

SUMMARY INITIAL COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT REPORT OF JULY 29, 2011
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September 13, 2011 - to the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future

The draft report has several serious omissions:

1. It omits the lack of trust and confidence in some nuclear utilities because of their efforts to develop consolidated interim storage facilities in Utah and New Mexico.
2. It omits the lessons of two important nuclear facilities at Fernald in Ohio and Rocky Flats in Colorado where "consent-based" disposal was accomplished.
3. It omits addressing why consent has not occurred around U.S. nuclear power plants.
4. It omits addressing many Western realities regarding uranium mining and milling facilities, nuclear weapons testing, and nuclear weapons sites. People in the West have borne a disproportionate burden of the nuclear legacy of waste; contamination of air, water, and soil; and multi-generational health effects.

Recommendations for the final report

- Building trust and confidence in the federal government and nuclear utilities is essential for the nation's nuclear waste program.
- Additional investigation is needed about U.S. "consent-based" nuclear waste disposal sites, including Fernald and Rocky Flats.
- Additional investigation is needed about whether a "consent-based" approach could result in long-term storage and disposal facilities at or near U.S. nuclear power plants.
- It will take decades to open permanent disposal facilities (and any off-site consolidated storage facilities). This reality and the continuing generation of spent fuel mean that interim storage of substantial quantities of SNF at operating reactors will continue for as long as they operate and for years more.
- Nuclear utilities should implement spent fuel pool storage improvements and HOSS, and the NRC should issue regulations for those safety and security improvements.
- New reactors should provide on-site storage for the total amount of spent fuel that they will generate during their operating lifetime, appropriate for many decades.
- The federal government and nuclear utilities should not develop off-site consolidated interim storage facilities. Instead, HOSS facilities should be implemented.
- A broad-based process should begin to revise nuclear utility contracts to address liability and costs and other long-term on-site storage issues.
- EPA should develop generic disposal standards through a robust, transparent public process.
- EPA and NRC should coordinate closely in the development of new repository performance and compliance regulations.
- Disposal site selection should not proceed until WIPP's operational and decommissioning phases are completed.
- Site selection should first focus in the eastern states.
- Defense high-level waste should be removed from tanks, solidified, and placed in robust on-site storage appropriate for many decades to a century.
- Communities and states with long-term HLW storage should be engaged in a broad-based process to determine what compensation, monitoring, and safety and security requirements are needed to maintain long-term storage or disposal.