



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative
DATE: April 27, 1987
SUBJECT: Newspaper Article

Please find enclosed more information that appeared in
our local newspaper that is of interest.

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PDR WASTE
WM-11 PDR

WM Record File

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WM Project 11

Docket No. 11

PDR 11

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'Nobody wants' nuke dump

By Chris Chrystal
United Press International

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The nation desperately needs a high-level nuclear waste dump, but plans to build one are stagnating because "nobody wants it," Energy Secretary John Herrington complained to a Senate panel Thursday.

His agency is under the gun of federal law to provide disposal for dangerous radioactive waste from more than 100 nuclear plants starting in 1998, but faces delays because of the national controversy over where to dump the nuclear garbage.

"We're not complying with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, and that's distressing," Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., told fellow members of the Environment and Public Works subcommittee on nuclear regulation at a hearing.

Current plans call for opening the first high-level dump in the year 2003 in either Washington state, Nevada, or Texas, then building a second dump in the East around the year 2025.

Westerners, as Simpson pointed out, feel it's unsafe "to generate waste in the East and haul it to the West." Also, they don't believe it's fair they should be stuck with the only dump, if a second one isn't built.

Easterners also shun a dump and their representatives tend to favor delays in planning a second repository.

"We desperately need a nuclear waste facility in the United States and the truth is, nobody wants in. The program is stagnating," Herrington said.

Asked whether he supports legislation introduced by Sens. Bennett Johnston, D-La., and James McClure, R-Idaho, offering \$100 million a year "bait" to the state or Indian tribe willing to accept the dump, Herrington said he is reserving judgment, but added, "I think something like that is going to be necessary."

Meanwhile, to comply with the law, the Energy Department is planning a temporary facility at Clinch River near Oak Ridge, Tenn., to begin collecting, cooling, packaging and storing the waste in 1998.

Objections to the proposal center around fears a so-called temporary facility would be expanded to

hold more and more waste while the government puts off building the dumps.

All three proposals have met adamant opposition in Congress among senators and House members from the affected areas.

"Nevada doesn't want it," Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., told the subcommittee. "It's inconceivable to put it next to where nuclear bombs go off."

Sen. Jim Sasser, D-Tenn., objecting to a facility in Tennessee, said congressional auditors have concluded the Energy Department hasn't given Congress enough information to decide whether it's necessary.

"We're being asked to buy a pig in a poke," Sasser said. "The need and feasibility ... have not been proven."

Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine, whose state has two possible sites for the second dump, pledged to "do everything in my power to stop the DOE from resuming the search for a second repository."

Mitchell said the law doesn't require building a second dump, nor is it technically necessary for the first dump to be considered "full" after receiving 70,000 tons of waste.

In January the Energy Department announced a five-year delay in opening the first dump, originally expected in 1998, and plans to stash the waste in a temporary facility until the permanent repository is ready.

Both proposals require congressional approval and fiscal 1988 appropriations, which Herrington estimated at \$725 million.

If Congress doesn't approve the delayed schedule for building the dumps, a document known as the "Mission Plan," it will cost \$60 million more to meet an accelerated schedule, Herrington explained.

The problem is, Mitchell pointed out, the Mission Plan won't be ready to present to Congress until June, which won't allow enough time for action before the fiscal year ends Sept. 30 because of July and August recesses.

Herrington said it would cost \$900 million — nearly \$1 billion — just to get enough information to choose a second dump site, and another \$6 billion to build it.

Simpson grumbled that costs of studying the dump sites have jumped from \$100 million a piece in 1981 to \$1 billion this year "just for punching holes."