



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

NWMO News Scan – May 8, 2019

Headlines

Local/NWMO

Decision on nuclear waste burial facility expected by December (Scott Miller, *CTV News* / May 7, 2019)

NII and University of Strathclyde Ink MOU (John Divinski, *Bayshore Broadcasting* / May 8, 2019)

Bruce Power and Bruce County partner with Scotland-based University (Jordan Mackinnon, *Blackburn News* / May 8, 2019)

Canada

Senators to consider sweeping package of amendments to controversial Bill C-69 (Jesse Snyder, *National Post* / May 7, 2019)

Civil society groups condemn plan to exempt nuclear reactors from Bill C-69 impact assessment (CELA / May 7, 2019)

United States

DNFSB Hearing Will Explore Accidents at WIPP, Idaho (*Exchange Monitor* / May 7, 2019)

Hearing denied on planned nuclear waste storage facility (Scott Turner, *Albuquerque Journal* / May 8, 2019)

Federal nuclear board nixes request for hearing on New Mexico waste facility (Rebecca Moss, *Santa Fe New Mexican* / May 7, 2019)

Federal panel rejects all objections to proposed New Mexico nuclear dump (Sierra Club, *KRWG News* / May 7, 2019)

Western Shoshone Host Public Protest of Yucca Mtn. Nuclear Proposal (Suzanne Potter, *Nevada Capital News* / May 7, 2019)

Grouting completed at collapsed tunnel on US Hanford site (*Nuclear Engineering International* / May 7, 2019)

International

Final testing of Chernobyl used fuel store (*World Nuclear News* / May 7, 2019)

Local/NWMO

[Decision on nuclear waste burial facility expected by December](#) (Scott Miller, *CTV News* / May 7, 2019)

It may be the biggest decision in Ontario's history.

Whether or not to bury radioactive waste within 1.2 kilometres of Lake Huron, will be decided by members of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) by year's end.

Saugeen First Nation Chief Lester Anoquot says he expects his community to hold a vote this October, with a final decision to support or not support the nuclear waste facility by the end of 2019.

Ontario Power Generation (OPG), who plans to bury hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of low- and intermediate-level nuclear waste in an underground bunker on the Bruce Power site, have said they will not build the facility without the first nation's support.

A government appointed Joint Review Panel approved the project, in principle, back in May of 2015.

The federal government has told OPG to get SON's approval, before they ultimately decide the project's fate.



[NII and University of Strathclyde Ink MOU](#) (John Divinski, *Bayshore Broadcasting* / May 8, 2019)

The Nuclear Innovation Institute (NII) has established its first international partner.

The University of Strathclyde's Advanced Nuclear Research Centre (ANRC) in Glasgow, Scotland, is joining with the N-I-I to create the foundation to expand discussions to ink international work in the area of operations, inspections and other nuclear innovations.

The signing took place Tuesday evening in Kincardine at a dinner of community leaders and industry representatives.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

One of the reps of the University of Strathclyde is no stranger to this region.

Former President & CEO of Bruce Power Duncan Hawthorne who says this deal will allow the best nuclear minds from the U. K. and Ontario to solve problems together.

The new partnership is expected to bring synergies that will not only strengthen the two organizations, but further enhance the benefits they could bring to Bruce Power, Bruce County, and the nuclear community in Ontario and internationally.

Bruce Power's Executive Vice President Corporate Affairs & Operational Services, James Scongack says once the Nuclear Institute is up and running, the University of Strathclyde will have a physical presence in the facility.

Scongack says in addition, the partnership will provide links for the 52 Bruce Power suppliers in the region to do work, outside the country.

Bruce County Warden Mitch Twolan, on hand for the MOU signing, says "This is a great opportunity for Bruce County to have the Nuclear Innovation Institute partner with a leader in nuclear research who can bring expertise and experience as we build a world-class nuclear research institute in rural Ontario."



BLACKBURNNEWS.COM
YOUR LOCAL NEWS NETWORK

[Bruce Power and Bruce County partner with Scotland-based University](#) (Jordan Mackinnon, *Blackburn News* | May 8, 2019)

A familiar face was on hand Tuesday to announce the first international partnership for Ontario's Nuclear Innovation Institute.

Former Bruce Power head Duncan Hawthorne announced a memorandum of understanding between the NII and the University of Strathclyde, based out of Glasgow, Scotland.

Hawthorne is the chair of the university's Advanced Nuclear Research Centre and said it's a meaningful connection between his past career at Bruce Power and his current work in the U.K.

The agreement will see the NII and the University of Strathclyde collaborate on research and development for safety and operational efficiencies across the nuclear industry.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

While Canada’s CANDU reactors and the nuclear technology in the U.K. differ, Hawthorne pointed out there’s enough similarities to make the partnership a no-brainer.

“CANDU units have got challenges which can prolong or extend the operating life, the U.K. nuclear fleet similar challenges but with a different technology, but the skill-sets are the same,” said Hawthorne. “But a lot of bright, young PhD students working together to solve some industry-wide problems is the way to tackle it.”

From Bruce Power’s perspective, Executive Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Operational Services James Scongack said the agreement builds on an already-successful partnership.

“We have done work with Strathclyde university for a number of years, obviously they have tremendous linkages throughout the nuclear industry and this is really bringing a lot of that work we have been doing with them and their expertise, here to Bruce County,” said Scongack.

Scongack said the NII remains committed to finding a permanent location within Saugeen Shores, with plans for the University of Strathclyde to have a physical presence within the facility once it is constructed.

Canada



[Senators to consider sweeping package of amendments to controversial Bill C-69](#) (Jesse Snyder, *National Post* | May 7, 2019)

Senators will consider a list of sweeping amendments in their study of the federal government’s controversial energy legislation, drawing battle lines on a bill that has become a rallying cry for critics of the Liberals’ approach to resource development and the environment.

Late on Tuesday, senators agreed to consider a package of amendments put forward by Conservative Sen. Michael MacDonald, deputy chair of the committee studying Bill C-69.

Taken together, the roughly 70 proposed amendments to C-69 would represent a deep and structural reconfiguration of a bill that has been met with scorn by the oil and gas sector. The committee will now discuss whether those amendments will be included in its final report, though observers say it is unlikely the federal government will accept any extensive alterations.

The package of proposed changes includes submissions from such industry lobby groups as the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA) and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), as well as provincial governments that oppose the legislation. Among other things, they aim to shave timelines for new resource projects, limit the scope of ministerial



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

powers and make economic considerations a higher priority when determining whether a major project gets built.

Bill C-69, which seeks to overhaul the environmental review process for large-scale projects like pipelines and nuclear plants, has become a point of vexation in the oil-rich provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Frustrations in those provinces has been mounting over the failure to increase Canada's oil pipeline capacity over the past 15 years, kneecapping producers and pummeling prices for Canadian crude oil.

Those tensions reached their peak just as Ottawa purchased the Trans Mountain pipeline for \$4.4 billion last August, after legal and regulatory delays brought an effort to expand the pipeline to a standstill. The move effectively nationalized the pipeline, infuriating some taxpayers and casting a pall over investor sentiment towards the Canadian oil sector.

Any amendments that are accepted by the committee would then have to be sent back to the House of Commons for approval. The committee has until May 16 to complete its report on the bill, including any proposed changes.

MacDonald's motion comes amid a flurry of proposed amendments being put forward by senators, both by Conservatives and the Independent Senators Group (ISG). Some Senators say that well over 100 amendments have already been submitted to the clerk, not including the package of 70-odd proposed changes that were to be introduced Tuesday evening.

Among the amendments obtained by the Post, one aims to reduce the timelines for projects reviewed by an independent panel from 600 days down to 510, satisfying industry demands for shorter review processes. Oil and gas lobby groups have warned that the new process could slow timelines to get major projects built, despite claims by Ottawa that the bill actually shortens the process with its "one project, one review" approach.

Many of the proposed amendments aim to limit ministerial powers — a key concern among oil and gas representatives, who argue that higher discretion afforded to the federal environment minister will make the process more uncertain.

One amendment would force the environment minister to get written approval from both the federal finance minister and minister of natural resources before a project could be rejected on environmental grounds. That would mark a substantial change from the current legislation, which leaves the decision solely to the environment minister, and would put more power in the hands of the typically more industry-friendly energy ministry.

Another proposed change would limit the minister's ability to subject certain projects to federal reviews, except under "unique and exceptional circumstances." Yet another would bar the minister from making such a decision 60 days after a project proposal is submitted.

Some amendments are far broader in their application. One proposes that the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) “may” — rather than “must” — consider a long list of factors when making a decision on a project, including the effects it may have on Indigenous people or whether it will cause undue environmental damage.

Other proposed amendments widen the language of the bill to include more economic considerations, rather than strictly environmental ones. The most recent draft of the bill compels regulatory bodies to consider the “sustainability” of a given project, which one amendment expands to include “environmental, health, social and economic effects.”

Some changes seek to limit the presence of foreign-funded environmental activism. One proposes to narrow the list of people or groups who can take part in public hearings, limiting them to people “directly affected by the project and whether, in the opinion of the review panel, the person has relevant information or expertise in relation to the matter before the review panel.”

It comes amid industry fears that environmental activist groups could further stall industrial development if the hearings process is applied too broadly. Environmental groups and some First Nations, for their part, argue that regulatory changes introduced by the former Conservative government in 2012 unnecessarily restricted the public hearings process.

Any amendments that are approved by the House of Commons would have to then pass third reading in the senate before June 28, when Parliament is scheduled to break for the election, putting a tight deadline on senators studying the bill.



[Civil society groups condemn plan to exempt nuclear reactors from Bill C-69 impact assessment](#) (CELA / May 7, 2019)

The Government of Canada is proposing that the "project list" for Bill C-69, the Impact Assessment Act, exempt many nuclear reactors from any environmental assessment. Civil society groups are condemning the exemption from environmental assessment under Bill C-69 and demanding that all new nuclear reactors be subjected to formal environmental assessment, as is now the case.

The federal government’s discussion paper, released on May 1, proposes that all nuclear reactors that produce less than 200 megawatts of thermal power be excluded from the Impact Assessment Act, as well as nuclear reactors built on existing nuclear sites that produce up to 900 megawatts of thermal power.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

“Excluding nuclear energy projects from impact assessment means there will be no credible sustainability-based assessment of the environmental, health, economic or social impacts of new, expanded or refurbished nuclear energy projects before they proceed,” says Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director and Counsel for the Canadian Environmental Law Association. “In our view, giving the nuclear power industry a free pass under the Impact Assessment Act is the antithesis of sound and precautionary environmental planning, and should not be countenanced by Parliament.”

“It is shocking that the federal government expects nuclear projects to go ahead with no impact assessment,” says Dr. Ole Hendrickson, a retired Environment Canada scientist and board member of Sierra Club Canada Foundation. “This may benefit the nuclear industry, but at the expense of the environment, public health and safety and the rights of Indigenous communities.”

In November, federal Minister of Natural Resources Amarjeet Sohi launched a “roadmap” at a nuclear industry conference in Ottawa that outlines plans to build Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in Indigenous and northern communities and at remote mining sites across Canada. The Roadmap’s recommendations included comments suggesting that SMRs should be exempted from Bill C-69.

The discussion paper for Bill C-69 regulations says that the effects from SMRs are “well known” and “share core characteristics” with existing conventional reactor technology. However, all proposed SMRs would employ new and untested designs, or technologies, some involving liquid metal and molten salt coolants that caused serious accidents in early prototype reactors, and some using controversial fuels never commercially allowed in Canada before, based on plutonium, thorium, or enriched uranium.

“People in northern and Indigenous communities where the nuclear industry wants to build these reactors have a right to know what the risks are,” says Hendrickson. “A formal impact assessment with public disclosure is essential to identify these risks, including radioactive emissions and long-lasting contamination of soil and groundwater, especially due to malfunctions or accidents.”

Impact assessment of SMRs became a focus of media attention last November when it was revealed that Canada's nuclear regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), had been secretly lobbying the Government for the reactors to be exempted from environmental assessment. The Globe and Mail reported that CNSC encouraged the government to exempt small modular reactors from the list of designated projects (see Federal nuclear regulator urges Liberals to exempt smaller reactors from full panel review - November 6, 2018).

The discussion paper also does not include decommissioning of nuclear reactors and facilities on the project list for Bill C-69. Decommissioning includes cleaning up, dismantling and removing contaminated nuclear facilities; storing the resulting radioactive waste; and returning



NUCLEAR WASTE SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION
MANAGEMENT DES DÉCHETS
ORGANIZATION NUCLÉAIRES

the nuclear sites back to public use. This is despite the environmental risks of these activities and direct requests from host communities.

Remediation of contaminated nuclear sites, new radioactive waste storage facilities at existing nuclear sites, and nuclear waste transport are also not identified for impact assessment in the discussion paper.

The federal government is giving Canadians until May 31 to submit comments on the discussion paper regarding the Bill C-69 Project List at the following address:
impactassessmentregulations.ca

About CCRCA

The Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area was formed in 1978 to research and advocate about nuclear waste and other pollution issues in Eastern Ontario and the Ottawa River watershed. The group works closely with other civil society groups to promote responsible management of radioactive wastes and protection of the environment.

About CCNR

The Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility is a not-for-profit organization, federally incorporated since 1978, dedicated to education and research on all issues related to nuclear energy, whether civilian or military, especially those pertaining to Canada.

About Sierra Club Canada Foundation

Sierra Club Canada Foundation is a national and grassroots non-profit organization committed to empowering people to protect, restore and enjoy a healthy and safe planet.

About Ralliement Contre La Pollution Radioactive

The mission of the Ralliement contre la pollution radioactive (RCPR) is to act voluntarily and collectively to promote responsible solutions for the management of radioactive waste that are safe for the environment and for the health of the population.

About CELA

The Canadian Environmental Law Association is a public interest law group founded in 1970 for the purposes of using and enhancing environmental laws to protect the environment and safeguard human health. CELA lawyers represent low-income and vulnerable communities in the courts and before tribunals on a wide variety of environmental and public health issues.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

United States

EXCHANGE MONITOR

[DNFSB Hearing Will Explore Accidents at WIPP, Idaho](#) (*Exchange Monitor* | May 7, 2019)

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) has set a public hearing for May 22 in Washington, D.C., to consider the Department of Energy's efforts to prevent future accidents during nuclear waste operations.

The half-day meeting is broken into two sessions, according to the recently released agenda. In the first, the DNFSB will focus on improved safety by understanding the February 2014 underground radiological release at DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico, as well as the April 2018 radioactive-waste drum breach at the Idaho National Laboratory. This includes improving documents used for transuranic waste facilities and strengthening federal subject matter expertise.

In the second session the board wants to more broadly address vulnerabilities associated with handling and processing solid waste at defense nuclear sites. This includes preventing unwanted chemical reactions and making corrective actions.

The agenda identifies up to eight "suggested panelists" spread over two sessions – including DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Anne Marie White; Carlsbad Field Office Manager Todd Shrader, and Idaho Cleanup Project Deputy Manager Jack Zimmerman.

An underground radiation release in February 2014, resulting from a drum of radioactive waste shipped from the DOE Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, resulted in WIPP going offline for about three years.

More recently, four drums of repackaged sludge waste at a fabric filter building within the INL Waste Management Facility overheated and blew off their lids, forcing a portion of the Accelerated Retrieval Project offline for more than a year. The sludge waste, produced at the old Rocky Flats nuclear weapons site in Colorado and buried for years on-site in Idaho, was repackaged by Fluor Idaho shortly before the drums blew off their lids. The new drums had not yet been certified for shipment to WIPP.

The meeting is set for noon to 4 p.m. ET on May 22 at DNFSB headquarters, 625 Indiana Ave. NW in Washington. Anyone interested in speaking during the public comment period should send a request in writing to hearing@dnfsb.gov.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

AlbuquerqueJournal

[Hearing denied on planned nuclear waste storage facility](#) (Scott Turner, *Albuquerque Journal* / May 8, 2019)

Opponents of a proposed interim nuclear fuel storage facility in southeast New Mexico are vowing to appeal a Nuclear Regulatory Commission board decision Tuesday that denied them an evidentiary hearing.

The NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board denied requests by several petitioners to conduct a hearing challenging Holtec International's license application to construct and operate a consolidated interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel in Lea County.

"This decision is a perfect example and a lesson for the citizens of New Mexico and the United States of how the NRC process is shamelessly designed to prevent the public from participating," Sierra Club attorney Wally Taylor said in a news release.

The three-judge board held oral arguments in Albuquerque in January on the standing of the various petitioners and the admissibility of their proposed contentions under NRC regulations.

While the judges agreed that some of the six petitioners met the qualifications for standing, they concluded the nearly 50 contentions raised were not admissible for an evidentiary hearing.

In January, Holtec had said in a news release that it did not believe any of the parties' contentions had merit. Efforts to reach Holtec officials after the hearing were unsuccessful.

On Tuesday, the judges held that the contentions either were not relevant to the application or did not establish a genuine dispute with aspects of the application, a release from the NRC said.

But Terry Lodge of Don't Waste Michigan, which had raised questions at the January hearing, said, "When not a single one of the more than 45 contentions crafted by some of the most talented antinuclear activists and lawyers in the game nationally qualifies for a hearing, there is something fundamentally wrong with the way these dangerous 'forever' projects are licensed."

Lodge and John Buchser, the nuclear waste co-chair of Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, raised concerns about the facility becoming a permanent site for storage.

"New Mexico citizens should be very concerned about this project," Buchser said.

Attorney Mindy Goldstein, who represents petitioner Beyond Nuclear, said she finds the ruling baffling regarding her organization's argument.

Beyond Nuclear questions the legality of Holtec's application, saying the Department of Energy is not able to take ownership of the radioactive waste under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act,



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

which stipulates there must be a permanent repository in place before the DOE can do so. Holtec documents mention the possibility of the company contracting with the DOE at the facility.

“They’re (Atomic Safety and Licensing Board) saying they’re really OK with it,” Goldstein said. “They’re saying they’re going to trust the applicant, that they won’t do anything illegal, and that the law could change.”

Holtec attorneys at the hearing did not dispute DOE not being able to take ownership.

But Holtec counsel Jay Silberg said during the January hearing the plan will still be viable if electric utilities retain title to the waste if the Nuclear Waste Policy Act is not altered or a permanent repository is not constructed.

Beyond Nuclear made a motion to dismiss Holtec’s application. That motion was denied.

The NRC’s hearing process allows appeals to the commission. Goldstein said Beyond Nuclear planned to take its case to the commission and is challenging the Holtec licensing application in U.S. Circuit Court in Washington, D.C.

The Sierra Club also said in a release it was also appealing the ruling with the Commission.

“It’s clear from the hearings across the state that the people of New Mexico don’t want this. They need to join forces and make that clear to New Mexico officials,” Taylor, of the Sierra Club, said. “State officials can pass and enforce laws that would require permits or other protections from the dangers posed by the transport of high-level radioactive waste to southeast New Mexico.”

Hearing petitions were filed by Beyond Nuclear, the Sierra Club and the Fasken Land and Minerals and Permian Basin Land and Royalty Owners, which were granted standing.

Two other petitioners – a coalition of several different organizations and NAC International, a rival dry storage cask vendor – were denied standing. The standing of a sixth petitioner, the Alliance for Environmental Strategies, was not decided.



[Federal nuclear board nixes request for hearing on New Mexico waste facility](#) (Rebecca Moss, *Santa Fe New Mexican* | May 7, 2019)



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

A federal board that oversees commercial nuclear materials and licenses said Tuesday it has rejected a request by a group of opponents over a proposed nuclear waste storage site in Southern New Mexico.

Holtec International, a New Jersey-based company specializing in nuclear reactor technology, is waiting on the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to approve its license for an expansive facility that could be used to hold all of the nation's spent nuclear fuel — radioactive uranium left over from power production.

Holtec is partnering with the Eddy Lea Energy Alliance, a coalition of local government officials in Southern New Mexico.

During a three-day hearing earlier this year in Albuquerque, an unlikely alliance of critics, including environmental and anti-nuclear groups as well as a nuclear fuel technology company and an oil and gas producer, raised concerns about the project.

The Sierra Club, Beyond Nuclear Inc., Texas-based Fasken Land and Minerals Ltd. and Georgia-based NAC International Inc. were among those who petitioned the commission to hold a hearing.

The facility is poised to violate federal law and could pose significant public health and safety danger from a radioactive accident, the groups argued. They also were concerned that an accident in Southern New Mexico would threaten the local economy, particularly for ranchers and mineral extraction operations in the region.

An evidentiary hearing would have allowed the groups to challenge Holtec's licence.

But the commission's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board said in a 142-page decision that the nearly 50 issues raised by the critics did not meet legal requirements necessary to trigger a hearing.

For instance, the three-member board said, an environmental analysis of the project is required under federal law, but the board does not have to "analyze every conceivable aspect of the project." Particularly, the board said in its decision, it is not required to assess worst-case scenario events or those that are "remote and highly speculative."

John Buchser, with the Sierra Club's Rio Grande Chapter, said the organization intends to appeal the board's decision to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The proposed facility has been under consideration for several years and was supported by former Gov. Susana Martinez as well as many officials in the region, which also is home to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

So far, WIPP, an underground storage site, is the only place to permanently deposit lower-level nuclear waste created by the Department of Energy's weapons production efforts.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

Holtec filed an application in 2017 to design a facility that would place removable canisters in a “dry-cask” storage system 25 feet below ground — where, the company argues, they would be more secure than if they remain at various nuclear power plants around the county.

The casks could be transferred to a permanent storage location in the future — though no such facility exists, and plans to open a site in Nevada were stalled by political and social pushback in that state in recent years.

A temporary storage site also has been proposed in West Texas, just across the border.

Groups critical of the plan said the license Holtec has requested — initially for 40 years, with the potential to operate for more than a century — contradicts federal law. The Department of Energy cannot legally take ownership of waste from private nuclear power stations unless a permanent repository is in operation. There are also questions about whether federal law allows storage of any high-level nuclear waste at a temporary facility when the nation has no designated site for permanent storage.

“Until the law changes on those two points, they can’t transport the waste,” Buchser said, adding New Mexicans statewide should be concerned about the project.

Critics also question whether private companies will be willing to take on the high cost and liability of shipping spent fuel to New Mexico.

Among other concerns raised by the petitioners: the safety of transportation by railroad on aging lines, the possibility of leaking canisters, the risk of water and environmental contamination, and the threat to oil and gas development in the booming Permian Basin.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Atomic Safety and Licensing Board said, however, it assumes Holtec and the Department of Energy “would not be complicit in any such unlawful contracts.”

Holtec and the board also said Congress could amend the Nuclear Waste Act to allow the Department of Energy to take ownership of the spent fuel, even without a permanent storage facility on the horizon.

The ruling put the project on track to be licensed by 2020, the company said.

Buchser, with the Sierra Club, said the onus now lies with New Mexico’s congressional delegation, governor and attorney general to decide if they support the project and the implications of an expanded nuclear waste footprint in New Mexico.

“The whole concept of consent for our politicians here in New Mexico becomes extremely important,” he said.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES



[Federal panel rejects all objections to proposed New Mexico nuclear dump](#) (Sierra Club, *KRWG News* / May 7, 2019)

Commentary: On Tuesday, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced that its Atomic Safety and Licensing Board had rejected every objection made by intervenors challenging Holtec International’s application to build a storage facility for high-level nuclear waste in southeast New Mexico.

Among the requests the panel refused to consider was the objection raised by Sierra Club that U.S. law clearly prohibits nuclear waste being moved to interim facilities before a permanent storage site has been identified. No such permanent sites exist in the U.S.

“This ‘interim’ storage facility could well become a permanent repository without the protections of a permanent repository,” Sierra Club attorney Wally Taylor said in response to Tuesday’s ruling. “Now it is up to the people and public officials in New Mexico to protect New Mexicans from this boondoggle.”

“New Mexico citizens should be very concerned about this project,” Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Nuclear-Waste Co-Chair John Buchser said. “Energy Secretary Rick Perry has indicated he is OK with the storage-site proposal in Texas, just across the New Mexico border, becoming a permanent facility. The Sierra Club is very concerned about possible radioactive releases from containers designed for short-term storage. The transport of this highly radioactive waste is even more risky, and the nation’s rail system is not safe enough to transport this waste.”

Taylor, representing the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, and attorneys for Beyond Nuclear, Fasken, AFES and transportation intervenors raised nearly 50 different contentions before the three-judge board during oral arguments in January in Albuquerque.

The panel, charged with ruling on petitioners’ standing and the admissibility of their contentions under NRC regulations, agreed that some of the six petitioners, including the Sierra Club, had standing, but ruled that not a single one of nearly 50 contentions raised were admissible for even an evidentiary hearing.

“The board won’t even consider transportation risk,” Buchser said.

“This decision is a perfect example and a lesson for the citizens of New Mexico and the United States of how the NRC process is shamelessly designed to prevent the public from participating,” Taylor said.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

“It’s clear from the hearings across the state that the people of New Mexico don’t want this. They need to join forces and make that clear to New Mexico officials,” Taylor said. “State officials can pass and enforce laws that would require permits or other protections from the dangers posed by the transport of high-level radioactive waste to southeast New Mexico.”

The next step for Sierra Club is to appeal to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.



[Western Shoshone Host Public Protest of Yucca Mtn. Nuclear Proposal](#) (Suzanne Potter, *Nevada Capital News* | May 7, 2019)

The Western Shoshone Tribe is inviting the public to join its protest this weekend against moves by the Trump administration to restart operations at the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository.

Hear an audio report from Suzanne Potter.

Tribe members began their annual sacred walk in Tonopah on Monday and will end in Mercury on Friday, where the public can join them. Western Shoshone Council member Johnnie Bobb, who will lead the events, said the tribe takes a stand to protect Mother Earth every year on Mother’s Day weekend.

“Our native people have been fighting this war for a long time,” he said. “The Nevada Test Site, quit building it. Don’t make it no more. Try something else. This is sacred land. This is Shoshone land. This is a treaty land. We don’t want this nuclear waste.”

Last year, the feds requested \$150 million to revive the licensing process, but Congress did not appropriate the money. This year, they’ve requested almost \$170 million. Members of Nevada’s congressional delegation have introduced bills to block the project at Yucca Mountain and top leaders in the casino industry are on record in opposition as well.

Even though the nuclear bomb tests took place decades ago, said Colton Miller, a Western Shoshone protester, the effects still remain. So, the tribe opposes any new nuclear storage at the site.

“The effects are being seen everywhere now in the surrounding area around the Yucca Mountain,” he said. “Radiation traces have been traced all the way to Indian Springs, Cactus Springs, 25 miles away, not to mention there’s an important aquifer that stretches out for 80 miles.”



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

The group PLAN Action is arranging bus transportation this Friday so people from Las Vegas and Reno can get to the site in Mercury, where they can camp and take part in the events on Saturday, returning on Sunday. More information is on the PLAN Action Facebook page.



[Grouting completed at collapsed tunnel on US Hanford site](#) (*Nuclear Engineering International* / May 7, 2019)

Workers at the US Hanford Site in southeast Washington state have finished filling a second waste storage tunnel with engineered grout, reducing the risk of a collapse and possible release of radioactive materials, the Department of Energy (DOE) said on 29 April.

DOE contractor CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company started grouting Tunnel 2, which is located next to the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility in October 2018. Crews placed the last truckload of grout on 26 April.

“The tunnel has been filled with grout, and we’ve significantly reduced the risk of contaminating Hanford workers, the public, or the environment,” noted Brian Vance, DOE’s manager for the Hanford site.

Tunnel 2 contains 28 railcars with contaminated processing equipment and materials generated during Hanford’s nuclear weapons production era. The decision to grout Tunnel 2 was made after the partial collapse of an adjacent waste storage Tunnel 1 in May 2017 caused an emergency response and shut down work at the Hanford Site for two days. An engineering evaluation of the second tunnel showed it too was at high risk of collapse.

CHPRC and subcontractor Intermech, developed mock-ups of grout placement to enhance lessons learned from successfully stabilising Tunnel 1 and to train the workforce. Grouting was determined to be the best choice for stabilising this tunnel by DOE's independent panel of experts because it provides the highest level of stability and protection and does not preclude future remedial actions. “Even though the tunnel is full of grout, this does not preclude future remedial actions or limit final closure decisions,” said Joe Franco, DOE Deputy Manager for the Richland Operations Office.

Approximately 4000 truckloads (40,000 cubic yards) of grout were placed in the Tunnel 2. Cameras in the tunnel ensured the grout flowed the length of the tunnel and around the contaminated equipment inside. The grout was injected in several lifts, or layers, and each lift was allowed to set before the next began.



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

Ty Blackford, CHPRC president and CEO said: "It took a lot of preparation and day-to-day attention to ensure we could make, move and place thousands of trucks of grout safely while assuring the potential for a radiological release was minimised."

Continuous monitoring and detection systems were in place to alert workers to potential chemical or radiological exposure conditions; lights and cameras installed in the tunnel to allow crews to remotely monitor grout placement and progress; and on-site batching of the grout to ensure reliable delivery of grout while decreasing traffic impacts. Looking ahead, Hanford crews will continue to monitor the tunnel until the full mission is complete.

International



[Final testing of Chernobyl used fuel store](#) (*World Nuclear News* / May 7, 2019)

Final system-wide trials began yesterday of the new dry interim used fuel storage facility at the site of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine. The facility is expected to be handed over to the state-owned enterprise Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (ChNPP) in the coming months.

The ISF2 facility is being constructed by the USA's Holtec International. The principal contractors on the project are Ukraine's UTEM, Germany's BNG and Italy's Maloni. The project, supported by the Nuclear Safety Account managed by the London-headquartered European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, will provide for the processing and storage of the used nuclear fuel from units 1, 2 and 3, which is required for the decommissioning of the Chernobyl plant.

"These functional dry runs follow a long series of exhaustive tests of the individual systems, structures and components within the spent nuclear fuel processing and storage complex called ISF2," Holtec said. These tests are expected to take two months to complete, the company noted. "ChNPP will then initiate commissioning of the facility beginning with 'hot' confirmatory tests."

The ISF2 project had begun in the late 1990s but was stalled when "the prior contractor's technology was shown to be inadequate to meet the facility's functional and regulatory requirements", according to Holtec, which took over the project in 2011.

"We were handed a facility full of defective equipment that had deteriorated for lack of any maintenance for nearly a decade," said Holtec's Project Manager Michael Pence. "Through the sheer commitment of our team and partners, this project, which looked nearly impossible given



NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION SOCIÉTÉ DE GESTION DES DÉCHETS NUCLÉAIRES

the poor condition of the building, shabby documentation and old equipment, with little or no hope of available replacement parts, has now reached the milestone we celebrate today."

On 26 April 1986, the Chernobyl plant suffered the worst nuclear accident in history when a power runaway event wrecked reactor 4. The three remaining reactor units, however, were vital to Ukraine's electricity needs and continued to operate for some years. Unit 2 shut down in 1991, unit 1 in 1996 and unit 3 in 2000. The plant officially entered the decommissioning phase in April last year, following approval by the Ukraine's State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate. The first phase of decommissioning is the so-called final shutdown and preservation stage, which is expected to take ten years. The last damaged used fuel assembly from units 1-3 of the plant was removed in June 2016 - from the cooling pool of unit 1 - and transferred to ISF1, a wet-type interim storage facility. ISF2 will store all the used fuel on the site for at least 100 years.

Holtec Ukraine's Director General Sergiy Tarakanov added, "We stand ready to assist ChNPP in the critically important fuel transfer campaign if necessary."

Energoatom, Ukraine's nuclear power plant operator, and Holtec started construction of the Central Spent Fuel Storage Facility (CSFSF) at the Chernobyl site in November 2017. It will receive used nuclear fuel from nine of Ukraine's 15 reactors - seven VVER-1000s and two VVER-440s - located at Rivne, South Ukraine and Khmelnytsky. The Zaporozhe nuclear power plant operates its own on-site used fuel storage facility that was commissioned in 2001. The CSFSF will be a dry storage facility in which the used fuel will be stored in double-walled stainless steel canisters. The facility will mean Ukraine will no longer have to spend USD200 million annually on its arrangement with Russia to transport and reprocess used nuclear fuel. The CSFSF is scheduled to enter full operation in 2020.