

Presentation to NRC

Good evening Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission.

My name is Steve Vierck and I am the president and CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Lea County. You will also hear testimony from Tres Hicks, the Chairman of our Board. Given the importance of this subject matter to our County, we are both presenting concerns of our organization.

Our appreciation to you for being here tonight in New Mexico to hear public input into the viability of Waste Control Specialists' proposed Interim Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel facility in our area.

Lea County's economy has been integrally linked to the energy sector since the 1920's. Our County produced more oil last year than any County in New Mexico and West Texas and is also a major producer and processor of natural gas. In renewable facets of the industry, our organization has assisted multiple, large renewable energy projects in solar, wind and biofuels.

We are a region that understands and is supportive of the need to diversify both our economy and our energy production. Our brand is the EnergyPlex for good reason.

Consistent with our understanding and support of the energy industry as a whole, we're typically supportive of the nuclear energy industry which from the earliest beginnings has been important to our state's and area's economy and to our nation's energy independence. The nuclear industry is well established in southeastern New Mexico and our organization played a central role in assisting Urenco in the location of their uranium enrichment facility east of Eunice. I should point out that Urenco has been an excellent corporate citizen.

We understand that an interim storage facility, if well-planned, technologically sound, and effectively operated, is preferable to the present system of storing the nuclear waste on site at the nation's dispersed nuclear power plants.

The core of our concerns as a public-private economic development partnership serving Lea County is an overall apprehension at the proposed facility being located right on our door step on the Texas-New Mexico border, yet not within our County or State. Much of the impact resulting from this large, complex project will be most felt within New Mexico and Lea County. Yet, it will not be subject to Lea County and State of New Mexico laws and restrictions. And – New Mexico will receive relatively little of the positive impacts.

This is particularly true with the fiscal impact on local governments and school districts. Some of the employees will live in Lea County. Yet the property tax revenues necessary to educate their children and to provide customized training at the junior college will not be there.

There will be increased traffic on our highways and County/city roads and on the Texas-New Mexico short line railroad which is important to supplying many Lea County businesses. The

most proximate public safety services to the facility will be located within Lea County. Yet - the bulk of tax revenues associated with the project will accrue not to Lea County and New Mexico but to Andrews County and the State of Texas.

Typically for large economic development projects, the cost of the additional public services associated with the project is more than made up by increased tax revenues related to the project. That will not be the case here.

My final point pertains to potential communication challenges. The proposed Interim Storage facility is a large and complex project. Problems may arise that require expeditious public input or governmental agency response. Given WCS' peculiar site issues, if problems arise that need to be quickly addressed, Lea County residents will need to address those issues in Andrews County or Austin, Texas or Washington D.C. Given the importance and risks associated with a facility of this nature, the repercussions of such geographically removed decision making could be problematic.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.