

September 15, 2011

The Honorable Ron Johnson
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am responding to an August 12, 2011, email from Deborah Weigel of your staff. She forwarded a copy of February 4, 2011, correspondence from the Host Communities Concerned About Stranded Spent Nuclear Fuel to the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future. The Host Communities' concern was with extended storage of spent nuclear fuel at individual nuclear power plant sites around the country, and they expressed a strong interest in being involved in the decision making process on future plans.

In December 2010, the Commission issued an updated Waste Confidence rule and decision concluding that, if necessary, spent fuel generated in any reactor can be stored safely and without significant environmental impact for at least 60 years beyond the licensed life for operation of a reactor (which may include the term of a renewed license), in a combination of storage in its spent fuel storage basin and either onsite or offsite independent spent fuel storage installations. The Commission further concluded as a part of this Waste Confidence decision that there is reasonable assurance that sufficient mined geologic repository capacity will be available to dispose of the commercial high-level radioactive waste and spent fuel generated in any reactor when necessary. Separately, the Commission directed the staff to develop a longer-term Waste Confidence update to consider the storage of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste for more than 60 years after the licensed life for operation of any commercial power reactor.

The NRC has scheduled an all-day meeting in Rockville, Maryland, for September 28, 2011, to inform and engage stakeholders on NRC's plans for extended storage and the longer-term Waste Confidence update. Further details regarding this meeting, including how to participate via teleconference or webcast, can be found on the NRC's public web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve.html>. At that meeting, the NRC staff will provide information on its plans for research on extended storage and transportation and plans for aligning work on an update to NRC's Waste Confidence decision and rule with that research. The NRC staff will inform stakeholders of upcoming opportunities for public comment and will solicit input on how the NRC can best interact with stakeholders as these two activities move forward.

R. Johnson

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This meeting and future public participation opportunities should provide the Host Communities with an appropriate venue for participation in NRC's activities associated with extended storage of spent nuclear fuel. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Ms. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA by Michael F. Weber for/

R. W. Borchardt
Executive Director
for Operations

R. Johnson

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