Possible Hosts for Nuke Dump

**DOE is Eyeing Two Sites in NC**

The U.S. Department of Energy has named two sites in North Carolina as possible locations for a high-level nuclear waste dump.

DOE listed a site in western N.C. and another in the central part of the state that could host a 3,000-foot-deep rock burial ground for radioactive wastes.

Both sites are near largely populated areas. A crystalline formation called the Elk River Massif is northeast of Asheville in parts of Haywood, Madison and Buncombe counties.

The second site is a 142-square-mile section of the Rolesville Pluton, extending through parts of Wake, Johnston and Franklin counties. The western edge of the formation lies within 10 miles of Raleigh.

These two sites and ten others in the eastern and northern-central parts of the country were named from a list of 236 possible sites to be the final burial ground for spent uranium from commercial and defense reactors.

The final site will be named in 1995.

The other ten sites consist of two in Virginia and two in Maine, one each in Georgia, New Hampshire and Wisconsin, and three in Minnesota.

The news that this state has two possible sites drew fire from some state officials following the announcement on January 16.

"We're going to fight it if it takes 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for seven years," said State Sen. Charles W. Hipps of Waynesville. He said he was concerned about transportation of wastes to a processing facility proposed in Tennessee.

State officials earlier charged that rock formations in western North Carolina were unstable, and criticized DOE for underemphasizing the populous areas near the two sites.

Gov. James Martin said he didn't think North Carolina had a good chance of being selected.

"It's going to be in the national interest to put that site somewhere," he said.

As a congressman in 1982, Martin voted in favor of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act which mandates that the Energy department build a repository in the western U.S. and select a site for another in the east.

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*From DOE's Area Recommendation Report, January 1986*
Court Order Blocks MRS

A federal judge issued an injunction Feb. 7 to stop progress on the U.S. Department of Energy's proposed nuclear waste processing facility in Tennessee.

U.S. District Judge Thomas A. Wiseman issued a permanent injunction against DOE's continuation of the project, ruling that DOE was in violation of federal law when it selected the Tennessee site for the facility.

DOE had proposed to build a nuclear waste processing and storage facility, called a Monitored Retrievable Storage Facility (MRS) at the abandoned Clinch River Breeder Reactor site near Oak Ridge.

The proposed unit would accept spent uranium from commercial and defense reactors, repack it into smaller bundles and store it until it can be shipped to a permanent burial site.

Wiseman ruled that DOE violated the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 when it did not consult with Tennessee officials during the siting process.

"This court declares without hesitation that the secretary has failed to carry out the statutory duties assigned to him," Wiseman said in a 30-page opinion. He referred to Energy Secretary John Herrington.

State officials say the ruling will force DOE to start over in its site selection.

A DOE official called the ruling a "delay."

Ben C. Rushe, director of DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, told the house interior subcommittee Feb. 7 that he planned to ask Congress within the next few days for permission to locate the MRS at the Clinch River site.

He commented that the presentation could be delayed because of the court injunction.

DOE officials allegedly ignored Wiseman's ruling before he issued the permanent injunction.

When he made the ruling that DOE was in violation on Feb. 2, he did not issue the injunction, stating that he trusted DOE to comply.

Two days later, deputy state attorney general Frank Scanlan sought the injunction, saying there was evidence that DOE planned to ignore the judge's first ruling.

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Like to Help?

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a non-profit, chartered organization supported by contributions.

All efforts are carried out by volunteers.

If you would like to make a contribution toward the League's expenses in researching the repository project, soliciting support from elected officials and providing information to the public, your help will be greatly appreciated.

Write us at PO Box 1308, West Jefferson, NC 28694

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The Repository

A Department of Energy illustration of a nuclear waste repository shows its depth in comparison to the height of the Washington Monument.

Interim Nuclear Waste Facility Is Unnecessary, Environmentalists Say

An interim storage facility for high-level nuclear waste is untested, unnecessary and unsafe.

That was the conclusion of environmentalists from six states who met in Knoxville, Tennessee in November.

The facility, called a Monitored Retrievable Storage Facility (MRS) is proposed by the U.S. Department of Energy and will probably be built at the abandoned Clinch River Breeder Reactor site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

It will be designed to package and store bundles of spent uranium from commercial and defense reactors until they are shipped elsewhere for permanent burial.

Two permanent storage sites are proposed in the western and eastern U.S., but have not been built.

The conference was attended by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, represented by co-chairman Janet Hoyle.

The environmentalists charged that the MRS is the government's hasty answer to pressure from the nuclear industry to take over wastes by 1998.

The U.S. government has contracted to take over high-level wastes that year, Hoyle said, and permanent burial facilities may not be built by then.

The MRS is designed to hold 15,000 metric tons of radioactive waste, though only 12,000 metric tons have been produced, Hoyle said. It is expected to begin operating in 1996.

North Carolina's mountain counties will be affected by the MRS because of shipments from the state's reactors to the Tennessee MRS.

DOE claims that the facility will reduce transport miles, since the first permanent repository will be located in the west.

"It puts a whole new set of communities at risk," Hoyle said. "If it's going via Tennessee it's going to go farther."

Eighty-five percent of the nation's reactors are east of the Mississippi.

According to DOE, most of the wastes will be transported by rail.

"DOE has yet to prove that rail is safer," Hoyle charged.

They also have yet to prove the safety of the shipment containers, or "casks" that will house the spent fuel.

DOE has abandoned more than half of its 17 cask designs because they are unsafe.

They have been tested in crashes and fires, but none of the tests actually used radioactive wastes, Hoyle said. Thus it was not determined whether they would have leaked radioactive vapors.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission reported that the tests were "interesting but not particularly useful."

Those attending the conference charged that DOE is withholding vital information on the MRS.

"DOE declined to let Tennessee look at MRS plans since April 25, when the three possible sites were selected," Hoyle said.

"I don't see how any state can base a decision with incomplete information," she continued.

Tennessee has the option of rejecting the MRS, but that can be overruled by Congress.

The other two possible sites were the Hartsville Nuclear Plant site and the Oak Ridge Reservation.

The Environmental Policy Institute, a private agency, opposes the $2 billion MRS. It charges that it diverts resources and attention away from permanent burial facilities.

The permanent repositories will provide underground burial for commercial and defense nuclear wastes, some of which will not decay to safe levels for 10,000 years.

DOE is considering sites in three western states for the first repository, which is to be built in 1998.

Seven states in the eastern and northern-central region have potential sites for the second repository, including North Carolina.
Joint Position: Opposition to Repository and MRS

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) and the Western North Carolina Alliance (WNCA) oppose the siting of a nuclear waste repository in western North Carolina and oppose the construction of a Monitored Retrievable Storage (MRS) facility.

Both groups advocate continued on-reactor site storage until a safe, permanent disposal method is developed. We have reached these positions after a long period of intensive study and participation in numerous public meetings concerning these issues.

We are working toward networking with other groups and organizations in western North Carolina that share our concerns. BREDL and WNCA believe that the citizens of this region need more information and that they have a right to participate in making decisions that affect their safety and quality of life.

The Repository Project and the MRS would have a profound effect on western North Carolina. We have concerns regarding the need for and safety of both facilities.

We oppose the establishment of a Crystalline Repository Project in western North Carolina. Our reasons include:

- The DOE's own abstract describes five problems with the SE-5 (Haywood-Buncombe-Madison) site:
  1. There is "evidence of active eustatic uplift."
  2. There is presence of shallow ground water resources for future use.
  3. There is "steep, rugged terrain" in the siting area and along access routes.
  4. The site's proximity to two PSD Class I areas.
  5. "A majority of the area is within ten miles of a densely populated area."

- The disposal of high level nuclear wastes in this area will have negative economic impacts, especially on tourism and the recreation industry.
- There is a threat to agriculture. Other areas where radioactive wastes are handled or stored have difficulty marketing their products due to the consumers' suspicions of contamination.
- The site could take up to 20,000 acres out of the local tax base.
- The likelihood of water contamination due to spills and earthquakes is high and could have far-level nuclear waste in the U.S.

We oppose the construction of a Monitored Retrievable Storage Facility. Our reasons include:

- The DOE has failed to demonstrate the need for a separate processing/storage facility; processing and packaging can best take place at the reactors.

- The technology of dismantling and repackaging fuel assemblies in a dry cell has not been tested.
- The MRS will mean more rather than less transportation of high-level nuclear waste in the U.S.
- The MRS will cost more than $2 billion which will be funded by higher electricity costs.
- The state of Tennessee has had neither sufficient time nor adequate information to assess the impacts of an MRS facility in that state, and has sued DOE.
- The MRS may become a long-term storage facility. The DOE's stated policy of storage at the MRS for "as long as necessary" is too vague and could provide a loophole for the DOE to use this facility for long term storage.
- North Carolinians who live and work downwind from the Tennessee facility may be in danger of contamination.
- The DOE's awkward management of the MRS proposal and the agency's treatment of Tennessee officials and citizens have set unacceptable limits on a state's rights of "consultation and co-operation" in high-level nuclear waste management.

We advocate continued on-reactor site storage until a safe,
permanent disposal method is developed.

- The Nuclear Waste Policy Act calls for maximization of on-site storage.
- The commercial nuclear industry has developed technologies, such as large, lead-lined holding tanks and compact storage, called reracking, that may increase storage sufficiency at reactor sites until a safe, terminal storage method is developed.
- Duke Power already has storage capacity to hold all the waste it will ever produce at existing reactors.
- The DOE has made no reasonable guarantees of safety—and can make none.

There are major problems with the transportation of high-level nuclear waste:

1. The DOE itself has almost no experience in the transport of high-level wastes.
2. Nine of the 17 existing casks used in nuclear transpor have been removed from use because of safety defects.
3. The DOE has never conducted confirmatory tests of transport cask safety. The agency will determine the safety of the new generation of casks based solely on engineering analysis and computer modeling.
4. A federal health study concludes that if only one percent of the materials inside a cask came out as a gas in a populated area, thousands of cancer deaths would result.

5. No routing information is being made available to the Emergency Response Directors of the states affected by transportation of high-level nuclear waste.
6. The Price-Anderson Act will apply to high-level nuclear waste transport. This act limits the liability for injury or damage in case of a transport accident to $625 million—a small amount compared with a possible $13 billion accident. The shippers will have no liability at all.

Therefore, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and the Western North Carolina Alliance urge the Department of Energy to remove western North Carolina from the proposed sites for a nuclear waste repository.

We urge the DOE to abandon the MRS project altogether. We further urge the DOE to continue on-reactor site storage until a safe, permanent disposal method is fully developed.

What One Person can do About N-Waste

Choose one, two, three or more...

1. Get on DOE’s mailing list.
   U.S. Department of Energy
   Chicago Operations Office
   9800 Cass Ave.
   Argonne, IL 60439

2. Write a letter to Governor Martin, stating specific concerns and suggestions.
   The honorable James G. Martin
   The State Capitol
   Raleigh, NC 27611

3. Write to Congressman Udall, who has the power to alter federal nuclear waste management.
   Congressman Morris K. Udall
   U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Energy and the Environment
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

4. Testify at the DOE public hearing at the Asheville Civic Center on April 4 at 7 p.m.

5. Get on the BREDL mailing list. Write:
   BREDL
   PO Box 1308
   West Jefferson, NC 28694

6. Give a donation to BREDL. Our all-volunteer organization needs money for printing, postage, telephone, gasoline.

7. Organize or join a study group to read and comment on DOE’s Draft Area Recommendation Report. Copies are available from DOE; comments are due April 16.

   Important note: In your comment refer to the report by using the exact title and issue number: Draft Area Recommendation Report for the Crystalline Repository Project, DOE/CH-15(1). DOE will not accept comments without this information.

8. Write letters to newspaper editors.

9. Write your representatives in Congress and the General Assembly. Call your county board of elections for full names and addresses.

10. Begin or support a resolution drive or petition drive.

DUPLICATE THIS LIST
**Affected Counties Launch Opposition**

Soon after the U.S. Department of Energy named the Elk River rock formation as a possible site for a high-level nuclear waste dump, people in Madison, Haywood and Buncombe counties formed groups to learn about, monitor and oppose the selection of the Elk River site.

The following are excerpts from their reports.

**Madison**

The Madison County Nuclear Waste Education Committee has outlined four areas of primary concern. They are:

- **Educational.** The group has been collecting information materials, to circulate, and hopes to make a slide show and group members available to any interested organizations.
- **Draft Area Recommendation Report.** The group is reviewing this

DOE document, which listed the department's 20 preferred sites chosen from 236 in 17 states.

The group anticipates working with the state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development in its commentary on the document.

- **Membership and letter-writing.** The group plans to launch a membership drive and a letter-writing campaign to reach every household—with both projects working toward unifying the county and solidifying its stance.
- **Litigation.** Avenues of possible litigation are being investigated.

**Haywood**

The Haywood County citizens concerned with the nuclear waste dump sitting in North Carolina are working on establishing positions and tasks.

The group's members have proposed to be a clearinghouse for information and all efforts to monitor and oppose the site selection.

They have discussed negative and positive economic factors, compiled a list of other groups that are taking action, and have proposed a number of projects.

Those include a child education program, a "Tie Up DOE" campaign with the theme of wearing red at DOE meetings, soliciting public comment by April 16, fundraising, contacting NRCD and Congressman Bill Hendon, and setting up a mailing list.

Also at the Feb. 2 meeting, committees for publicity, education, and activities were formed.

**Buncombe**

Reports from Buncombe County organizations were not available.

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**SE-5: The Rocks of the Elk River Massif**

The map shows the rock formation's proximity to populous areas.
Next Gamble: Who loses?

Extra precautions, can carry all the 'cooled' irradiated fuel generated during a reactor's lifetime directly to the final disposal site, if and when one becomes available. This contrasts with current industry proposals to move 2,400 truck shipments of 'hot' fuel per reactor to a temporary federal storage facility and then to a final disposal site.'" The Next Nuclear Gamble denies the Federal Department of Transportation's claim that the casks presently in use are "virtually indestructible." It maintains that the 1961 tests meant to simulate the impact, puncture, fire and water immersion to which a cask might be subjected in an accident are outmoded and inadequate.

Furthermore, "no casks presently in use in the U.S. have been physically tested. Cask tests have been done by computer simulations or hand calculations." Such theoretical projections may be intellectually stimulating but are reasonably reliable or reassuring.

CEP's finding on casks is that the German cask known as Castor "appears to be a major improvement over present American transport casks."

The potentially greater safety of rail and barge transport is argued convincingly and at length.

Transport casks: how safe?

The inadequacies of the Price-Anderson Act are strongly noted. Non-fault insurance issued with a liability limit of $560 million in the face of a possible $4 billion in property damages in a single accident is deplorable as law and as economics.

The chance of recovering but 14 cents on every dollar of property damage is in itself alarming, but even more so is the fact that the Price-Anderson Act only covers a portion of the nuclear waste transports.

The format of the book is ingenious and follows the sound teaching practice of repetition. Each of the nine chapters is developed by brief titled sections developing aspects of the chapter's topic.

Then the chapter is concluded with a series of tables, boxes, and/or figurines that reiterate in detail points made or episodes reported in the individual sections. This is a form of emphasis that is both impressive and provocative.

Chapter IX is titled Recommendations. Chief among these are:

- Cask improvement;
- Realistic assessment of the economic damages should a nuclear transport accident occur in an urban area;
- Improved tie-downs;
- Rerouting transports to avoid sensitive areas;
- A more thorough analysis of potential accidents in rural as well as urban areas;
- The creation of guides and training programs for all personnel involved in the shipping of nuclear waste;
- Suspension of shipping until a final depository is located;
- The cessation of numerous small shipments in favor of carefully prepared large shipments, and;
- The introduction by municipalities of ordinances and certificates of transport issued for a fee to shipments meeting high safety standards with the fee covering the cost to the municipality of training and equipping personnel to enforce the ordinances.

The Next Nuclear Gamble is one in which every American has a stake. Those stakes are too high for us to ignore the warnings and refuse to urge our legislators to enact the precautionary measures outlined by Marvin Resnikoff and his collaborators on the staff of the Council on Economic Priorities.

Bill Mock is chairman of the League's research committee.
Timetable for Second Repository Project

The U.S. Department of Energy has issued the following schedule for repository siting in the Crystalline Repository Project. The timetable is taken from the Draft Area Recommendation Report, issued January 1986.

**July 1986:** Issue final area recommendation report

**July 1986:** Identify potentially acceptable sites

**December 1986:** Issue final area characterization plan

**December 1986:** Begin area phase field investigations

**January 1990:** Complete area phase field investigations

**September 1991:** Issue final environmental assessments

**December 1991:** President approves sites

**January 1993:** Issue initial site characterization plan

**March 1993:** Request Congressional approval for construction

**March 1998:** President recommends second repository site to Congress

**May 1998:** Submit license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

**August 2000:** Receive construction authorization from NRC and begin construction

**June 2006:** Begin waste emplacement

Recommendations to the Gov't.

A group of concerned citizens representing 23 North Carolina organizations and the Steering Committee of the North Carolina Alliance presented the following recommendations to the Governor's Citizens Advisory Committee on February 6.

- Oppose the siting and construction of the Tennessee MRS.
- Oppose the Crystalline Repository Project siting process: the schedule and DOE's management of the project.
- Examine the dangers of transporting high-level nuclear wastes through the mountains.
- Promote participation of the citizens from the sited areas in the state's commentary on the Draft ARR.
- Ensure full participation of citizens in the DOE-public hearings; provide an open microphone, a state transcript, and timely release of hearing testimony.

Your Opinion Counts

The League Line encourages letters to the editor with opposing or similar viewpoints to our own. Your name, address and phone number must accompany each letter for verification. Anonymous letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for length, libelous material or material that is, to our knowledge, factually incorrect. Letters may be addressed to: Letters to the Editor

The League Line

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West Jefferson, NC 28694

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