, well before a repository could be opened. This facility would permit the federal government to begin meeting its contractual and statutory obligations under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to remove used reactor fuel from decommissioned and operating nuclear power plants while reducing the taxpayer liabilities associated with the government's delay in accepting used fuel. The DOE was required by the 1982 law to accept used nuclear fuel beginning in 1998.

In addition to a consolidated storage program, a geologic repository program is necessary and should be pursued simultaneously. We continue to support the completion of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's review of DOE's license application for the proposed Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository so that the science can dictate whether it is a suitable site. We believe that a consolidated storage program that focuses initially on decommissioned fuel must be pursued in conjunction with any repository program including Yucca Mountain.

Creating a new management organization is a priority. It will provide consistent leadership for a focused mission of managing used nuclear fuel while better insulating the program from political interference or a constant rotation of managers. In addition to safeguarding consumer payments, fixing the funding issues will help ensure that the new organization will have a sustainable revenue stream to fulfill its mission.

These proposals by the administration are a positive step toward creating a sustainable used fuel management program for both commercial used nuclear fuel and defense radioactive waste. The administration must work with Congress on near-term actions, such as a pilot storage project for used fuel from decommissioned reactors, ending the misuse of the Nuclear Waste Fund and providing sufficient resources within DOE in the fiscal 2014 budget and thereafter to manage the waste program until a new organization is created.

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The [National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners](#) is the national association representing the State Public Service Commissioners who regulate essential utility services, including energy, telecommunications, and water. NARUC members are responsible for assuring reliable utility service at fair, just, and reasonable rates.

The [Nuclear Energy Institute](#) is the policy organization for the nuclear technologies industry. NEI's members include all utilities licensed to operate commercial nuclear power plants in the United States, nuclear plant designers, major architect/engineering firms, fuel fabrication facilities, nuclear material licensees, and other organizations and individuals involved in the nuclear energy industry. For more information on [integrated used nuclear fuel management](#) visit our website.

The [Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition](#) is an ad hoc organization representing the collective interests of state utility regulators, consumer advocates, tribal governments, local governments, electric utilities, and associate members, on nuclear waste policy matters. NWSC's primary focus is to protect ratepayer payments into the Nuclear Waste Fund and to support the removal

and ultimate disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste currently stranded at numerous commercial, defense, research, and decommissioned sites in 39 states.