

WM Symposia WM2010 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 14 – Yucca Mountain Project, What’s Next? Plus and International Update on National Strategies for SNF Management and Disposal

Panel Reporter – Robert Edmonds, AREVA Federal Services, LLC

This session was well attended with over 150 people at the start. Due to the very recent filing by DOE to withdraw their own License Application and statements by DOE and some Members of Congress that they intended to terminate the project, while other members of Congress and many stakeholder groups strongly opposed the move, the session was both timely and provocative. The Session was divided into 4 Panels as follows:

Panel 1: Current status of the repository program including activities in Congress, the Administration, DOE-RW and NRC

Panelists were:

- Eric Knox, *URS Corp.*, Co-Chair
- Paul Dickman, *US NRC*, Co-Chair
- Darrell Lacy, *Nye County, NV*

Eric Knox, who was with OCRWM Senior Staff until 2009, gave an update on the status of the Yucca Mountain Project, particularly the budget and staff reductions at the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM).

Paul Dickman gave the status of the OCRWM License Application and the very recent motion to withdraw the Application, as well as the potential implications of withdrawal on the Nuclear Waste Confidence Ruling.

Darrell Lacy gave Nye County’s position on License Application Withdrawal, saying the County preferred to see the licensing process go forward uninterrupted to conclusion so that the stakeholders would know if the site could be deemed acceptable.

Sample questions:

1. Mr. Knox was asked what could be done to prevent DOE from laying off all of the experienced people and risking losing technical competence and knowledge forever? His answer was that the only way to do so is to have congress reject DOE request to reprogram OCRWM funds and instruct DOE to keep the staff pending decision on License Application withdrawal.

Panel 2: Implications for utilities and DOE defense waste sites of withdrawing the Yucca Mountain license application (LA) or de-funding the program

Panelists were:

- Ed Davis, *President of Pegasus, and Director of Sustainable Nuclear Task Force*
- John Parkyn, *Chairman and CEO, Private Fuel Storage, LLC*

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Ed Davis addressed the four major concerns with DOE LA withdrawal at this time from his point of view. These were:

- No technical evidence that Yucca Mountain is unacceptable
- No review of the impacts (on utilities or DOE sites) has been conducted
- No interactions by DOE with any affected communities or stakeholders prior to the decision to withdraw
- No “plan B”

John Parkyn discussed the implications of LA withdrawal on decommissioned nuclear power plant sites, on currently operating plants, new plants, and the relicensing of SNF storage facilities. He stressed the sense of urgency for DOE to develop a plan for removing SNF from decommissioned sites. The Private Fuel Storage (PFS) Project would have solved this problem, but it was halted by the Governor of Utah after the project received its NRC license.

Panel 3: Alternatives to a repository, including federal storage and recycling

Panelists were:

- Andrew Orell, *Sandia National Lab, Director of Nuclear Energy Programs*
- Mark Peters, *Deputy Associate Lab Director, Argonne National Lab*
- Rod McCullum, *Nuclear Energy Institute* (substituting for Dan Stout)
- George Dials, *Executive VP, B&W Technical Services*
- Frank Parker, *Distinguished Professor of Environmental Engineering, Vanderbilt University*

Andrew Orell discussed the process required to site and open a repository. He noted that “having a volunteer site and community is not enough, you need a volunteer state”.

Mark Peters described the R&D programs currently underway at DOE and National Labs which are looking at recycling and reactor options which would allow the US to close the nuclear fuel cycle.

Rod McCullum described a model for managing the back end of the fuel cycle via a private-public partnership called “FedCorp”.

George Dials, who has managed both the WIPP project and the Yucca Mountain Project, discussed the need for principled leadership from both government and industry in order to accomplish the task of closing the fuel cycle. He proposed the following:

- Turn YMP into an MRS
- Make WIPP into the Repository by taking the vitrified defense waste to WIPP
- Recycle

Frank Parker reflected on more than 30 years of working on both interim storage and repository studies. He noted that the “one million year standard” is meaningless and impossible to do. He suggested that the US should only attempt to set realistic assumptions for the next 3-5 generations.

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Questions:

1. Ed Helminski commented that in his opinion NEI should not be a part of any FedCorp. He also noted that the Utah Governor told the PFS project leaders that he did not want it in his state, but the project went forward anyway. Ed proposed that all 11 of the sites studied for Monitored Retrieval Storage should be developed. Finally, he said that a “NASA-type” organization is needed to close the back end.
2. Bob Williams noted that industry must review how a FedCorp would be different from COMSAT or TVA.

Panel 4: International programs which offer lessons learned and alternative approaches

Panelists were:

- Enrique Biurrun, *Head of International Cooperation Department, DMB TECHNOLOGY GmbH, Germany*
- Jean-Michel Bosgiraud, *Engineer, ANDRA, France*
- Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm, *Vice Chair, Swedish National Council for Nuclear Waste*

Each of these speakers described the status of repository programs currently underway in their countries.