

Let your voice be heard on nuke waste

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 22 June 2018 03:38

Editor,

With the prospect of having high-level radioactive nuclear waste coming to New Mexico from over 100 nuclear reactors and other potential sources located all over the United States, residents of McKinley County and Gallup have an opportunity to weigh in on the decisions that will determine this outcome.

The proposed transportation routes are on Interstate 40 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad which go through the Heart of Gallup. According to the U.S. Nuclear Regulation Commission (NRC) and Holtec International, the company that wants to build the waste site, the proposed Consolidated Interim Storage Facility (CISF) will be located in Lea County in Southeastern New Mexico, approximately 35 miles Northeast of Carlsbad and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) is also located.

On February 14, 2014 a drum containing radioactive waste blew up in an underground nuclear dump in New Mexico which was one of the costliest nuclear accidents in U.S. history with the long-term cost of the mishap that could top \$2 billion. Thousands of tons of radioactive waste that were headed for the dump were backed up in other states that had shipments ready for transport. It was noted that the WIPP incident was caused by cat litter which is used to soak up liquid nuclear waste.

Even with the rise of solar power as a popular alternative for energy there are still 61 commercially operating nuclear power plants with 99 nuclear reactors in 30 U.S. states. The newest nuclear reactor to enter service, Watts Bar Unit 2 with 1,150 MW net summer electricity generating capacity, began commercial operation in October 2016. Two new nuclear reactors are actively under construction: Vogtle Units 3 and 4 in Georgia.

Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque (NM), houses a storage facility hosting over 2,000 nuclear weapons, the largest in the world. On the Navajo Nation, there are over 1,000 abandoned uranium mines sites with many waste sites exposed and unreclaimed. Ironically, there are local mines that have been designated for reactivation in the Church Rock and Crownpoint (NM) regions so, along with other (non-)active regional mines, the waste will be plentiful for a long time to come.

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The Environmental Review Schedule begin with the Notice of Intent to Conduct Scoping and Prepare Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on March 30, 2018. A Public Scoping meeting was held in Gallup on May 21 with over 100 individuals attending and giving their comments that will be used for the Final EIS by the NRC. 37 attendees spoke with only one speaker in favor of the proposed transportation route.

The public can still submit their comments on the proposed transportation routes and any other concerns they may have about Holtec International's Transportation proposal and HI-STORE Consolidated Interim Storage Facility Project, Docket ID NRC-2018-0052, Deadline: July 30, 2018, to: <https://www.nrc.gov/waste/spent-fuel-storage/cis/holtec-international.html>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jill Caverly, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington DC, 20555-0001; telephone: 301-415-7674; e-mail: .

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