

Be sure to keep the *b r o a d* picture in view...

Why would we consider the environmental impact of any proposed project separately from considering the impacts of whatever the *alternative(s)* to that project are?? For that matter, how could we consider only the *environmental* impacts of the project?? There are *lots* of impacts, environmental and otherwise, of all the alternatives, too – including the oft-ignored alternative of doing little or *nothing* about the situation for which the project is being considered!!

Surely, if we don't take a broad view of the situation, we run the risk of skewed policy decisions, no? (& the narrower our focus, the greater the skewing risk!)

Alternative / Renewable energy sources have their *own* serious environmental Impacts! (not to mention their *much* lower energy 'density' & continuity of availability). For example, the infrastructure needed to harness these other power sources consumes tremendous resources (in materials, land & monetarily). And unless a great deal *more* resources are used for the "capacity storage" that all these sporadically-available power sources require, we'll *still* have to use conventional, always-available power sources to 'fill in' for when the Alternative / Renewable sources aren't available. (Wind & Solar are *highly* variable in availability!)

Excessive *Conservation* also has adverse environmental impacts – from the more impoverished conditions resulting from too much reliance on Conservation. *A more prosperous society is more able to afford the costs of higher levels of environmental preservation!*

Just as "No one is an Island" (unto themselves), we dare not consider, in isolation, the impacts of just one (kind of) proposal.

Something else to keep in mind as deliberation proceeds on these proposed new nuclear power generating facilities:

The validity of scientific (and other) theories & findings, is not in any way dependent on how many – or few – people express those theories & findings. Likewise, the wisdom of any particular public policy(ies) also has no necessary relationship to the number of people supporting them. None of those things bears any *necessary* relationship to majority (or minority) views.

The Eco-Friendly Hoax of Nuclear Energy

From: "jduman@juno.com" <jduman@juno.com>
To: ArlingtonConservationCouncil@yahoo.com
Cc: karen@seedcoalition.org
Subject: The Eco-Friendly Hoax of Nuclear Energy
Date: Jan 3, 2009 4:30 AM

Here is an article that may interest you and help you develop comments and questions to provide to the NRC on the environmental impacts of expanding Comanche Peak at Glen Rose, less than 50 miles away. Remember, we are all encouraged to write our elected officials, state and federal, and request that they not vote on anything about nuclear power plants until they have visited one and toured the inner workings. Jo Ann

Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR)
<http://www.fair.org>

Extra! January/February 2008

Money Is the Real Green Power:
The hoax of eco-friendly nuclear energy

By Karl Grossman

Nuclear advocates in government and the nuclear industry are engaged in a massive, heavily financed drive to revive atomic power in the United States—with most of the mainstream media either not questioning or actually assisting in the promotion.

"With a very few notable exceptions, such as the Los Angeles Times, the U.S. media have turned the same sort of blind, uncritical eye on the nuclear industry's claims that led an earlier generation of Americans to believe atomic energy would be too cheap to meter," comments Michael Mariotte, executive director of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. "The nuclear industry's public relations effort has improved over the past 50 years, while the natural skepticism of reporters toward corporate claims seems to have disappeared."

The New York Times continues to be, as it was a half-century ago when nuclear technology was first advanced, a media leader in pushing the technology, which collapsed in the U.S. with the 1979 Three Mile Island and 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant accidents. The Times has showered readers with a variety of pieces advocating a nuclear revival, all marbled with omissions and untruths. A lead editorial headlined "The Greening of Nuclear Power" (5/13/06) opened:

Not so many years ago, nuclear energy was a hobgoblin to environmentalists, who feared the potential for catastrophic accidents and long-term radiation contamination. . . . But this is a new era, dominated by fears of tight energy supplies and global warming. Suddenly nuclear power is looking better.

Nukes add to greenhouse

Parroting a central atomic industry theme these days, the Times editors declared, "Nuclear energy can replace fossil-fuel power plants for generating electricity, reducing the carbon dioxide emissions that contribute heavily to global warming." As a TV commercial frequently aired by the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), the nuclear industry trade group, states: "Nuclear power plants don't emit greenhouse gases, so they protect our environment."

What is left unmentioned by the NEI, the Times and other mainstream media making this claim is that the overall "nuclear cycle"—which includes uranium mining and milling, enrichment, fuel fabrication and disposal of radioactive waste—has significant greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

As Michel Lee, chair of the Council on Intelligent Energy & Conservation Policy, wrote in an (unpublished) letter to the

Times, the

dirty secret is that nuclear power makes a substantial contribution to global warming. Nuclear power is actually a chain of highly energy-intensive industrial processes. These include uranium mining, conversion, enrichment and fabrication of nuclear fuel; construction and deconstruction of the massive nuclear facility structures; and the disposition of high-level nuclear waste.

She included information on "independent studies that document in detail the extent to which the entire nuclear cycle generates greenhouse emissions."

Separately, Lee wrote to a Times journalist stating that the "fiction" that nuclear power does not contribute to global warming "has been a prime feature of the nuclear industry's and Bush administration's PR campaign" that "unfortunately . . . has been swallowed by a number of New York Times reporters, op-ed columnists and editors."

Greens for hire

In "The Greening of Nuclear Power," the Times, like other mainstream media touting a nuclear restart, also spoke of environmentalists changing their stance on nuclear power. "Two new leaders" have emerged "to encourage the building of new nuclear reactors," according to the editorial. They happen to be Christine Todd Whitman, George W. Bush's first Environmental Protection Agency administrator, and Patrick Moore, "a co-founder of Greenpeace." The Times heralded this as "the latest sign that nuclear power is getting a more welcome reception from some environmentalists."

However, "both Whitman and Moore . . . are being paid to do so by the Nuclear Energy Institute," noted the Center for Media and Democracy's Diane Farsetta (PRWatch.org, 3/14/07). In her piece "Moore Spin: Or, How Reporters Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Nuclear Front Groups," Farsetta also reported:

A Nexis news database search on March 1, 2007 identified 302 news items about nuclear power that cite Moore since April 2006. Only 37 of those pieces—12 percent of the total—mention his financial relationship with NEI.

Whitman and Moore were hired as part of NEI's "Clean and Safe Energy Coalition" in 2006, which is "fully funded" by the institute, Farsetta noted. As for Moore and Greenpeace, his "association . . . ended in 1986," and he "has now spent more time working as a PR consultant to the logging, mining, biotech, nuclear and other industries . . . than he did as an environmental activist."

According to Harvey Wasserman, senior advisor to Greenpeace USA and co-author of *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience With Atomic Radiation* (Brattleboro Reformer, 2/24/07), "Moore sailed on the first Greenpeace campaign, but he did not actually found the organization." Wasserman went on to cite an actual founder of the organization, Bob Hunter, describing Moore as "the Judas of the ecology movement."

Scarce high-grade fuel

Insisting that "there is good reason to give nuclear power a fresh look," "The Greening of Nuclear Power" further claimed, "It can diversify our sources of energy with a fuel—uranium—that is both abundant and inexpensive." This, too, was bogus. The uranium from which fuel used in nuclear power plants is made—so-called "high-grade" ore containing substantial amounts of fissionable uranium-235—is, in fact, not "abundant." As Andrew Simms of the New Economics Foundation told BBC News (11/29/05), another "dirty little secret" of nuclear power is that "startlingly, there's only a few decades left of the proven high-grade uranium ore it needs for fuel." This has been the projection for years.

Indeed, this limit on "high-grade" uranium ore is why the industry projects that, in the long-term, nuclear power will need to be based on breeder reactors running on manmade plutonium. But use of plutonium-fueled reactors has been stymied because they can explode like atomic bombs—they contain tons of plutonium fuel, while the first bomb using plutonium, dropped on Nagasaki, contained 15 pounds. Because it takes only a few pounds of plutonium to make an atomic bomb, they also constitute an enormous proliferation risk.

Blaming Jane Fonda

"The Jane Fonda Effect" (9/16/07), a Times Magazine column by Stephen Dubner and Steven Levitt, blamed nuclear power's stall on the 1979 film *The China Syndrome*, starring Jane Fonda, which opened days before the Three Mile Island partial meltdown. "Stoked by *The China Syndrome*," it caused "widespread panic," wrote Dubner and Levitt,

even though, they maintained, the accident did not “produce any deaths, injuries or significant damage.”

In fact, the utility that owned Three Mile Island has for years been quietly paying people whose family members died, contracted cancer or were otherwise impacted by the accident. While settlements range up to \$1 million, the utility company continues to insist this does not acknowledge fault. The toll of Three Mile Island is chronicled in my television documentary *Three Mile Island Revisited* (EnviroVideo, 1993) and Wasserman’s book *Killing Our Own* (which includes a devastating chapter, “People Died at Three Mile Island”), among other works.

But Dubner and Levitt continue undeterred, declaring, “The big news is that nuclear power may be making a comeback in the United States.” They acknowledge the Chernobyl accident, stating that it “killed at least a few dozen people directly.” They admit that it “exposed millions more to radiation,” but keep silent about the consequences of this in terms of illness and death. This atomic version of Holocaust denial flies in the face of voluminous research on the disaster that puts the number of dead in the hundreds of thousands.

“At least 500,000 people—perhaps more—have already died out of the 2 million people who were officially classed as victims of Chernobyl in Ukraine,” said Nikolai Omelyanets, deputy head of the National Commission for Radiation Protection in Ukraine (*Guardian*, 3/25/06). Dr. Alexey Yablokov, president of the Center for Russian Environmental Policy, calculates a death toll of 300,000. In the book *Chernobyl: 20 Years On*, which he co-edited, Yablokov writes, “In 20 years it has become clear that not tens, hundreds of thousands, but millions of people in the Northern Hemisphere have suffered and will suffer from the Chernobyl catastrophe.”

The *New York Times Magazine* also published “Atomic Balm?” (7/16/06), by Jon Gertner; the subhead read, “For the first time in decades, increasing the role of nuclear power in the United States may be starting to make political, environmental and even economic sense.” Gertner used the term nuclear “renaissance,” and again forwarded the claim that “the supply [of uranium] is abundant.”

Gertner told of how the “lifespan” for nuclear plants was set at 40 years because this was considered “how long a large nuclear plant could safely operate.” This has “proved a conservative estimate,” he states—without providing a factual basis. So the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been “granting 20-year extensions” to the 103 U.S. nuclear plants so they “can run for a total of 60 years.” (Consider the safety and reliability of 60-year-old cars speeding down highways.)

“Even with such licensing renewals, though, it’s doubtful the current fleet of plants will run for, say, 80 years,” he continued, and “that means the industry, in a way, is in a race against time.” It needs to build new plants because the “absence” of nuclear power “would probably pose tremendous challenges for the United States.”

The *New York Times* also allows its nuclear advocacy to slip into its news stories. In an article (11/27/07) about the French nuclear power company Areva signing a deal with a Chinese atomic corporation, *Times* reporter John Tagliabue wrote of Areva chief executive Anne Lauvergeon’s “long path from dirty hands to clean energy.” The “dirty hands” referred to a youthful interest in archaeology; that nuclear power is “clean energy” appears to require no explanation.

Another story, datelined Fort Collins, Colorado (11/19/07), reported on two energy projects proposed for what the paper calls “a deeply green city.” Describing the plans as “exposing the hard place that communities like this across the country are likely to confront,” *Times* reporter Kirk Johnson wrote:

Both projects would do exactly what the city proclaims it wants, helping to produce zero-carbon energy. But one involves crowd-pleasing, feel-good solar power, and the other is a uranium mine, which has a base of support here about as big as a pinkie. Environmentalism and local politics have collided with a broader ethical and moral debate about the good of the planet, and whether some places could or should be called upon to sacrifice for their high-minded goals.

Other revivalists

Other media promoting a nuclear revival—their words prominently featured on NEI’s website—include *USA Today* (3/5/06): “The facts are straightforward: Nuclear power . . . creates virtually none of the pollution that causes climate change and delivers electricity cheaper than other forms of generation do.” And the *Augusta Chronicle* (8/21/06): “Nuclear power—for decades perceived as an environmental scourge—is emerging as the cleanest and most cost-efficient source of energy available, a fact conceded even by environmentalists.” And *Investor’s Business Daily* (12/1/06): “We can worry about imaginary threats of nuclear energy or the real dangers of fossil fuel pollution.”

Glenn Beck of *CNN* *Headline News* also joined the chorus of support (5/2/07): “Look, America should embrace nuclear power, even if it’s [just] to get off the foreign oil bandwagon.” This is also common nuclear disinformation, that nuclear

power is needed to displace foreign oil. The only energy produced by nuclear power is electricity—and only 3 percent of electricity in the U.S. is generated with oil.

There are a few exceptions in the mainstream media, notably the other Times, the Los Angeles Times. “The dream that nuclear power would turn atomic fission into a force for good rather than destruction unraveled with the Three Mile Island disaster in 1979 and the Chernobyl meltdown in 1986,” the paper stated (7/23/07) in an editorial headlined: “No to Nukes: It’s Tempting to Turn to Nuclear Plants to Combat Climate Change, but Alternatives Are Safer and Cheaper.” Those who claim nuclear power “must be part of any solution” to global warming or climate change “make a weak case,” said the L.A. Times, citing

the enormous cost of building nuclear plants, the reluctance of investors to fund them, community opposition and an endless controversy over what to do with the waste. . . . What’s more, there are cleaner, cheaper, faster alternatives that come with none of the risks.

Staggering numbers

As to the risks, the mainstream media’s handling—or non-handling—of the U.S. government’s most comprehensive study on the consequences of a nuclear plant accident is instructive. Calculation of Reactor Accident Consequences 2 (known as CRAC-2) was done by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in the 1980s. Bill Smirnow, an anti-nuclear activist, has tried for years to interest media in reporting on it—sending out information about it continually. The study estimates the impacts from a meltdown at each nuclear plant in the U.S. in categories of “peak early fatalities,” “peak early injuries,” “peak cancer deaths” and “costs [in] billions.” (“Peak” refers to the highest calculated value—not a “worst case scenario,” as worse assumptions could have been chosen.) For the Indian Point 3 plant north of New York City, for example, the projection is that a meltdown would cause 50,000 “peak early fatalities,” 141,000 “peak early injuries,” 13,000 “peak cancer deaths,” and \$314 billion in property damage—and that’s based on the dollar’s value in 1980, so the cost today would be nearly \$1 trillion. For the Salem 2 nuclear plant in New Jersey, the study projects 100,000 “peak early fatalities,” 70,000 “peak early injuries,” 40,000 “peak cancer deaths,” and \$155 billion in property damage. The study provides similarly staggering numbers across the country.

“I’ve sent the CRAC-2 material out for years to media and have never heard a thing,” Smirnow told Extra!

Not anyone in the media ever even asked me a question. There’s no excuse for this media inattention to such an important subject, and it shows how they’re falling flat on their faces in not performing their purported mission of educating and informing the public. Whatever their reason or reasons for not informing their readers and listeners, the effect is one of helping the nuclear power industry and hurting the public. If the public was informed, this new big pro-nuke push would never happen.

Also in the way of sins of omission is the media silence on “routine emissions”—the amount of radioactivity the U.S. government allows to be routinely released by nuclear plants. “It doesn’t take an accident for a nuclear power plant to release radioactivity into our air, water and soil,” says Kay Drey of Beyond Nuclear at the Nuclear Policy Research Institute. “All it takes is the plant’s everyday routine operation, and federal regulations permit these radioactive releases. Rarely, if ever, is this reported by media.” The radioactive substances regularly emitted include tritium, krypton and xenon. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission sets a “permissible” level for these “routine emissions,” but, as Drey states, “permissible does not mean safe.”

Hidden subsidies

Another lonely voice amid the media nuclear cheerleaders is the Las Vegas Sun, which recently has been especially outraged by \$50 billion in loan guarantees for the nuclear industry to build new nuclear plants included in the 2007 Energy Bill. The Sun demanded (8/1/07): “Pull the Plug Already.”

In reporting on the economics of nuclear power, mainstream media virtually never mention the many government subsidies for it, while continuing to claim that it’s “cost-effective” (Augusta Chronicle, 8/21/06). One such giveaway is the Price-Anderson Act, which shields the nuclear industry from liability for catastrophic accidents. Price-Anderson, supposed to be temporary when first enacted in 1957, has been extended repeatedly and now limits liability in the event of an accident to \$10 billion, despite CRAC-2’s projections of consequences far worse than that.

Writing on CommonDreams.org (9/11/07), Ralph Nader explored the economic issue. “Taxpayers alert!” he declared:

The atomic power corporations are beating on the doors in Washington to make you guarantee their financing for more giant nuclear plants. They are pouring money and applying political muscle to Congress for up to \$50 billion in loan

guarantees to persuade an uninterested Wall Street that Uncle Sam will pay for any defaults on industry construction loans. . . . The atomic power industry does not give up. Not as long as Uncle Sam can be dragooned to be its subsidizing, immunizing partner. Ever since the first of 100 plants opened in 1957, corporate socialism has fed this insatiable atomic goliath with many types of subsidies.

Ignored alternatives

Yet another claim by mainstream media in pushing for a nuclear revival is the "success" of the French nuclear program. 60 Minutes (4/8/07) did it in a segment called "Vive Les Nukes." (See FAIR Action Alert, [4/18/07](#).) Correspondent Steve Kroft started with the nuclear-power-doesn't-contribute-to-global-warming myth:

With power demands rising and concerns over global warming increasing, what the world needs now is an efficient means of producing carbon-free energy. And one of the few available options is nuclear, a technology whose time seemed to come and go, and may now be coming again. . . . With zero greenhouse gas emissions, the U.S. government, public utilities and even some environmental groups are taking a second look at nuclear power, and one of the first places they're looking to is France, where it's been a resounding success.

Though she was totally ignored, Linda Gunter of Beyond Nuclear told 60 Minutes of radioactive contamination in the marine life off Normandy where the French reprocessing center sits, leukemia clusters in people living along that coast, and massive demonstrations in French cities earlier in the year protesting construction of new nuclear power plants.

The Union of Concerned Scientists was upset by 60 Minutes' downplaying of alternative energy technologies such as wind and solar. UCS's Alden Meyer wrote to 60 Minutes:

In fact, wind power could supply more energy to the U.S. grid than nuclear does today, and when combined with a mix of energy efficiency and other renewable energy sources, could provide a continuous energy supply that would help us make dramatic reductions in global warming.

Dismissal of renewable energy forms is another major facet of mainstream media's drive for a nuclear power revival. As the St. Petersburg Times put it (12/08/06), "While renewable sources of energy such as solar power are still in the developmental stage, nuclear is the new green." Renewables Are Ready was the title of a 1999 book written by two UCS staffers. Today, they are more than ready. "Wind is the cheapest form of new generation now being built," wrote Greenpeace advisor Wasserman (Free Press, 4/10/07). He pointed to an "array of wind, solar, bio-fuels, geothermal, ocean thermal and increased conservation and efficiency."

Wasserman has also written about another element ignored by most mainstream media (Free Press, 7/9/07): "The switch to renewables defunds global terrorism. Atomic reactors are pre-deployed weapons of radioactive mass destruction. Shutting them down ends the fear of apocalyptic disaster by both terror and error." He stressed, again, that safe, clean energy is here and "we could replace everything with available technology that could easily supply all our needs while allowing a sustainable planet to survive and thrive."

The one green thing

What are the causes of the media nuclear dysfunction? The obvious problem is media ownership. General Electric, for one, is both a leading nuclear plant manufacturer and a media mogul, owning NBC and other outlets. (For years, CBS was owned by Westinghouse; Westinghouse and GE are the Coke and Pepsi of nuclear power.) There have been board and financial interlocks between the media and nuclear industries. There is the long-held pro-nuclear faith at media such as the New York Times. (See [sidebar](#).)

There is also the giant public relations operation—both corporate, led by the NEI, and government, involving the Department of Energy and its national nuclear laboratories. "You have the NEI and the nuclear industry propagandizing on nuclear power, and journalists taking down what the industry is saying and not looking at the veracity of their claims," Greenpeace USA nuclear policy analyst Jim Riccio told Extra!

And then there's lots of money. FAIR recently exposed (Action Alert, 8/22/07) how National Public Radio, which broadcasts many pro-nuclear pieces, has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from "nuclear operator Sempra Energy" and Constellation Energy, "which belongs to Nustart Energy, a 10-company consortium pushing for new nuclear power plant construction."

The only thing green about nuclear power is the nuclear establishment's dollars.

Karl Grossman is a professor of journalism at the State University of New York College at Old Westbury. Books he has written about nuclear technology include *Cover Up: What You ARE NOT Supposed to Know About Nuclear Power*. He has hosted many television programs on nuclear technology on EnviroVideo.com

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Re: [ArlingtonConservationCouncil] Fw: Revised factsheet, press release on Comanche Peak

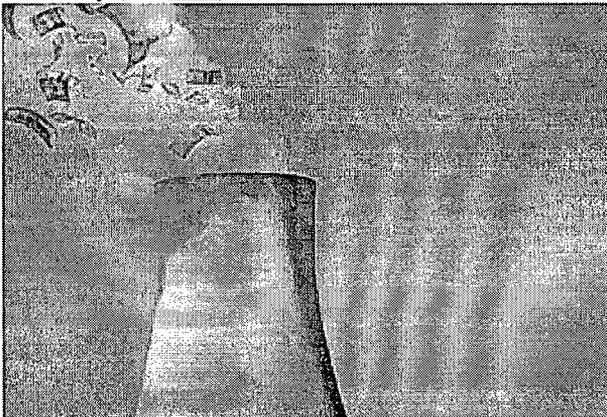
From: schermbeck@aol.com
To: ArlingtonConservationCouncil@yahoogroups.com, karen@seedcoalition.org
Subject: Re: [ArlingtonConservationCouncil] Fw: Revised factsheet, press release on Comanche Peak
Date: Jan 6, 2009 3:06 PM

It's last minute, but thanks to Steve for his offer. and here's some late-breaking ammunition for anyone going tonight :

<http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2009/1/5/163027/5088?source=rss>

A new study [PDF] puts the generation costs for power from new nuclear plants at from 25 to 30 cents per kilowatt-hour -- triple current U.S. electricity rates!

This staggering price is far higher than the cost of a variety of carbon-free renewable power sources available today -- and 10 times the cost of energy efficiency (see [here](#)).



The new study, *Business Risks and Costs of New Nuclear Power* [PDF], is one of the most detailed cost analyses publicly available on the current generation of nuclear power plants being considered in this country. It is by a leading expert in power plant costs, Craig A. Severance. A practicing CPA, Severance is co-author of *The Economics of Nuclear and Coal Power* (Praeger 1976), and former Assistant to the Chairman and to Commerce Counsel, Iowa State Commerce Commission. This important new analysis is being published by Climate Progress because it fills a critical gap in the current debate over nuclear power -- transparency. Severance explains:

All assumptions, and methods of calculation are clearly stated. The piece is a deliberate effort to demystify the entire process, so that anyone reading it (including non-technical readers) can develop a clear understanding of how total generation costs per kWh come together.

As stunning as this new, detailed cost estimate is, it should not come as a total surprise. I detailed the escalating capital costs of nuclear power in my May 2008 report, "[The Self-Limiting Future of Nuclear Power](#)." And in a story last week on nuclear power's supposed comeback, [Time magazine notes](#) that nuclear plants' capital costs are "out of control," concluding:

Most efficiency improvements have been priced at 1¢ to 3¢ per kilowatt-hour, while **new nuclear energy is on track to cost 15¢ to 20¢ per kilowatt-**

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others who love their
cats

hour. And no nuclear plant has ever been completed on budget.

Time buried that in the penultimate paragraph of the story!

Yet even *Time's* rough estimate is too low, as *Business Risks and Costs of New Nuclear Power* [PDF] quantifies in detail. Here is the Executive Summary:

It has been an entire generation since nuclear power was seriously considered as an energy option in the U.S. It seems to have been forgotten that the reason U.S. utilities stopped ordering nuclear power plants was their conclusion that nuclear power's business risks and costs proved excessive.

With global warming concerns now taking traditional coal plants off the table, U.S. utilities are risk averse to rely solely on natural gas for new generation. Many U.S. utilities are diversifying through a combination of aggressive load reduction incentives to customers, better grid management, and a mixture of renewable energy sources supplying zero-fuel-cost kWh's, backed by the KW capacity of natural gas turbines where needed. Some U.S. utilities, primarily in the South, often have less aggressive load reduction programs, and view their region as deficient in renewable energy resources. These utilities are now exploring new nuclear power.

Estimates for new nuclear power place these facilities among the costliest private projects ever undertaken. Utilities promoting new nuclear power assert it is their least costly option. However, independent studies have concluded new nuclear power is not economically competitive.

Given this discrepancy, nuclear's history of cost overruns, and the fact new generation designs have never been constructed anywhere, there is a major business risk nuclear power will be more costly than projected. **Recent construction cost estimates imply capital costs/kWh (not counting operation or fuel costs) from 17-22 cents/kWh when the nuclear facilities come on-line. Another major business risk is nuclear's history of construction delays.** Delays would run costs higher, risking funding shortfalls. The strain on cash flow is expected to degrade credit ratings.

Generation costs/kWh for new nuclear (including fuel & O&M but not distribution to customers) are likely to be from 25 - 30 cents/kWh. This high cost may destroy the very demand the plant was built to serve. High electric rates may seriously impact utility customers and make nuclear utilities' service areas noncompetitive with other regions of the U.S. which are developing lower-cost electricity.

I am **not** saying here that nuclear power will play no role in the fight to stay below 450 ppm of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations and avoid catastrophic climate outcomes. Indeed, I have been including a full wedge of nuclear in my 12 to 14 wedges "solution" to global warming [here](#). It may, however, be time to reconsider that, since it is increasingly clear achieving even one wedge of nuclear will be a very time-consuming and expensive proposition, probably costing \$6 to \$8 **trillion** and sharply driving up electricity prices.

Given the myriad low-carbon, much-lower-cost alternatives to nuclear power available today -- such as efficiency, wind, solar thermal baseload, solar PV, geothermal, and recycled energy (see [here](#)) -- **the burden is on the nuclear industry to provide its own detailed, public cost estimates that it is prepared to stand behind in public utility commission hearings.**

What is unique about this [new analysis](#) [PDF] is its transparency: "all assumptions, and methods of calculation are clearly stated." As Severance explains:

In contrast to this transparency, many nuclear promoters have adopted a

"Black Box" approach. It has unfortunately been the case over the last couple of years that some utilities have begun to claim that even rudimentary basics of their nuclear cost estimates must be hidden from the public as "trade secrets". For instance, in the South Carolina Electric & Gas proposal to build two reactors now under consideration by the South Carolina PSC, there is literally a large "box" obscuring the bulk of the calculations in the SC E&G Exhibit which presents the utility's projection of construction and financing costs for the proposed two-unit facility. In a different case, Duke Energy claimed that it does not even have to disclose its new cost estimates for a proposed nuclear facility in Cherokee County, S.C.. In the Duke case, C. Dukes Scott, South Carolina's consumer advocate, who represents the public in utility rate cases, noted, "If the cost wasn't confidential in February," Scott said, "how is it confidential in April?"

Even when no effort to conceal information is apparent, the very terminology used when projections are presented can be confusing or misleading. For instance, in 2007 when a number of new nuclear proposals began to advance, it was common for "Overnight Cost" estimates to be quoted. For a project (such as solar or wind) whose construction period may be as short as several months, the difference between an "overnight" cost and the full cost to complete the project may not be significant. However, for a nuclear project that may typically take a decade to complete, cost escalations that occur during this long construction period, plus the financing costs during construction, may easily double the total cost of a project compared to its "overnight" cost. When the full picture is presented, some may perceive the total cost estimate has mysteriously doubled. However, it simply should have been stated clearly to begin with that major escalation and financing costs cannot be avoided when it takes a long time to complete a project. Failure to do so is tantamount to selling someone a house with "teaser" initial mortgage payments and failing to make clear that the mortgage payments will later reset to a much higher level.

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Another mysterious "black box" presentation method is to fold the overall costs of the new facility into the general rate base of the utility, without ever mentioning what the generation costs per kWh of the nuclear unit will be. Instead, it is often only presented how total costs per kWh for all ratepayers will increase -- which includes kWh's generated by existing generation units. (For instance, if a nuclear unit is to supply 20 percent of the kWh's for the utility when it comes on line, any cost increase per kWh appears to only be 1/5 as large because the additional costs are also spread over the 80 percent of kWh's generated by other facilities, even though those other facilities did not cause the rate increase.) While it is important to know the impact on final overall retail electric rates, it is also important to know the generation costs per kWh from the nuclear facility. If this step is "skipped" in public presentations, the nuclear units (or any new generation power source that is more expensive than existing units) can appear far cheaper than their real impact.

The Paper takes the approach that it is best to lay out in detail "how you got that number" at each step of the way. All parties can then proceed to have discussions based upon real numbers rather than mysterious "Black Box" secrets.

So feel free to criticize the analysis, but anyone offering different all-in cost estimates for power from new nuclear plants should detail their own assumptions and calculation. And simply pointing to the operating costs of existing paid-off nuclear plants doesn't count as detailed analysis -- my home

would be very cheap to live in if I didn't have a mortgage.

Also, it's fine to call for aggressively developing 4th generation nuclear plants (as [James Hansen does](#)) -- I'm all for such R&D -- but that won't help us meet 2020 climate targets, and probably won't help us significantly meet 2030 targets. In any case, it is impossible to accurately project the real world all-in costs of noncommercial technologies that are still largely sitting on the drawing board.

The full study is [here](#) [PDF].

This post was created for [ClimateProgress.org](#), a project of the [Center for American Progress Action Fund](#).

-----Original Message-----

From: Stephen Smith <buggy188@juno.com>

To: ArlingtonConservationCouncil@yahoogroups.com

Cc: ArlingtonConservationCouncil@yahoogroups.com; dnewsom@aisd.net

Sent: Tue, 6 Jan 2009 7:05 am

Subject: Re: [ArlingtonConservationCouncil] Fw: Revised factsheet, press release on Comanche Peak

all concerned citizens of north texas,

i would like to share expenses and attend the nuclear regulatory commission meeting in glen rose this evening with interested parties from arlington.

this will be our only chance to express our thoughts, concerns, fears, and consternation about coming rate hikes to those decision-makers. in no way will two new, experimental reactors ameliorate our nation's need for sustainable, non-toxic energy sources.

give me a call and we can arrange the details (817-275-7469). besides, what could be more fun than throwing a monkey wrench in luminent's (formerly txu)pl to poison the planet for profit!!

keep on keepin' on,

steve

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Ladies and Gentleman,

My name is Paul Harper, I wear many hats including:

County Chair
Somervell County Democratic Party

President
Paul & Debbie Harper Foundation

Volunteer Driver
Board Member
Chair of the Planning Committee
Somervell County Food Bank

Engineer
Microsoft Corp.

Owner
Glen Rose Network Corp., Somervell County Salon Blog

Taxpayer because I do live here.

I can see the obvious financial benefits of having a power plant in our county. It is a tax base for the county and school district; it creates an industry which generates other local business activities, and we are exporting our goods outside the county.

I also realize there is a downside though that is not often spoken of, and that is of the radioactive waste that is stored here in Somervell County. We take our garbage to the local dump (or have it picked up) and then it is transported off to somewhere else yet we keep this radioactive waste here. Yucca Mountain is not open for business and now we want to expand the storage of radioactive waste here in our county. I do not think it such a wise move to keep increasing the size of the radioactive waste without figuring out what to do with it. A much more prudent approach would be for these companies to figure out how to deal with the existing waste that they are creating before trying to increase the amount we have to deal with. This waste is a man made product by this company, among many others, and they need to figure out a solution before the next meeting we have is how to expand the storage facilities in this county so we can handle even more radioactive waste.

I thank everyone for their time and consideration.

Paul Harper
1502 County Road 2018
Glen Rose, Texas 76043
254-898-0354

Public Scoping Meeting related to the Comanche Peak, Unit 3 and 4 COL Application
Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Commenter Name:

JACK CATHEY

Organization Name (if any):

Address:

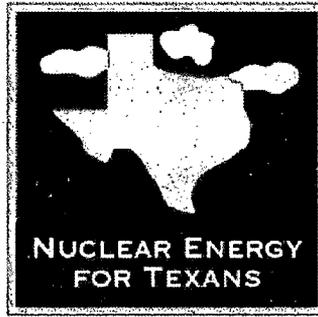
P.O. BOX 420
NEMO TEX.
76070

Email Address:

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WATER FLOW FROM GRANBURY LAKE
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DISCHARGE "HOT" WATER FROM
SQUAW CREEK NEEDS TO BE
STUDIED. LOSS OF FISH, TURTLES
FRAGS.
NEED STUDY OF IMPACT "DOWN"
RIVER

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*A Coalition Supporting Safe, Clean,
Reliable Electricity Production*

For Immediate Release

January 6, 2009

Contact: Robert Black

(512) 617-5620

rblack@NuclearEnergyForTexans.org

Nuclear Energy for Texans Supports Comanche Peak Expansion

AUSTIN – Nuclear Energy for Texans (NET) today applauded Dallas-based Luminant’s application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to expand its Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant near Glen Rose, Texas.

“With the Texas population expected to double in the next few decades and electricity demand surging, Texas needs new energy sources and nuclear power is the safest, cleanest, most reliable base-load energy source available,” said Tom Forbes, NET President. “As Texas looks toward creating a diverse energy mix to keep Texas competitive in the 21st century global economy, increased nuclear power will be a pivotal part of meeting that challenge.”

Texas is expecting a tremendous increase in electricity demand over the next 20 years as the population continues to expand. Independent studies show that the need for power in the state is expected to grow 48 percent by 2030. Nuclear energy is the only proven base-load energy source that can safely and reliably produce tremendous amounts of electricity without emitting harmful greenhouse gases.

“NET commends Luminant for its vision and commitment to expanding Texas’ energy portfolio through safe, clean and reliable nuclear energy,” said Forbes.

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About NET

*United under the name **Nuclear Energy for Texans**, a statewide coalition has formed in support of nuclear energy as a safe, clean and reliable alternative to meeting the increasing energy needs of the state. The coalition includes elected officials at the state and local level, representatives from business and industry, health organizations and the scientific and engineering community. The coalition was formed solely to educate Texans and promote the benefits of nuclear energy as a safe, reliable and clean alternative form of electricity for the state.*

To learn more about NET, log on to www.NuclearEnergyForTexans.org.