

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC ISSUES DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR DECOMMISSIONING OF CONTAMINATED SITE IN
PENNSYLVANIA

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has published for public comment a draft environmental impact statement concerning the proposed decommissioning of the Shallow Land Disposal Area, owned and maintained at Parks Township, Pennsylvania, by Babcock & Wilcox (B&W) under an NRC license.

The NRC will offer an opportunity for a hearing to persons whose interests may be affected by the decommissioning actions.

This site was used from 1961 until 1970 for disposal of hazardous and low-level wastes from a nuclear fuel fabrication facility in nearby Apollo, Pennsylvania. (Such disposal was permitted by Federal regulations in effect at the time.) Radioactive materials buried in trenches on site include natural uranium, enriched and depleted uranium, and lesser quantities of thorium, americium and plutonium. For the past several years, the area has been included in the NRC Site Decommissioning Management Plan list of about 50 contaminated sites which require special oversight to ensure safe and timely decommissioning.

The draft environmental impact statement evaluates both radiological and non-radiological impacts associated with B&W's proposed decommissioning approach (stabilization in place), and those of four alternatives: no action, disposal off site, stabilization on site, and modified stabilization in place. Impacts are assessed for socioeconomics, land use, cultural resources, geology, air quality, water quality, human health, biological resources, and wetlands.

B&W proposes to stabilize the wastes on site by installing an engineered cover and hydrologic barrier systems surrounding the trenches to provide groundwater protection. An underlying coal mine would be stabilized by injecting grout into the mine

voids to prevent settlement. Access controls would be required in perpetuity to prevent human intrusion into the wastes.

The NRC staff's preliminary conclusion, presented in the draft statement, is that modified stabilization in place, an NRC-developed alternative, would protect public health and the environment at less cost than other alternatives. This approach would include access controls and backfilling of the coal mine, but would not require capping the waste or building of engineered barriers. None of the alternatives are expected to cause an off-site radiation dose or other significant off-site impacts.

Persons interested in commenting on the draft environmental impact statement (designated as NUREG-1613) may obtain a single copy by writing to: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Printing and Graphics Branch, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Written comments should be mailed to David L. Meyer, Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Mail Stop T-6D59, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. Comments may be delivered to 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, between 7:30 a. m. and 4:15 p.m. on Federal workdays.

Comments are due by December 15, but NRC will grant reasonable requests for extensions of up to 15 days.

In addition to publishing the draft statement for comment, NRC plans to hold a public meeting next month in Parks Township to discuss the report. The date, time and location will be announced shortly.

A copy of the draft environmental impact statement is being made available for public inspection at the NRC local public document room in the Apollo Memorial Library, 219 North Pennsylvania Avenue, Apollo, Pennsylvania 15613. The telephone number is 412/478-4214.

Decommissioning associated with B&W's former operating facility at Parks Township is covered by a separate license and is not within the scope of this environmental impact statement.

NRC will publish in the Federal Register soon a notice that will include procedures that should be followed by persons who wish to file a petition with the NRC for a hearing on the decommissioning alternatives. The notice will also specify the date by which petitions must be filed.

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