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NRC Issues Final Environmental Study on Proposed New Mexico Spent Fuel Storage Facility

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has published its [final environmental impact statement](#) for Holtec International's application for a license to construct and operate a consolidated interim spent nuclear fuel storage facility in Lea County, New Mexico. Based on its environmental review, the NRC staff recommends issuing the license, subject to the determinations in the staff's safety review of the application.

Holtec proposes initially to store 500 canisters holding approximately 8,680 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel in a first phase and eventually to store up to 10,000 canisters in an additional 19 phases. The canisters would be transported by rail from operating, decommissioning, and decommissioned commercial nuclear power plants around the country.

The NRC's EIS assesses the environmental impacts of the entire project, or all 20 possible phases, from construction through decommissioning. It looked at the impacts to land use, transportation, geology and soils, surface waters and wetlands, groundwater, ecological resources, historic and cultural resources, environmental justice and several other areas.

The agency published a draft EIS for public comment in March 2020. Due to the Covid-19 public health emergency, the public comment period was extended to six months. During that time, the NRC staff held six online public meetings to present the draft EIS and receive public comments. More than 4,800 comment submissions with 3,718 individual comments were received and addressed in the final EIS.

Publication of the final EIS completes the environmental portion of the NRC's licensing review. The staff will make a licensing decision following completion of its safety evaluation report, expected in January 2023. Information about the Holtec application and the NRC's review is available on the [NRC website](#).