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Later deadline sought on West Valley hearings

By Kathy Kellogg CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

ASHFORD — Nuclear waste watchdog groups are asking the Department of Energy (DOE) to extend a June 8 comment deadline by almost five months and to expand the number of public hearings to raise public awareness about an environmental impact study on cleanup proposals at the West Valley Demonstration Project and Western New York Nuclear Service Center.

In December the DOE released its updated study and will hold public hearings on March 31 at the William Seneca Building on the Seneca Nation of Indians in Irving, April 1 at the Ashford Office Complex on Route 219 in Ashford, and April 2 at the Clarion Hotel on McKinley Parkway in Blasdell. A decision on the waste cleanup is expected.

A group of environmentalists Wednesday urged the West Valley Citizen Task Force advisory panel to support their request for an extension and for three additional hearings, in Buffalo, Rochester and Albany. They also met Thursday with other interest groups and the Seneca Nation of Indians to spread the word about the environmental impact study and about an independent study that recommends a full cleanup.

“We’re asking for more time so everybody in the state can hear and learn” about the process that will result in a final record of decision on what to do with the site, said Diane D’Arrigo of Nuclear Information Resource Center.

D’Arrigo, along with Anne Rabe of the Citizens Environmental Coalition and Center for Health, Environment and Justice, said an extra few months will help inform and gain the participation of people statewide who are affected by the site and its cleanup. And they point out that they have been waiting decades for the environmental impact study, which was first drafted and released to the public in 1996 but has been extensively revised over the past 12 years.

The women also asked the advisory group to join them in asking for a full site removal of all wastes to less risky above-ground storage sites as soon as possible due to worsening risks of soil erosion, water transport and spread of radioactive materials.

Their alternative is not included in the environmental impact study. According to the DOE impact study the proposed options range from sitewide removal of all facilities at an approximate cost of \$15 billion, closing the site and leaving the waste in place at an estimated cost of \$6.4 billion, and doing nothing but monitoring and routine maintenance at a

cost of about \$13 billion.

The DOE and the state Nuclear Research and Development Authority prefer a two-phase alternative that removes the main reprocessing plant building, the vitrification facility that was used to solidify 660,000 gallons of high-level nuclear waste, the source of a leaking underground plume of strontium-90, and low-level waste treatment lagoons. The first phase would cost between \$1.8 and \$5.7 billion but requires further spending on technical studies and postpones some decisions as well as further cleanup for 30 years.

“A six-month public review period is way out of the ordinary,” John Chamberlain of the DOE said on Friday.

He added that the DOE is probably going to consider the request but the typical public review period lasts about 60 days.

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WEST VALLEY

Interest growing on cleanup options

By Kathy Kellogg

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With less than five months remaining before a June 8 deadline, U. S. Department of Energy officials are gearing up to receive public comments on the 800-page updated draft environmental impact study of cleanup and closing options at the former Western New York Nuclear Service Center near West Valley.

The first draft, called the Cleanup and Closure Draft EIS of 1996, generated 1,170 comments in writing during a six month comment period and at three public hearings held in August 1996.

A few letters have trickled in to DOE headquarters in response to the second draft of the environmental statement, and four environmental groups have requested a four-month extension of the comment deadline — a request the DOE is considering but is not likely to grant. Interest in the proposed cleanup options may grow as informational meetings are scheduled, and as public hearings draw near in March and April. A final decision will be made in November or December to set the course for site activities in 2011.

But only a handful of area residents attended the DOE's quarterly update Tuesday in Springville, where an outline of cleanup alternatives was presented along with reports on the past few months' site-management activities.

Several audience members said afterward that they intend to keep up with the process but don't feel any better after learning more about what must be removed from the 200-acre site containing waste from commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing that ceased in 1972.

"I worry where the funding is coming from," said a man who declined to give his name. "The state and federal government are not owning up to whose problem this originally was."

Ray Vaughn, of the watchdog group West Valley Coalition on Nuclear Wastes and a member of the citizen advisory group, the West Valley Citizen Task Force, rarely misses a meeting.

"I keep coming partly because of the little things that are emphasized that I didn't know to ask. . . It's important to attend meetings, and it will take an effort like we did in 1996," said Vaughn.

Officials urged the public to attend the next quarterly update at 6:30 p. m. May 5 in the Ashford Office Complex on Route 219.

Three public hearings will be held, March 31 from 6 to 9 p. m. in the William Seneca Building, 12837 Route 438, Irving; April 1 from 6:30 to 9:30 p. m. in the Ashford Office Complex; and April 2 from 6:30 to 9:30 p. m. in the Clarion Hotel McKinley at S-3950 Mc-Kinley Parkway in Blasdell.



JUST OUTSTANDING — Helen Brogan, Outstanding Citizen of the Year (left), accepts her award from Molly Frank, SACC president.



AWARDED — Fellowship Hill Ministries, were named Outstanding Not-for-Profit group. The staff, above, from left to right, Barb Bodi, Karen King, Julie Ryan and Linette Crelly.

Springville Area Chamber announces award recipients

Friends and family of Helen Brogan gathered to celebrate her Outstanding Citizen of the Year award presented to her at the annual Springville Area Chamber of Commerce Dinner on January 24. Linette and Todd Crelly accepted the Outstanding Not-for-Profit award for the Fellowship Hill Ministries for the Ministries' valued contributions to the community. Outstanding Business of the Year was awarded to West Valley Environmental Services LLC. Project Manager Al Konetzni received the award on behalf of its employees.

During the awards ceremony, Village of Springville Deputy Mayor Jean Moncreif, and Town of Concord Supervisor Gary Eppolito, presented each awardee with a joint proclamation from the village and town thanking them for their important contributions to the community.

This year's dinner, hosted by Pop's Sports Bar and Grill, was well attended by the community. Winners of the Springville Area Chamber of Commerce raffle were: \$500 cash - Linette Crelly, Sabres hockey tickets - Jack Gerber, and the Buffalo Sports Basket - Dr. Michael Reilly.



BUSINESS OF THE YEAR DONATION — During the Springville Area Chamber of Commerce's Annual Awards dinner, Al Konetzni, project manager for West Valley Environmental Services LLC, right, presented a check for \$2,000 to Chamber president Molly Frank, left, and Chamber executive director Kate Moody, center. This annual donation assists the Chamber with its mission to encourage, develop, and unite the business community in the Springville region.