



US public views sought on waste siting consent

26 January 2016

The US Department of Energy (DOE) has invited public comment by 15 June on a consent-based approach to siting facilities for the storage and disposal of used commercial nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

An Invitation for Public Comment was issued in the US Federal Register on 23 December and the first of a series of public meetings was held in Washington DC on 20 January.

A Blue Ribbon Commission was tasked with developing alternative strategies after the US administration shelved the program to develop a national repository for used fuel at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. A strategy for the USA's management and disposal of used nuclear fuel and high-level waste was then drawn up.

The strategy outlines an integrated waste management system starting with the development by 2021 of a pilot interim storage facility to accept used fuel from reactors that have already closed. This would be followed by the development of a larger interim storage facility by 2025. Finally, one or more long-term geologic repositories would be developed by 2048. A consent-based approach to siting the facilities is to be taken throughout the decision making process.

The current consultation process aims to seek public input to help to decide how to define "consent". The DOE has asked specifically for input on how it can best ensure that the site selection process is fair. It has also asked for input on which models and experience it should use in designing its process - consent-based models for siting nuclear waste facilities are being used in Canada, Finland and Sweden - and who should be involved in the site selection process. It also asks what information the public and communities feel they would need to enable them to participate in the site selection process.

The initial meeting was chaired by undersecretary for science and energy, Lynn Orr, and involved a keynote presentation, panel discussion, question-

and-answer sessions and poster session. Public meetings are due to take place in Chicago in March and Atlanta in April, with further meetings to be announced.

Two private sector proposals for interim storage solutions - a consolidated interim storage facility in Texas, led by Waste Control Specialists, and an interim used fuel storage facility proposed by Holtec International and the Eddy-Lea Alliance of New Mexico - are also being developed.

*Researched and written
by World Nuclear News*

ISSN 2040-5766