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LOC INC
Oak Ridge Reservation Local Oversight Committee

May 2, 1996

U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Fissile Materials Disposition
P.O. Box 23786
Washington, DC 20026-3786

RE: STORAGE AND DISPOSITION OF WEAPONS-USABLE FISSILE MATERIALS DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, (DOE/EIS-0229-D, FEBRUARY 1996)

The Oak Ridge Reservation Local Oversight Committee, Inc. (LOC) has reviewed the above-referenced document, and submits the following comments and recommendations:

General Comments:

1. Local governments and citizens have been overwhelmed by DOE's timing in releasing major National Environmental Policy Act documents. While the agency may save money by holding multiple hearings in two days, cost savings do not outweigh the negative aspects of a concurrent process. | 1/08.02.00

2. The Oak Ridge Reservation locations chosen for long-term storage alternatives (Figure 2.3-5, p. 2-38) and for the disposition of plutonium (Figure 2.4-5, p. 2-81) are extremely poor choices; these sites should be removed from consideration. Other potential sites should be thoroughly analyzed to assure the public that proposed sites are suitable. | 2/01.04.00

3. Figure S-15, on page S-37, is missing the Electrometallurgical Treatment Alternative. | 3/16.00.00

Preferred Alternatives:

1. The statement on p. 2-258 is of great concern: "At the present time, the Department does not have sufficient information upon which to select a preferred alternative. The Final PEIS will contain a preferred alternative." If the DOE does not have sufficient information to make a decision, it is premature for the agency to issue a final PEIS or ROD. It is unreasonable to expect the public to make informed judgements, given that the comment period and information was insufficient, and that the agency was not able to identify preferred alternatives. | 4/08.03.00

2. The Upgrades at Multiple Sites Alternative for Long-Term Storage appears to be the most viable option. A more thorough analysis of potential environmental impacts at the Pantex Site on the Ogalalla acquifer, however, is essential. Consolidation of some of the material at the Nevada Test Site's P-Tunnel may be feasible, and may enable inclusion of the Rocky Flats material. | 5/08.03.01 | 6/08.03.01

3. The LOC is unequivocally opposed to the co-location of plutonium and highly enriched | 7/08.03.01

Anderson • Meigs • Rhea • Roane • City of Oak Ridge • Knox • Loudon

136 S. Illinois Avenue, Suite 208 • Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830 • Phone (615) 483-1333 • Fax (615) 482-6572

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08 02 00 Comment Number 1

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's concern about the integration of public meetings on draft EISs. The joint meetings on the Storage and Disposition PEIS, the Stockpile Stewardship and Management PEIS, and the Pantex EIS were held using an integrated format at the request of several organizations and citizen advisory boards. They stated that such meetings "would be more convenient and provide a less confusing format for public participants. It would avoid duplication, permit a much more efficient use of the public's time and allow a more-informed decision about the issues."

01 04 00 Comment Number 2

Consistent with NEPA, DOE evaluated ORR as well as a range of other reasonable sites for storage and disposition of weapons-usable fissile materials.

16 00 00 Comment Number 3

The Electrometallurgical Treatment Alternative was mistakenly left out of Figure S–15 in the Draft PEIS Summary. Based on comments received, the bar charts have been deleted for the Final PEIS Summary.

08 03 00 Comment Number 4

Between the issuance of the Draft and Final PEIS, DOE has obtained information from a variety of sources. One of those sources of information was the public. Public input was used to determine the Preferred Alternative for the Final PEIS.

08 03 01 Comment Number 5

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's support for the Upgrade Storage Alternative. Decisions on storage of weapons-usable fissile materials will be based upon environmental analyses, technical and economic studies, national policy considerations, and public input.

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uranium. The Oak Ridge site has considerable expertise in the handling of HEU; long-term storage should be performed, with appropriate safeguards and upgrades, at Y-12. Other sites with expertise in the handling of plutonium should continue with that work. The two functions should not be co-mingled at any site. 7/08.03.01 cont.

4. The selection of a preferred alternative for disposition of plutonium is problematic at this time; the DOE should seriously consider separating disposition from the process--as was done with the Disposition of HEU--in order to reach a timely decision on Long-Term Storage. 8/01.00.00

Discussion of Disposition Alternatives

1. No Action would, in effect, make long-term monitored storage indefinite. However, given current uncertainties associated with disposition alternatives, it may be more cost effective to continue safe, secure storage until more studied options are presented. The recently issued Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement includes provisions for temporary, on-site storage pending shipment off-site, long-term storage which allows for retrieval and monitoring, and permanent on-site disposal. The goal is to have plutonium removed from the site, beginning no later than 2010. The final PEIS should incorporate provisions of the Rocky Flats agreement. 9/08.03.01

2. The Deep Borehole alternative needs additional analysis on geological consequences; site characterization would have to precede a decision, as western locations would perform differently from sites in proximity to ground and surface water. Immobilized Disposition may be a viable alternative, but not enough is currently known for DOE to make a decision by late 1996. Further development is necessary. 10/08.03.00

3. Immobilization, especially Electrometallurgical Treatment, appears promising, but creates high-level waste. High-level waste has not yet been addressed (it was outside the scope of the Waste Management PEIS). Therefore, the option does not appear viable at this time. 11/05.03.08

4. Reactor options in the U.S. are not politically acceptable at this time. This situation may change, as global impacts of fossil fuel usage become better understood by the U.S. public. Reactor options are not currently economically viable either; the blending of HEU will provide domestic reactors with ample fuel in the near term. The DOE should continue exploring the CANDU Reactor, and possibly other foreign plutonium reactor options. 12/08.03.01

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Amy S. Fitzgerald

Amy S. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Executive Director

cc: Earl Leming, Manager, TDEC DOE-Oversight Division
Jim Hall, Manager, Oak Ridge Operations Office

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08 03 01 Comment Number 6

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's support for new missions at NTS. Decisions on storage and disposition of weapons-usable fissile materials will be based on environmental analyses, technical and economic studies, national policy considerations, and public input.

08 03 01 Comment Number 7

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's opposition to the Collocation Alternative. Decisions on storage of weapons-usable fissile materials will be based upon environmental analyses, technical and economic studies, national policy considerations, and public input.

01 00 00 Comment Number 8

Separating the storage decision from the disposition decision would not effectively meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. Planning for storage of the surplus Pu pending disposition is closely related to the planning for disposition itself, and could be affected by the technology(ies) selected to implement the Proposed Action. DOE is confident that a decision can be made on the disposition technology(ies) at the ROD, based on available data and environmental, technical, cost, schedule, and nonproliferation assessments completed to date.

08 03 01 Comment Number 9

Comment noted. The Final PEIS includes consideration of various agreements DOE has with external organizations, including the *Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement*. These agreements will be integrated in DOE's decisionmaking process, as appropriate, for fissile materials storage and disposition.

RESOLUTION NUMBER 96-3

WHEREAS, the Oak Ridge Reservation Local Oversight Committee (LOC), being comprised of elected officials and citizen representatives of Anderson, Knox, Loudon, Meigs, Rhea, and Roane Counties and the City of Oak Ridge, was created to provide local input into decisions affecting the continued operation of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Oak Ridge Reservation; and

WHEREAS, thousands of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons are slated to be retired within the next decade, resulting in excess weapons-grade fissile materials; and

WHEREAS, the improper management of fissile materials constitutes a threat to national and international security; and

WHEREAS, the DOE has issued the Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) which addresses activities that would result in the storage of weapons-usable plutonium and highly enriched uranium, and the disposition of surplus weapons-usable plutonium; and

WHEREAS, the DOE has simultaneously issued the Draft PEIS for Stockpile Stewardship and Management which recommends a technical program for maintaining the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile; and

WHEREAS, the DOE unduly restricted local government and public involvement on these important topics by issuing the documents at the same time and by holding concurrent public hearings in Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, the DOE has not developed a preferred alternative for either long-term storage or disposition of plutonium or long-term storage of highly enriched uranium; and

WHEREAS, employees at the Oak Ridge Y-12 facility are uniquely experienced in the safe and secure long-term storage of highly enriched uranium; and

WHEREAS, the proposed sites for co-location of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, and for disposition of plutonium on the Oak Ridge Reservation are technically unsuitable, and would conflict with economic diversification initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the National Academy of Sciences has concluded that none of the current options for long-term disposition of excess weapons plutonium can be expected to substantially reduce the inventories of excess plutonium from nuclear weapons for at least a decade; and

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08 03 00 Comment Number 10

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's support for additional research and development before decisions are made on the Borehole and Immobilization Alternatives.

05 03 08 Comment Number 11

As noted in Appendix H of the Draft PEIS, DOE is addressing how the immobilized forms would perform in a high-level waste repository compared to those forms currently being evaluated for disposal in a licensed repository.

08 03 01 Comment Number 12

The Department of Energy acknowledges the commentor's support for the CANDU Reactor Alternative. Decisions on the disposition of weapons-usable fissile materials will be based upon environmental analyses, technical and economic studies, national policy considerations, and public input.

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WHEREAS, *the citizens of LOC jurisdictions are entitled to assurances that the* environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with DOE's proposed alternatives are systematically evaluated; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of this Committee recommend that DOE *implement the Upgrade Alternative for the storage of highly enriched uranium and the* Upgrade at Multiple Sites Alternative for the long-term storage of plutonium, with some consolidation of materials where feasible; and be it further

RESOLVED that this Board of Directors urges the DOE to implement a modified No Action alternative for the disposition of plutonium, to include secure, above ground storage coupled with international inspections, until such time that more technically sound, economically viable, and politically acceptable options for long-term disposition *are identified; and be it further*

RESOLVED, that this resolution and attached comments shall be submitted to the U.S. Department of Energy for consideration in its preparation of the Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, and that the Executive Director send a copy of this resolution to the Tennessee Congressional delegation and other relevant federal and state officials.

This, the 2nd day of May 1996.

Edmund A. Nephew

Edmund A. Nephew, Chairman
Board of Directors
Oak Ridge Reservation Local Oversight Committee

Amy S. Fitzgerald

Amy S. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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