

**Springville Journal, Thursday, May 29, 2008**

**DEC issues a statement on progress at WVDP**

By MITCHELL LAW  
Journal Reporter

New York State Department of Conservation (DEC) issued a new report recently which stated the US Department of Energy (DOE) has yet to reach the first milepost of an agreement which was signed 21 years ago for cleanup of radioactive waste at Western New York Nuclear Service Center (WNYNSC) which is located in West Valley.

West Valley is a 3,345 acre site formerly run by Nuclear Fuel Services. The agreement was signed in May 1987 by the federal government, the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes and the Radioactive Waste Campaign.

The Department of Conservation in their statement about the DOE reaching the first milestone, was referring to the completion of a final environmental impact statement, which is currently in progress by a Core Team.

The Core Team is a cooperation of DOE, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), DEC and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH).

Another concern issued by the DEC was the level of funding which was allocated to the West Valley project. The 2008 federal budget allocates \$57.6 million for West Valley. DEC's report indicated that a minimum commitment of \$95 million per year for a decade would allow for significant cleanup.

In response, DOE Director Bryan Bower told the Journal, "We have to consider where the site was in 2005-2006 because that's when the funding process began."

He said it takes a number of years for the government to process and make a decision on the funding for West Valley.

"In 2005-2006 we didn't have a decision for the project, we didn't have a path forward," he added. In the eyes of the DOE, significant progress has been made over the years for West Valley in cooperation with the New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA). DOE contracts West Valley Environmental Services (WVES) at the West Valley site.

Since the 1980 West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) Act, the waste solidification process began and so far, two of their goals have been achieved.

First of those goals was the solidification of high-level radioactive liquid waste at the site. The second step has been the design of containers for permanent disposal of the solidified waste.

Other ongoing projects yet to be completed at WVDP are the shipment of canisters for federal repository for disposal, the disposal of low-level and transuranic waste and the decontamination and decommissioning of the facilities which were used by the project.

"The best way to make sure we have the funding is to have a plan. We are working to develop that plan," Bower said.

The draft of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) continues to be discussed by the Core Team. The EIS is a document which analyzes and compares potential environmental impacts of four alternatives for decommissioning and/or long-term stewardship at the WVDP and the WNYNSC. Four alternatives which have been drafted include: state-wide removal, site-wide close in-place, no action and phased decision making.

The recommended preferred alternative is the phased decision-making which includes the active on-site management of SDA for up to 30 years.

It would also include the removal of most WVDP facilities, identification and completion of activities to support future decisions on exhumation or in-place closure of remaining WVDP facilities. This is a preferred alternative, it isn't a decision, Bower stated. "It gets us moving in the right direction and moving toward a decision."

Bower explained that once the Core Team has a plan, it's easier to go to the DOE, and eventually the Office of Management and Budget which represents the president, to ask for the funding from Congress.

The DOE director applauded the DEC for recognizing the value of the core team and the benefits of moving ahead with a phased decommissioning of West Valley.

"When we are all moving ahead in the same direction it's easier to move ahead to go to congress and ask for funding on the plan," Bower added.

Cleanup at WVDP is led by the Department of Energy. The site is owned by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. West Valley Environmental Services LLC is the prime contractor to the DOE at the West Valley site.

**The Reformer.com, 06-12-2008**

Nuclear reprocessing

Editor of the *Reformer*:

I am writing in response to a letter to the editor that made light of the concept of global warming, implying that using carbon based sources of fuel will not harm the environment. This is a subject that I will not, or perhaps cannot, take issue with here.

However, I would like to speak out about the comment that, among other things, we ought to work on the technology of reprocessing nuclear waste, (just as many other countries do currently).

The Nuclear Information and Resource Service, (the NIRS) put out a fact sheet called "Reprocessing is Not the Solution to the Nuclear Waste problem." It seems that in 1970 it was decided that irradiated fuel and the plutonium it contains should be treated as a waste, not a resource. This was because the only commercial reprocessing site, in West Valley New York, was a complete failure and, to this day, has never been cleaned up, and is burdened still with a projected cost of over \$5 billion.

Radioactive waste, when it is removed from the reactor, is at least a solid ceramic pellet that is encased in thin metal cladding. This waste, 20 to 30 tons of which is produced each year at Vermont Yankee, is already millions of times more radioactive than fresh uranium. Unshielded, in seconds, it would produce a lethal dose of radioactivity that would be a hazard for 12,000 generations to come.

Reprocessing, as I understand it, destabilizes this already deadly waste by chopping up the fuel rods and dissolving them in nitric acid. The result is a "radioactive stew that is then processed to remove the plutonium and uranium, leaving behind the highly radioactive fission products in the liquid." There have been attempts to restabilize this material, but the stability of the ceramic pellet and the metal clad fuel rod has been lost.

It's true that reprocessing is being done in France, the UK, Russia and Japan, but, according to the NIRS, "every reprocessing site is an environmental catastrophe, with massive releases of radioactivity into air, land and water; high worker radiation exposures, and residues that are harder to handle than the terrible waste it begins with."

Also reprocessing, which is "unviable without large taxpayer subsidies," "creates stockpiles of nuclear weapons-usable plutonium." This is a shocking contradiction to the United States' continuous demands that other nations abstain from nuclear proliferation.

I hope people will go to the NIRS Web site, learn more, and then question those who speak casually about what they like to call recycling because the word sounds friendly, like something we do at the dump.

There is nothing friendly about nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. If the world somehow survives the Chernobyls, the Hiroshimas, the depleted uranium, and the 120,000 tons of waste that our reactors have already produced, we are still leaving 12,000 generations of children a legacy of deadly radioactive waste in one form or another.

Next year we have a choice to create a truly sustainable and truly safe energy future for our children and grandchildren by replacing Vermont Yankee with a diverse package of energy solutions that can bring jobs and prosperity to our state. Our legislature has taken back the power to vote no to the extension of the reactors life beyond 2012. Please encourage them to do so.

Jane Newton,

South Londonderry, June 12



## Republicans fail in energy crisis

First published: Sunday, June 22, 2008

Remedies for soaring gasoline prices proposed by President Bush and Sen. John McCain, who the GOP prays succeeds him, would increase America's capacity to produce more energy from its own resources.

What those remedies would not do is reduce the cost of gas anytime soon or much ever. The President's demand that Congress immediately lift its bans on exploring for oil and natural gas off-shore and on federal lands wouldn't be productive for at least seven years, more likely 10. The impact on world prices, and on the cost of a gallon of gas in America, would be minimal. That's because the U.S. controls, at most, only 3 percent of the world's oil reserves.

In a political year, the President, the Republican candidate and the Republican congressional minority are trying to leverage the American people's disgruntlement with gas prices that have increased six-fold in recent years. Their aim is to overcome environmental restrictions imposed in response to public demand nearly 30 years ago and give their staunchest supporters, the oil companies, what they have been lusting for.

Nowhere in the Bush or McCain proposals is there so much as a hint that all of the added oil and gas would be retained exclusively for American consumption, which presently accounts for a quarter of the world's production. That's because it wouldn't. Instead America's mammoth oil companies would continue to seek the highest returns, meaning the growing markets in Asia especially.

The 200 mile off-shore exploration requires the use of drill ships outfitted with the gear to exploit oil fields located deep in ocean beds. The makers of the these ships are furiously building, but the world competition for their product is severe. That adds to the time lag between finding a field and exploiting it commercially.

If, in the fullness of time, the exploration of off-limits fields were all to come on line and be as productive as their most ardent boosters predict, their impact would be diluted by yearly population increases and the accompanying rise in demand for gasoline and natural gas. The proposals put forward by Bush and McCain last week could at best help in the far future, but only a bit.

For his part, McCain came out in another speech for the building of 45 nuclear power plants in the U.S. by 2030, and another 55 some unspecified time down the road. At present, the 104 nuclear reactors still on line produce about 20 percent of the country's electricity. Bush also routinely invokes nuclear power as an energy shortage antidote.

Their reasoning is why not step up nuclear's role because it does not add to the global warming as fossil fuels do.

What McCain did not discuss was the practicality of doing so. The federal government over the years has dedicated billions of dollars in subsidies to the nuclear industry. But that would be chicken feed to what it would cost to erect new plants today. It could well be so much that any gains would be overtaken by their costs. Besides, McCain has no plan to add to nuclear subsidies, pretty much undermining his supposedly bold idea.

Neither did he speak to the abiding issue of how to dispose of the increased hazardous nuclear waste that is a byproduct of nuclear power. His campaign said he would find a way, not otherwise spelled out.

I wish he would let us in on what he has mind to safeguard the people against toxic radioactivity that requires at least 10,000 years to dissipate as a threat to health. No one currently in the neighborhood of any nuclear waste holding tanks -- and especially not the citizens of Nevada, where the Yucca Mountain depository is located -- should be indifferent to this drawback of nuclear power.

For example, in 1987 the U.S. government agreed to begin cleaning up nuclear waste at New York state's West Valley Nuclear Service Center. A report issued recently by the state Department of Environmental Conservation stated that "Exactly 21 years later, it has yet to reach the first regulatory milestone" at the facility that had been shut down since 1975.

The U.S. hasn't found the money or the will to cope with the toxic messes created a generation ago, so how is it prepared to underwrite a major expansion?

Dealing with the challenge of the energy crisis requires more than political tomfoolery that the Republican President and the Republican candidate have so far mustered. The solution rests in the nearer future much more on government supported conservation. On their own, Americans are beginning to drive less. They should be enabled to do so in more efficient vehicles and encouraged to otherwise modify the profligate ways energy is consumed in this country. That actually would bring costs down.

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**HEARST** *newspapers*

## **Buffalo News, 06-23-2008**

### **Letter to the Editor: Nuclear power plants pose serious problems**

On June 8, The News ran a Viewpoints article in support of federal loan guarantees to nuclear plant construction. Author Theodore Adams misses the mark on both the economics and the waste problems associated with nuclear plants.

The nuclear cycle is complex and anything nuclear is expensive at every single stage. We will pay for the power the nuclear plant produces and we will keep on paying with our taxes for the government subsidies to the nuclear industry.

Today, subsidies also include the enormous costs associated with dealing with the wastes of past and present nuclear cycles: from uranium mine tailings to disposal of fuel rods and contaminated materials to the demolition of outdated plants.

In Western New York alone, we have significantly contaminated sites at **West Valley**, Tonawanda and Lake Ontario Ordnance. While some progress has been made, the industry has a long way to go before it can show that its wastes have been cleaned up at these sites.

Nuclear power is not affordable as a private industry and must rely on government handouts. This fact alone is an antithesis of a free-market system and denies tenets of capitalism and principles of conservative economics. First things first, please. Solve the waste problem before creating more of the same problem.

Joanne Hameister

*Chairwoman, Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes*