Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Final PEIS

MILLS-REKDAL, SHEILA, ET AL.
PAGE 1 OF 3

April 22, 1996

To the United States Department of Energy
Office of Fissile Materials Disposition
P.O. Box 23786
Washington, D.C. 20026-3786

In a democracy the voice of all people should be listened to and considered in decision-making when policies so greatly affect grassroots America. Being concerned with the preservation of rural America, I am seriously troubled by the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement prepared for the Department of Energy regarding Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials.

Although I recognize the need to assure safe, secure, long-term storage and disposition of the significant quantities of surplus fissile materials, which include plutonium (Pu) and highly enriched uranium (HEU), I believe this document fails to address very critical ~~human issues~~ life issues. 1/09.00.04

In reviewing the alternative for the possible future of Pantex, it becomes very evident that all of the nation's weapons-usable plutonium not in active warheads would be stored at Pantex - 20,000 pits, plus much of the plutonium now at Rocky Flats Plant, Colorado; Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; Savannah River, South Carolina; and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Before 1989, plutonium pits were never stored at Pantex. However, with the closing of Rocky Flats, Pantex is the interim storage site for at least 12,000 pits. Now this document proposes not only storing plutonium pits, but other more undesirable forms of plutonium.

Once stored at Pantex, this site is being considered for a plutonium pit disassembly/conversion facility to cut the pits and process them into metal or oxide; a plutonium conversion facility to process other types of Pu; a facility to mix plutonium with uranium to make mixed oxide fuel (MOX); nuclear power reactors to use the MOX fuel, plus storage of the spent fuel from the reactors, as well as storage of all the mixed waste generated from all these processes. It is processing of plutonium which has contributed to the national environmental degradation which saddles our nation with a $300 billion dollar cleanup problem.

This document states there would be few negative effects from doing any and all of those activities at Pantex. What the document fails to address is the impact on the good reputation of our agricultural products. Agriculture is the one industry which has consistently sustained the Panhandle for decades.

The food chain begins here in the prime agricultural farmland of the Texas Panhandle. The meat products and cereal grains produced here are shipped throughout the world; 25% of the Nation's beef is produced and processed here. The quality and wholesomeness of these products would be placed in jeopardy with the siting of these processes at Pantex. Without production agriculture this part of Texas would cease to exist. When one of every four people is employed in an agriculture related job, the loss to this High Plains trade area of those jobs would create untold problems.

A second issue the document fails to address is the location of Pantex above the Ogallala aquifer, the source of groundwater for the plains of Texas and seven other Midwestern food producing states. With high explosives, chemicals, solvents, and radionuclides, Pantex has contaminated the fine grained layer of water bearing sands above the Ogallala aquifer. With the downward migration of the recharging waters, how long will it be before the Ogallala itself will be contaminated? 1/09.00.04 cont.

Water and agriculture are the real wealth of the Texas Panhandle. Without them there would be no "Texas Panhandle." We cannot stand by and allow these resources to be compromised in any way. Food is the most important commodity we have - it must be protected.

All of us even a & your children, etc.

Not all alternatives for siting these processes at other sites were analyzed in this document. Before choosing a preferred alternative, other options need to be considered. The siting of these missions at Pantex seems shortsighted and ill-conceived. The environmental impact in conjunction with these processes has the potential to devastate this food producing region.

The Panhandle is too valuable to be used as a plutonium storage, processing and waste facility. 2/08.03.01

Sincerely,

Sheila Mills-Rekdal
Randy Rekdal
Andrew Rekdal
Ellen D Mills

M-078

09 00 04 Comment Number 1

Radiological and chemical releases resulting from the Proposed Actions for normal operations would be within Federal and State regulatory limits. Therefore, the quality of agriculture in the Panhandle would not be affected, and agriculture-related employment in the Panhandle region would remain unaffected.

Also, current and future operations at Pantex are not expected to affect the water quality of the Ogallala Aquifer. However, since this aquifer is being depleted (that is, the current withdrawal is exceeding the current recharge), and since Pantex operations contribute to the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, impacts to the aquifer were analyzed in the PEIS.

Current and future operations at Pantex are not expected to impact the soil used for agriculture and farming in the Pantex region. All activities will be limited to Pantex and any impacts to the surrounding areas are within Federal, State, and local regulatory limits.

The PEIS includes analyses on the radiological and chemical impacts to workers and the public from both normal operations and accidents. These analyses also address the effects to local plant and animal resources as well as the effects on prime farmland.

08 03 01 Comment Number 2

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

4/29/96

To Whom it May Concern;

Question: Who derived the most monetary profit from Rocky Flats?

Question: Who is paying for clean up?

Basic premise learned from parents: You make a mess you clean it up; even if it means no dinner.

That is why it is so very important that this decision be made with the utmost caution and foresight. Projects of this magnitude have no place in the small ball park of political favertism, cronyism, or any other "-ism". This is too deadly a subject to be used as a political football.

This is not just a question of "not in my back yard." It is a question of "where can this facility be located that it will have the least impact on the environment - socially & ecologically. It seems the Manzano Site at Kirtland AFB would be a much safer site - security wise as well as it is not in an agricultural zone of the same proportion. It

(over)

3/01.04.00

M-078

01 04 00 **Comment Number 3**

Combined storage of pits and non-pit Pu at the Manzano WSA was originally eliminated as a reasonable alternative in the Draft PEIS. After considering separate storage of pits from non-pit Pu, the option to store these pits at the Manzano WSA no longer appears unreasonable. The Manzano WSA was evaluated in the Pantex EIS and Section 2.1.3 of the Final PEIS. The Final PEIS was revised to clarify the consideration of the Manzano WSA for combined storage, and a description of the WSA was included in Appendix P.

MILLS-REKDAL, SHEILA, ET AL.
PAGE 3 OF 3

appears to have been a storage facility with capability to store 30,000 pits. It would certainly seem more practical than Larson county. 3/01.04.00 cont.

I sincerely hope reason pervails in this matter & that political money grubbing is side tracked for the practical plutonium train to find it's home station.

Sincerely,

We are the Caretakers of this Planet!

M-078