

From: Matt Abbott <matt.abbott@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 2:32 PM
To: Holtec-CISFEIS Resource
Subject: [External_Sender] Docket ID NRC-2018-0052 Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comment

Dear NRC staff,

I am writing to submit a public comment in response to the Draft Environmental Impact

Statement (Docket ID NRC-2018-0052) regarding Holtec International's application for a

license to build and operate a "Consolidated Interim Storage Facility for Spent Nuclear Fuel

and High Level Waste" (NUREG-2237).

I am strongly opposed to the Holtec storage proposal!

1. New Mexico Does Not Consent

The motto of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is "Protecting People and the

Environment," yet the NRC's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Holtec

project does neither. Instead, the NRC's inadequate draft EIS puts people, wildlife and

precious water resources at significant and potentially, deadly risk by failing to heed

the concerns of the community. We join the All Pueblo Council of Governors, New

Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico State Land Commissioner

Stephanie Garcia Richard, more than a dozen county and city governments, the Alliance for

Environmental Strategies, the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, the Permian Basin

Coalition of Land & Royalty Owners and Operators, the Nuclear Issues Study Group, and

the more than 30,000 residents who commented during the 2018 scoping period in

vehemently opposing bringing the nation's high level radioactive waste from nuclear

power plants to our communities. We do not consent to becoming a nuclear wasteland

for millions of years.

2. Cumulative Impacts

The DEIS is inadequate because it fails to consider cumulative impacts from the damage

the nuclear industry has already inflicted on New Mexicans for the past 75 years: uranium

mining and milling in the northwest on indigenous Diné and Pueblo lands, including the

1979 Churchrock Disaster; radioactive contamination to Tewa lands and people from the

Manhattan project in the Los Alamos area; fallout on downwinders from the Trinity Test in

the Tularosa basin; the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, which has already accidentally released

dangerous amounts of radiation and now wants to expand; the URENCO uranium

enrichment plant in Eunice; the world's largest nuclear warhead stockpile on the edge of

Albuquerque; and the toxic threat to Albuquerque's aquifer by the Mixed Waste Landfill.

Rather than adding 173,600 metric tons of high level radioactive waste to a state that has

already been grossly overburdened, the United States should be directing its resources

towards cleaning up the contamination already present in our communities, just

compensation, and holistic community health studies. The DEIS also fails to account for

cumulative impacts from the other proposal for Consolidated Interim Storage, approximately

forty miles east at the current Waste Control Specialists low-level radioactive waste site.

3. Environmental Racism

It's no coincidence that the United States wants to make New Mexico a nuclear wasteland.

It ranks as one of the poorest states and is a majority minority state, with more Black,

Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) residents than white residents. For the NRC to

determine that nuclear waste which will threaten life for millions of years would have "small"

or "no environmental impact" is a blatant violation of environmental justice principles

and is environmental racism in action. We do not give our own government license to

allow a private industry to further contaminate our home or to expand the massive nuclear

burden we already bear.

4. Threats to Cultural Properties & Historic Sites

Holtec International and the NRC would have us believe that the site is a desolate,

uninhabited place with “no historic value or significance.” This statement is completely false

and without merit. The site is located near or on two lagunas or playa lakes: Laguna Gatuna

and Laguna Plata. Lagune Plata is an archaeological district that has been extensively

studied for decades. Two sites near Laguna Gatuna, where the nuclear waste is proposed

to be stored, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeologists have

found a plethora of evidence of the Jornada Mogollon people, dating from 200 AD, 700 AD,

and 1200 AD. More than 200 archeological sites are located within six miles of the

proposed nuclear waste dump. Laguna Gatuna, while often dry, fills with water after

monsoon rains, attracting a variety of wildlife and hunters for millenia. The Hopi and

Mescalero Apache nations have identified the area as culturally significant to them, and the

Hopi nation has informed the NRC that traditional cultural properties could be adversely

affected if this project proceeds. The site where Holtec wants to dump tens of thousands of

tons of radioactive waste has profound historic value and significance.

5. Threats to Water & Wildlife

The impact of this forever deadly nuclear waste would have devastating consequences on

wildlife including threatened species that rely on the lagunas for drinking water and

surrounding area as a critical habitat, including the Lesser Prairie Chicken, and the Dune

Sagebrush Lizard. Agencies such as U.S. Fish & Wildlife, New Mexico Game & Fish, the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New Mexico Environment Dept (NMED) have

all gone on record attesting to the significance of Laguna Gatuna for migratory birds, and

have argued that it should be designated permanently as a Water of the United States

(WOTUS), which would make it eligible for protection under the Clean Water Act.

6. Threats from Transporting Irradiated Nuclear Fuel

Not only New Mexico would be adversely impacted by the Holtec project: all communities

along the transportation routes between nuclear power plants and the Holtec

proposed site would be threatened by radiation from the rail cars, and from the

devastating financial and environmental damage if an accident or act of malice should

occur. Studies have shown that one accident is likely to occur for every 10,000 shipments. It

is irresponsible and dangerous for NRC to avoid inclusion of these mammoth risks and

liability in its DEIS for Holtec's application.

7. Holtec's Project is Illegal

Finally, under current U.S. law, this project is illegal. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982,

as amended, does not allow the federal government to take title to the high level radioactive

waste until a permanent geologic repository is operating. So the federal government cannot

pay for transportation and storage of the waste as Holtec wants. The license cannot be

issued until either a permanent repository is operating, or U.S. law is changed.

For all the above reasons and more, I declare that the DEIS for Holtec's application is

inadequate and further that the license for a high level radioactive waste storage facility

should be denied. In conclusion, high level nuclear waste from nuclear power plants around

the U.S. should not be brought to New Mexico—it should be isolated on or near the current

site until there is an environmentally just and scientifically sound option is available.

Sincerely,

Matt Abbott

Federal Register Notice: 85FR16150
Comment Number: 4415

Mail Envelope Properties (1274391057.5321632.1600799517945)

Subject: [External_Sender] Docket ID NRC-2018-0052 Draft Environmental Impact
Statement Comment
Sent Date: 9/22/2020 2:31:57 PM
Received Date: 9/22/2020 2:42:07 PM
From: Matt Abbott

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|---------|------|----------------------|
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