



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

MAR 21 1989

NOTE TO: HLWM Branch Chiefs
 FROM: Mark Delligatti, SPAET Program Element Manager
 SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL WASTE INFORMATION SUMMARY
 FOR MARCH 15, 1989

Enclosed is the High-Level Waste Information Summary prepared by the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses (CNWRA). Items in this issue should be of interest to all segments of the Division.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Delligatti".

Mark Delligatti, SPAET Program Element Manager

Enclosure: As Stated

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CENTER FOR NUCLEAR WASTE REGULATORY ANALYSIS
Washington Office

Pertinent Information Summary

6-89

March 15, 1989

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this summary is to provide timely information that is relevant to the management of High Level Nuclear Waste. Source document information is provided the reader who desires more information. Accuracy of the information is not guaranteed.

REPORT

Subject: Reporter Cites Opposing Specialists As Confusing Yucca Mt. Effort

Source: Nuclear Waste News, February 23, 1989

Summary: In a February 12, 1989 op-ed article, New York Times writer, Matthew Wald states that: A "clash of intellectual subcultures" between engineers and geologists is adding to an already bewildering site characterization effort at Yucca Mountain. "While engineers complain that the geologists' predictions can over-reach the bounds of their expertise, geologists contend that the engineers sacrifice scientific rigor for stubborn adherence to procedures used to insure good engineering."

Subject: DOE To Submit Final Dry Cask Report to Congress

Source: HLW Focus of the Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989

Summary: DOE's final version of the Dry Cask Storage Study report is expected to be released shortly. This report incorporates comments received on the initial version released for comment in July 1988. DOE reports that most comments received were on the scope of the study rather than its contents, therefore the final version is substantively identical to the version released in July.

Subject: MRS Commission Awards Contracts for Technical Studies

Source: HLW Focus of the Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989
Nuclear Waste News, March 2, 1989

Summary: The MRS Commission has awarded contracts, totalling over \$800,000, to three firms, ICF Technology Inc., EBASCO Services, Inc., and a team led by Golder Associates Inc., including Analytical Sciences Corporation, Edlow International Company and the Ralph M. Parson

Company of Pasadena, CA., to conduct technical studies as part of the Commission's evaluation of the need for a MRS facility.

ICF will evaluate the transportation impacts of alternative strategies and will develop a systems integration model that incorporates the results of the other contractor studies and assesses the overall risks, benefits and economic costs of alternative spent fuel management strategies. EBASCO will review the need for spent fuel storage and at-reactor storage capacity, and will assess the risks, benefits, economic costs and need for rod consolidation. Golder will evaluate the economic costs of alternative approaches to spent fuel management.

Subject: DOE's Application for Water Rights Goes to Public Hearing

Source: The Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989

Summary: With the public interest being so high, the Nevada State Engineer has decided to hold a public hearing on the protest filed by the National Park Service over DOE's application to use ground water from the Death Valley area for site characterization studies at Yucca Mountain. The hearing will be held in March or April.

Subject: State of Nevada Suit Dismissed by Court

Source: The Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989

Summary: The Federal District Court for the District of Nevada has dismissed the State of Nevada's suit challenging the decision of the BLM to issue a right-of-way reservation authorizing the DOE "to occupy, use and develop public lands" to carry out site characterization studies at Yucca Mountain. The state intends to appeal the District Court decision in the U.S. Court of Appeals, according to the Nevada Attorney General's office.

Subject: Due Dates for OCRWM Major Reports and Milestones

Source: The HLW Focus, The Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989

Summary: The list below represents an update as of 2/23/89, of due dates for select OCRWM Major Reports and Milestones:

Submit 1988 Amended Mission Plan to Congress	3/89
Issue OCRWM Annual Report to Congress	3/89-4/89
Submit Final Dry Cask Storage to Congress	2/89
Draft Comprehensive Transportation Plan	3/89-4/89
ESF Site Preparation Work	5/89
ESF Construction and Testing Activities	11/89

Subject: MRS Issues Progress Report to Congress On Need for MRS Facility

Source: The HLW Focus, The Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989
Nuclear Waste News, March 2, 1989

Summary: In a recently submitted progress report to Congress, the MRS Review

Commission outlined the four generic spent fuel management strategies to be more fully evaluated in the final report to Congress. The four strategies are:

- o At-reactor storage until the repository is ready
- o hybrid systems with a mix of at-reactor storage and MRS storage at regional MRS facilities;
- o storage at a central MRS facility
- o processing and storage at a central facility

The strategies will be evaluated for a variety of scenarios, that will take into consideration variables such as the scheduling of waste acceptance at a repository, fuel burnup, and emerging technologies. Ten criteria will be used to assess the strategies:

- o overall safety and environmental impacts
- o effect on safe, efficient preparation of spent fuel for permanent disposal (impact on repository design and construction, waste preparation, waste package design, fabrication and standardization)
- o transportation impacts (including consideration of dual purpose and universal casks)
- o flexibility and reliability of the national nuclear waste management program
- o economic efficiency
- o effects on public confidence in the national nuclear waste program
- o likelihood of meeting regulatory requirements
- o likelihood of adverse impacts on reactor operations
- o equity of the system (i.e., regarding distribution of costs and benefits)
- o likelihood that DOE will be able to meet its contractual obligations

Subject: NRC Likely to Adopt Licensing System Final Negotiated Rule

Source: The HLW Focus, Radioactive Exchange, February 24, 1989

Summary: It seems likely from comments made at a February 7 briefing and from subsequent discussions, that the NRC will adopt the Final Negotiated Rule on the HLW Repository Licensing Support System as proposed by the HLW Licensing Support System Advisory Committee. With the exception of the utility members on the Advisory Committee, the Final Negotiated Rule reflects the consensus of all other members including representatives of the State of Nevada, DOE and environmental groups. The utilities' criticisms focus on two main issues: (1) "the LSS would not enable the NRC to meet the three-year schedule for the issuance of the construction authorization mandated by the NWPA; and (2) the costs of the LSS have been underestimated."

Subject: Lawmaker Tells New DOE Head Nuclear Waste Program Is In "Shambles"

Source: Inside Energy/with Federal Lands, February 27, 1989

Summary: During Energy Secretary-designate James Watkins confirmation hearing, Senate Energy Committee Chairman J. Bennett Johnston charged that DOE's efforts to develop a high-level nuclear waste repository are in "shambles" and warned that continuing delays and cost overruns could force taxpayers to bail out the program.

Johnston implied that the existing 1 mill per kilowatt fee on nuclear-generated electricity, will not be sufficient to pay for the final costs of the program. "There are either going to have to big taxes or big increases in the utility fees and I hope Edison Electric [Institute] and the utilities are listening." Johnston further stated that little real progress has been made on the program since the last testing borehole was drilled in 1985, and claimed that most of the agency's work since then has involved additional studies, reports and meeting Nuclear Regulatory Commission demands.

Subject: Manufacturer Develops Method for Accelerating Half-life Decay of Radioisotopes

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 2, 1989

Summary: Cumberland & Ohio Co. of Texas has developed a method and apparatus for accelerating the half-life decay of radioisotopes. The firm contends that the system will accelerate the normal half-life decay cycle of all nuclear waste materials rendering the contaminated material harmless. The system can be installed at facilities that produce nuclear waste, eliminating transportation, storage and rehandling of materials.

Subject: DOE Hopes to "Move Dirt" At Yucca Mt. in 1989; But Roadblocks Remain

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 2, 1989

Summary: Speaking before the opening session of Waste Management '89, DOE's Yucca Mt. Project Manager, Carl Gertz stated DOE's goal is to begin site preparation work by May 1989 and to start work on the exploratory shaft collar by November 1989. He admitted, however, that major obstacles must be overcome before these tasks can be undertaken. These roadblocks are:

- o Land Access - DOE has a right-of-way reservation from BLM and the Nevada Test Site is already under DOE control. However, BLM must grant a right of way for the Nellis Air Force Base Bombing and Gunnery Range property. The Air Force must complete an environmental assessment and submit it to BLM before the right of way can be issued.
- o State Permits - DOE has been unable to obtain necessary environmental compliance permits from the state of Nevada. For instance, an application for an air quality permit for land disturbance was filed over a year ago.
- o NRC Comments on the SCP - NRC has stated that it will be mid-August before its review of the SCP is complete. NRC's

comments must be considered before DOE can begin construction on the exploratory shaft facility.

- o Study Plans - DOE must complete detailed study plans for specific site activities and submit them to NRC. These study plans must be reviewed by NRC before the specific activity can be undertaken. To date, DOE has submitted five study plans on the exploratory shaft facility.
- o Quality Assurance - In October 1988, NRC approved the Yucca Mt. quality assurance plan. DOE expects to have a fully qualified quality assurance program in place by this summer.

Subject: Nuclear Waste Transportation Center Seeks Personnel

Source: Nuclear Waste News - March 9, 1989

Summary: The University of Nevada's Nuclear Waste Transportation Research Center is seeking a director and senior technical specialists. The Center has received a major contract from the State of Nevada to develop a technical resource base to address nuclear waste transportation issues affecting the state.

Subject: New ASME Committee To Address Mixed Waste Issues

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 9, 1989

Summary: The American Society of Mechanical Engineers has set up a committee to address the technical issues of mixed radioactive/hazardous waste. The committee, formed during February's Waste Management '89 meeting in Tucson, Arizona, came out of ASME's Risk Analysis Task Force.

Subject: Mixed Waste Being Accepted at Nevada Test Site

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 9, 1989

Summary: Since December, DOE's Nevada Operations Office has been receiving mixed radioactive/hazardous waste for disposal at the Nevada Test Site. About 6,000 cubic feet of pondcrete and saltcrete, the currently accepted waste forms, has been received at the only in the country now accepting mixed waste.

The waste being received now will be disposed of in an existing unit on the Test Site. However, DOE hopes to have a separate Mixed Waste Management Unit in operation by the end of the year. This management unit will be part of the test site's Radioactive Waste Management Site. Mixed waste will then be received from DOE's 17 nuclear weapons sites around the country. A DOE contractor assigned to the Test Site estimates that between a million and a million and a half cubic feet of mixed waste are now in storage. About 100,000 cubic feet of mixed waste are being generated annually, mostly by the Rocky Flats facility.

Subject: TRW Gains Court Injunction on HLW Program Contract

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 9, 1989

Summary: Following a petition filed on December 23, 1988 by TRW Environmental Safety Systems, Inc. the U.S. Claims Court in Washington, D.C., issued a preliminary injunction March 8 barring DOE from awarding Bechtel Systems Management Inc. the 10-year \$1 billion management and operating contract for the high-level radioactive waste repository program. TRW posted a \$1 million bond on March 9 as a show of good faith and to prevent unreasonable injury to the government and Bechtel. March 30 has been set as the hearing date to rule on a permanent injunction.

Subject: DOE Head Urges Review Board To Listen To Critics

Source: Nuclear Waste News, March 9, 1989

Summary: Secretary of Energy James Watkins has urged the newly formed Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board to listen to the criticism directed at the high-level radioactive waste repository program. He told the board that he expected it to broaden its scope beyond the repository program to the future of nuclear power and to provide help in solving "bigger issues." However, he stressed the need to first let the country know that nuclear waste can be managed.