

July 28, 2021

For immediate release

Contact: Karen Hadden, Executive Director, Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) Coalition, karenhadden@gmail.com Former Texas State Rep. Lon Burnam, Public Citizen's Texas Office, lonburnam@gmail.com

MEDIA ADVISORY -- U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION LICENSING DECISION COMING SOON

Texas High-Level Radioactive Waste "Interim Storage" Would Hold Nearly Half the Nation's Commercial Irradiated Nuclear Fuel; High-Risk Train, Truck, and/or Barge Shipments Would Pass Through Most States

ANDREWS, TX, July 26, 2021--The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) may complete a Safety Analysis and the Final Environmental Impact Statement by the end of this month for an application to store deadly nuclear reactor waste in Texas. Despite strong local, state, and national opposition, the NRC could license the facility, possibly within the following 30 days.

The proposal by Interim Storage Partners (ISP - a joint venture of Waste Control Specialists (WCS) and ORANO) would allow importation and storage of 40,000 metric tons of high-level radioactive waste from nuclear reactors across the country. The deadly waste could travel through major cities and ports, headed to Andrews County in West Texas. It would be stored above-ground for decades at WCS' existing low-level radioactive waste site. Another company, Holtec International, seeks an NRC license to store 173,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel in nearby New Mexico.

If high-level radioactive waste facilities are approved, unprecedented mass transport of spent nuclear fuel could occur, in a process lasting decades. A single rail car could carry as much plutonium as was in the bomb dropped on Nagasaki. The capacity of the two sites exceeds the entire amount of existing U.S. nuclear reactor waste, as well as all that's projected to be produced in the future. A State of Nevada study found that clean-up of radioactive contamination from an accident could soar as high as \$9.5 billion for just one square mile of a downtown area.

Importing high-level radioactive waste to either site would risk the health and safety of our children and future generations. There would be increased risks of transportation accidents, leaks or sabotage along the nation's transportation routes. Exposure to radioactivity can cause various cancers, genetic damage, birth defects and even death.

Strong Bipartisan Opposition: Texans do NOT consent to High-Level Radioactive Waste

Governor Abbott has expressed strong opposition to high-level radioactive waste storage. ([Governor's letter](#)) Resolutions opposing the dangerous plans have been passed by 5 Texas Counties and 3 cities, representing 5.4 million Texans. ([Dallas County Resolution](#))

Andrews County, the potential site for ISP's high-level radioactive waste storage, voted unanimously to oppose the plans and will soon finalize their resolution. ([cbs7.andrews-co-commissioners-vote](#))

This week sixty-three Texas Legislators wrote to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in opposition to high-level radioactive waste storage, and cc'd Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of the Department of Energy, an agency that is updating "consent-based siting" criteria. ([Texas legislator letter](#)) The letter was circulated among Democratic Texas Legislators and sent by Sen. Jose Menendez. Some Democratic Legislators will send their own letters and a similar letter is being circulated among Texas Republican Legislators.

Legal action is also underway. Parties opposing WCS licensing include SEED Coalition, Sierra Club, Beyond Nuclear, Leona Morgan, Fasken Oil and a coalition of oil royalty owners. Most of these cases are now on appeal at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

"Opponents will continue to fight high-level radioactive waste storage in Texas and New Mexico, even if the NRC licenses one or both facilities," said Karen Hadden, Executive Director of the Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. A Monitored Retrievable Storage facility for high-level radioactive waste was to be run by Private Fuel Storage at the Skull Valley Goshutes Indian Reservation in Tooele County, Utah. It was licensed by the NRC, but never constructed.

In Texas, South Texas Project (STP) 3 & 4 nuclear reactor units were licensed but were never built. Opponents claimed that nuclear construction costs would be too high, especially with wind and solar energy becoming readily available and increasingly affordable. These claims turned out to be true and became key factors in the cancellation of that project.

Contacts - National Organizations:

Diane D'Arrigo, Nuclear Information & Resource Service (NIRS, dianed@nirs.org)

Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear, kevin@beyondnuclear.org