

Public Comments For:
GOVERNOR'S NUCLEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
Meeting Date: June 13, 2013

Submitted by:
Tom Clements



**Comments by Tom Clements to South Carolina Governor's Nuclear Advisory Council
June 13, 2013**

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to make a few brief comments on two issues of concern to the Nuclear Advisory Council and the people of South Carolina.

1. DOE FY13 & FY 14 Budget and Liquid Waste Operations Impacts

Given the importance of the management of high-level waste (HLW) at the Savannah River Site (SRS), it is imperative that the Department of Energy fully fund HLW operations at SRS. Pressure on funding for SRS management comes from several sources, including a DOE focus on the Hanford high-level waste situation and continuation of funding of the plutonium fuel (MOX) program at exorbitant, unsustainable levels.

As HLW at SRS poses a risk to the environment of the Savannah River region, the management of that waste needs to continue at a rapid pace. A significant reduction in funds, which would slow down processing of waste out of the aging tanks, is simply not acceptable.

Given that it appears that DOE is now set to back away from commitments made with the State of South Carolina and the Environmental Protection Agency, it is appropriate that the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) explain to DOE that a failure to meet milestones will result in the levying of penalties by DHEC. DHEC has significant leverage over DOE in its ability to levy fines and this right must not be surrendered and the timelines for tank closure shifted into the future.

2. Opposition Grows to Spent Fuel Storage at Savannah River Site

At the Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board (SRS CAB) meeting on June 20-21 in North Augusta, the CAB heard from eight public interest groups from South Carolina and Georgia and a number of individuals in support of the draft CAB recommendation against bringing spent fuel to the site. Additionally, emails and letters numbering in the hundreds have been sent to the CAB in opposition to spent fuel storage at SRS.

This outpouring of public sentiment against spent fuel storage and reprocessing at SRS is significant as it is building the wide base of not giving "consent" to "consolidated spent fuel storage" at SRS. Congress is soon to introduce legislations dealing with the path forward with spent fuel and DOE high-level waste and the idea of "consent" by the public to such facilities will likely be discussed in that legislation.

I and many others commented on draft legislation presented for comment by Senator Ron Wyden and other senators. In my comments, I pointed out that folks here in South Carolina are already defining what constitutes "consent" and that it is clear that the public is not in the mood to give such consent to a nuclear dump. The attempts by special interest groups claiming to speak for the community in supporting spent fuel storage and reprocessing have been drowned out by public sentiment. I predict that the voice of "non-consent" will only grow as Congress is educated about the fact that the "consent" process is being defined on the ground right here in South Carolina.

SRS recommendation postponed

Citizens Advisory Board presents draft advising DOE not to accept spent nuclear material, decides to wait until later date to formally consider approving the proposal

BY MICHAEL ULMER
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The possible storage of spent nuclear fuel at Savannah River Site was left on the table Monday by the SRS Citizens Advisory Board, a group designed to offer advice to the Department of Energy, which owns SRS.

Board members presented a draft recommendation advising DOE not to accept the nuclear material, but decided to wait until a later date to formally consider approving the proposal.

The choice to defer to a later meeting was met with controversy by board members and those in attendance at Monday's session.

Rose Hayes offered the recommendation to the board, explaining that she believed

Waste Management Committee Chairman Ed Burke requested a decision take place during Monday's meeting or another session set for today.

Burke was not in attendance on Monday, but was scheduled to present a draft recommendation during the board's meeting.

However, fellow board member Don Bridges indicated that Burke wanted to delay consideration of the proposal in order to examine every angle.

Terry Spears, a DOE representative, agreed with Bridges, noting it was best to bring the proposal forward at a future meeting.

He said it was his understanding that the proposal was brought forward Monday only for discussion and not for a vote.

After discussion, the board

decided it will likely take up the issue during a meeting in September or October.

More than a dozen community residents and representatives from nonprofit organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Conservation Voters of South Carolina offered support for the board's recommendation to DOE.

Hayes said she hoped the board would eventually decide to recommend that DOE not consider using SRS as a storage site for spent nuclear waste.

She noted that SRS has been viewed by policy makers as a potential replacement for Yucca Mountain, an idea she believes should be scrapped.

Yucca Mountain, located in Nevada, was to be a repository for spent nuclear fuel and other radioactive waste until President Barack Obama stopped

funding in 2010.

According to Patrick McGuire, a representative of DOE, spent nuclear fuel is fuel that has been removed from a reactor. Currently, SRS has a large inventory of research reactor spent nuclear fuel, McGuire said, but no commercial material such as that discussed during Monday's meeting.

In light of the decision to cease funding for Yucca Mountain, Obama created the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, which recommended the nation find a suitable storage facility for multi-decade use.

The commission's proposed date to open a repository is 2048, according to the draft recommendation presented during Monday's meeting.

• **Michael Ulmer** covers the



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL ULMER

Wilkins Byrd, an Aiken resident, was one of several community members on Monday voicing support to deny spent nuclear fuel storage at SRS.

county government beat for the *Aiken Standard* and has been with the newspaper since March 2013. He is a native of North Augusta and major in political science at the University of South Carolina.

SAVANNAH RIVER SITE

Group considers opposing storage

By Rob Pavay
Staff Writer

Savannah River Site's Citizens Advisory Board is considering a draft recommendation opposing any future use of the site for storing spent nuclear fuel.

"The CAB would like to go on record saying that it is opposed to the use of SRS or any portion of the site for the storage of commercial nuclear wastes," said the draft, shared Monday by the board's waste management committee.

The draft is only at the discussion stage. A full vote on the position would be scheduled this summer.

Though there is no formal plan to bring spent commercial reactor fuel to the site, the demise of the government's Yucca Mountain project in Nevada left the nation without options for the 75,000 tons of radioactive spent fuel accumulating at commercial nuclear plants.

A blue-ribbon committee formed to explore alternatives suggested "consolidated, interim storage" of the dangerous material until a better solution can be found.

The committee did not make site recommendations, but officials say it would be difficult to explore those options without considering SRS, which has nuclear waste experience and infrastructure, and a location in

the South, which has many commercial nuclear plants.

In March, consultants hired by the SRS Community Reuse Organization - an economic development consortium - unveiled a \$200,000 study that concluded the site's H Canyon processing facilities and long history of nuclear involvement make it a suitable site for such storage.

Though the project would bring money and jobs, it would require broad community support to be successful, the study said.

The draft recommendation notes that the advisory board is not opposed to commercial nuclear power generation but fears that a new effort to create a permanent repository "is generations away" and could leave material stranded indefinitely in South Carolina.

Representatives from Friends of the Earth, the South Carolina Chapter of the Sierra Club and other groups have said they will oppose any plan to import spent fuel into the state.

"It is clear that there is a growing momentum in South Carolina against giving consent to a consolidated storage facility for highly radioactive spent fuel at SRS or any other site," said Tom Clements, the Southeastern nuclear campaign coordinator with Friends of the Earth.

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