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COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PEIS FOR STORAGE AND DISPOSITION OF FISSILE MATERIALS

As with several of the Environmental Impact Statements now underway, critical comment on alternatives is of questionable value because the Department of Energy's stated intention is to select a "hybrid alternative." To do a complete evaluation of any proposed action, the commenter must have complete and clearly defined details, and know that the action, as stated, is a viable option. At a public meeting, held to discuss this document, workshop participants were told that none of the proposed actions was a "preferred alternative" and that the final Record of Decision could include elements chosen from several alternatives. Such a plan puts public participants at a serious disadvantage and weakens the effectiveness of their involvement. The result is declining or further fortified distrust toward the federal agency and its decisions - especially in matters where public health and safety are, or should be the highest priority. 1/08.03.01

The alternatives in the DPEIS are in two categories - long-term storage and plutonium disposition.

Long-Term Storage

Long-term storage is defined as fifty years. At the public meeting in Las Vegas the "no action" and upgrade alternatives were discussed in a facilitated workshop. The DOE presenter said, in response to questions, that the "no action" proposal would leave plutonium where it is and not include improvements and repairs necessary to bring facilities into a safe condition. Knowing that the existing facilities have deficiencies and problems that threaten the health and safety of workers and nearby communities, this alternative is unacceptable and could be considered a "straw man." 2/01.04.00

M-010

08 03 01 Comment Number 1

Between the issuance of the Draft and the Final PEIS, DOE has obtained information from a variety of sources, including the public. Public input was used to determine the Preferred Alternative and will be considered in DOE's decisionmaking process. DOE also conducted cost, schedule, and nonproliferation studies and reviewed various studies with the public before determining the Preferred Alternative.

01 04 00 Comment Number 2

Under the No Action Alternative, environmental and safety upgrades and maintenance at existing storage facilities would be done, as required, to ensure safe operation for the balance of the facility's useful life. The No Action Alternative is required pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations implementing NEPA.

NEVADA NUCLEAR WASTE TASK FORCE, INC., LAS VEGAS, NV, JUDY TREICHEL
PAGE 2 OF 3

The second alternative - upgrade existing facilities - would clearly be the preference of this commenter, except that the DOE presenter said that it would include partial consolidation. "Partial consolidation" is a vague term and lends itself to the "hybrid decision" that would not be a subject to thorough evaluation by the public. 3/08.02.00

Neither of the two consolidation alternatives should be selected. There is no proven, safe method for long-term nuclear material storage. Every site is now, and will be, experimental with unforeseen situations and trial and error style responses. Consolidation, therefore does not ensure safety or environmental protection. It also has a transportation component that increases risks to a far greater number of people. 4/02.03.08 5/10.00.00

Plutonium Disposition

Three technology alternatives are discussed for Plutonium Disposition. Two of them are not disposal technologies. Immobilization and reactor use are simply a change in the waste form. Currently, it is assumed that the resulting forms suggested will go to a repository for disposal. Because the existence or availability of a repository is not certain (and perhaps not likely), these two alternatives are incorrectly defined. 6/11.01.08

The third choice - deep borehole - is another possible "straw man." It is a concept with no proven merit and there is no site with any chance of public approval. 7/04.00.00

Clearly, the only option worth considering is long-term storage alone - it is the reality of the situation. Meanwhile alternatives for disposal should continue to be researched. Given the status of the knowledge about alternatives, a disposal decision is premature. 8/02.00.08 9/08.03.00

The preparation of an EIS is not simply a troublesome box to be checked off in the federal process. Likewise, the key element of it - public participation is not an unimportant detail. Of all the entities, (or in DOE jargon - "stakeholders") involved, the public is the only lasting one. While federal agencies come and go and congressional decisions change continually, the public remains. The citizens pay the costs, live with the risks and ultimately will be either adequately protected or the victims of irreversible consequences. 10/08.02.00

Submitted by,

Judy Treichel
Executive Director

M-010

08 02 00 Comment Number 3

The PEIS provides specific information on the partial consolidation portion by analyzing the impacts of moving all of the surplus material from RFETS and LANL to one or more of the six sites being analyzed. Therefore, if all of the materials were sent to more than one site, environmental impacts at any of the sites receiving material would be less.

02 03 08 Comment Number 4

Comment noted.

10 00 00 Comment Number 5

The human health risks of material transportations associated with the proposed Pu storage and disposition alternatives are evaluated and presented in Section 4.4 of this PEIS. The more detailed description of the methodology and supporting data for the analysis is presented in Appendix G. Transportation of radioactive materials between sites includes health risks for both normal operations and accident conditions to the public and workers.

11 01 08 Comment Number 6

Comment noted. However, the goal is to convert the material into a form that meets the Spent Fuel Standard, which is not dependent on the availability of a repository.

04 00 00 Comment Number 7

Since no sites have been selected for a deep borehole and there are no existing deep boreholes utilized for waste disposal, DOE chose to analyze a generic borehole site for environmental impacts. The other disposition technologies require facilities which are similar to existing facilities in the United States. Therefore, DOE chose to pick representative sites for the other disposition alternatives.

02 00 08 **Comment Number 8**

Comment noted.

08 03 00 **Comment Number 9**

The Department of Energy is following a schedule that allows the careful consideration of all relevant information, such as this PEIS, technical and economic studies, and commentors' input. Then good, sustainable decisions can be made.

08 02 00 **Comment Number 10**

Comment noted. DOE is committed to full implementation of NEPA that includes public participation at all levels. All comments submitted receive full consideration.