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Comments of West Richland Councilman, Ken Dobbin
April 11, 1996 Public Meeting on Storage and
Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials
Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

The Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) will need 800kg to one metric ton per year of weapons return plutonium to fuel the multi-missions it will be asked to perform. The FFTF will use a once-through fuel system that converts the plutonium to a spent fuel standard. It will not be recycled.

These FFTF missions include tritium for national security, medical isotopes for cell-directed cancer therapy and treatment of other major diseases, and commercial isotopes for agriculture and industry.

Advanced Nuclear and Medical Systems, called ANMS, is a consortium of companies negotiating with the Department of Energy to operate the FFTF to privately provide these missions for our Nation. ANMS has widespread Congressional and professional support for the privatization of the FFTF.

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ANTS has proposed an alliance with the Washington Public Power Supply System to jointly burn plutonium in the FFTF and WNP-2. That proposal provides synergism between the two facilities and will use the already constructed Fuels and Materials Examination Facility, called the FMEF, for plutonium fuel management.

These facilities take advantage of the national security issues of all those located on the Hanford site. The FFTF and FMEF already have state-of-the-art plutonium security systems. Eleven metric tons of the plutonium is already located on the Hanford site.

The FFTF creates a teaming opportunity with Russia. The United States wants Russia to use a once-through fuel system and not recycle. Russia wants to burn the plutonium in their fast reactors. The FFTF would demonstrate how to convert the plutonium to a spent fuel standard without recycle. They could be persuaded to do likewise.

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Converting weapons-usable plutonium to a spent fuel standard cooperatively with the Russians while providing medical isotopes is a win-win for both the Hanford area and the Nation.

I urge the Department of Energy to include the FFTF as a viable plutonium disposition option in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on the Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials. 1/01.02.00

Thank you,

Ken Dobbin
Councilman, City of West Richland, Washington
Member, American Nuclear Society Eastern Washington Section, Public Information Committee

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01 02 00 Comment Number 1

Liquid metal reactors were not included as alternatives for Pu disposition in the PEIS due to longer time and greater cost required to complete their construction. The FFTF, on the other hand, is an existing reactor and could be used for Pu burning. However, the limited capacity of the FFTF would limit the rate at which Pu could be dispositioned and require a much longer timeframe for disposition than that which could be achieved with the reactor options addressed in the PEIS.

The Department of Energy is in fact considering the FFTF for the TSR PEIS. The ROD (December 1995, 60 FR 63878) for the TSR PEIS addressed the FFTF for tritium production as follows:

> A private group has recently suggested that it purchase the FFTF from DOE and that DOE then contract with the private group to make tritium at that facility. In the [Tritium and Recycling Final] PEIS, the use of the FFTF was considered and dismissed as a long-term tritium supply option because the amount of tritium that it could produce would only meet a percentage of the steady state tritium requirements, and it was not reasonable to rely on operating the facility far beyond the end of its design life. However, DOE will evaluate the presentation made by the private group to determine whether the operation of the FFTF might be able to play any role in meeting future tritium requirements. If any changes are warranted to this ROD following that review, or further NEPA documentation is required, DOE will take appropriate action.

The Secretary of Energy has requested a review by the JASONS Panel (eminent academic scholars and scientists) as part of the evaluation of the tritium production with the FFTF. Should the outcome of this evaluation lead to a DOE proposal to restart the FFTF for tritium production, additional environmental analyses would be performed, as appropriate. If the FFTF were to be restarted, a substantial portion of the surplus Pu that would be used for MOX fuel could be used to fabricate FFTF driver fuel, thereby achieving the Spent Fuel Standard for Pu disposition through irradiation in the FFTF. Further description of the FFTF has been added to Appendix N of the PEIS.