SONGS CEP Compilation of Public Email Communications

December 1, 2025, thru January 27, 2026

Table of Contents		
#	**Title**	**Page**
1	For Awareness: San Diego Union Tribune Article – What the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station looks like with demolition at 80%	1
2	For Awareness: 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake in Vicinity of San Onofre at 12:36 pm Today – No Impact to the Site	7
3	For Awareness: Recent Articles Re: SONGS Plant Demolition Enters Final Stages and Efforts by City of Irvine to Address SONGS Waste	8
4	For Awareness: Three Recent Articles Re: SONGS Dismantlement Progress, 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake South of the Plant and Irvine Becoming a Leader for Spent Nuclear Fuel	16
5	For Awareness: Recent Articles Related to SONGS – What's Up with dead lobsters at San Onofre State Beach? And Jim Desmond's smart idea on removing San Onofre's nuclear waste	26
6	For Awareness: OC Register Article – America, meet NuCorp, a mythical answer to nuclear waste woes	32

1. For Awareness: San Diego Union Tribune Article – What the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station looks like with demolition at 80%

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Monday, December 1, 2025 1:52 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; John Gabbard; Mike Sappingfield; Ken Schultz
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: San Diego Union Tribune Article - What the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station looks like with demolition at 80%

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share Rob Nikolewski's San Diego Union Tribune article on the status of the SONGS decommissioning project.

https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2025/12/01/what-the-san-onofre-nuclear-generating-station-looks-like-with-demolition-at-80/

What the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station looks like with demolition at 80%

The first of the iconic domes that loom over Interstate 5 will start coming down in the fourth quarter of next year



Demolition continues at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. Unit 2 is on the left and Unit 3 on the right. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **Rob Nikolewski** | rob.nikolewski@sduniontribune.com | The San Diego Union-Tribune

PUBLISHED: December 1, 2025 at 6:00 AM PST

Five years down, about three more to go to complete the dismantlement of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

"When we started in 2020, we said it would be about eight years," said Ron Pontes, Environmental Oversight and Site Closure Manager for Southern California Edison. "We're really on track with that, moving right along."

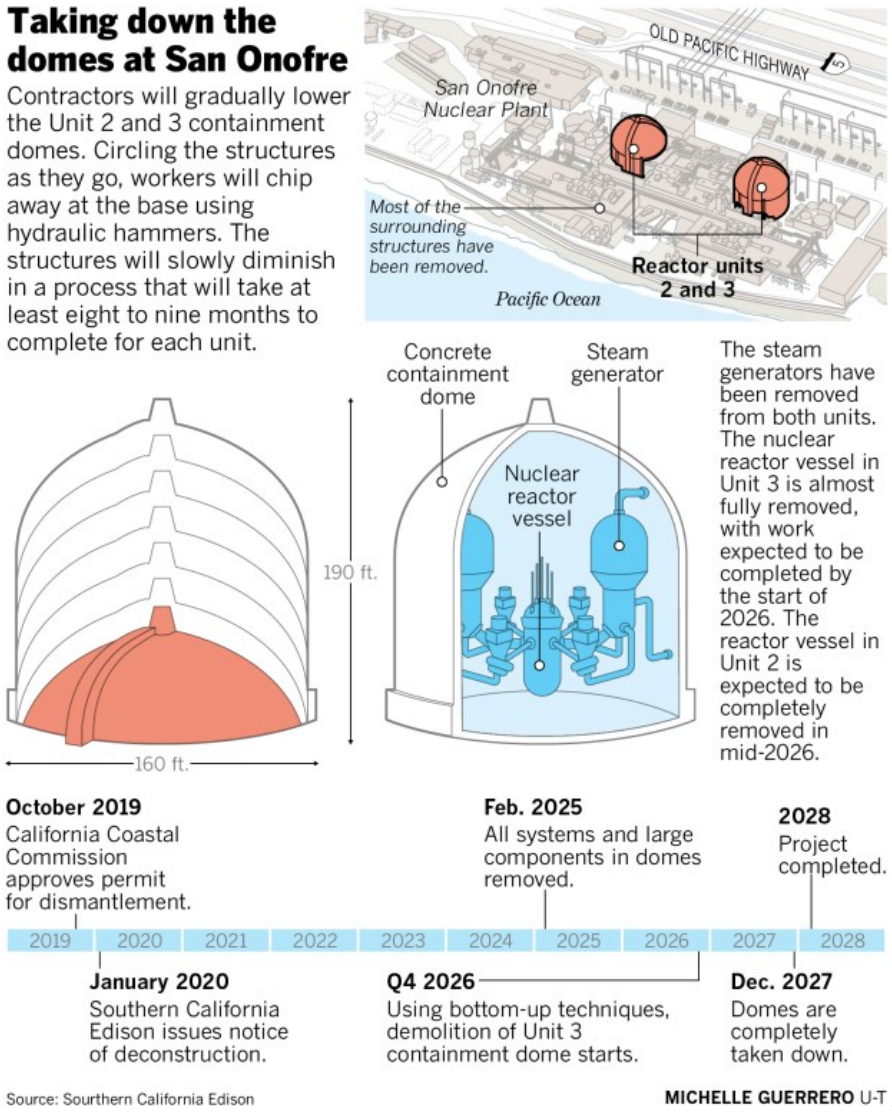
Drivers zooming along Interstate 5 still see the two giant containment domes that rise 190 feet high at the site of the plant, known as SONGS for short. But a recent tour showed the Union-Tribune the extent of the massive deconstruction effort.

Nearly all of the above-ground structures are gone and piles of rubble, almost reminiscent of old photos of bombed out buildings from World War II, lie scattered around the scene as workers — some operating excavators and other heavy equipment — busily remove chunks of debris from the 84-acre footprint of SONGS.

"We're about 80% done with this phase," Pontes said.

Demolition efforts on the $4.7 billion project started in October 2020 and are scheduled to wrap up by the end of 2028.

By the time work is completed, about 1.1 billion pounds of equipment, components, rebar, concrete, steel and titanium will be removed. About 80% of the material is presumed to be radioactive.



SONGS has a railroad spur on site and most of the rubble gets shipped by railcars to a disposal facility in Clive, Utah. The vast majority of the material is labeled as Class A waste, the lowest level of radioactive material.

Class B and C low-level waste have already been removed, with non-radioactive material sent to Las Vegas for recycling or to a landfill facility in Arizona.

By the time the dismantlement wraps up, about 5,500 shipments will be made. Thus far, roughly 570 million pounds have left San Onofre in about 2,400 shipments.

Rail exports are monitored by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Transportation. A host of local, state and federal agencies that include the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control and the U.S. Environmental Protection Administration also conduct environmental and building inspections.

"We're definitely well-regulated," Pontes said.

When will the domes come down?

The two containment towers will not come down all at once; there won't be any dramatic implosions.

Rather, each dome will be reduced gradually, from the bottom up. Workers using hydraulic hammers will chip away at the 160-foot-wide circumference and, in stages, each dome will collapse onto itself, about 8 feet at a time.

"The weight of the building, gravity, works for you," Pontes said. "Eventually it just settles and then you muck out all the concrete and rebar and do it again in 6, 8, 10-foot lifts, just hammering away at the side of it."



Crews using heavy equipment work on dismantlement efforts near Unit 2 at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station on Nov. 19. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

The Unit 3 containment dome will come down first, with operations scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter of next year. Unit 3 is on the southern end of the plant, nearer to San Diego.

Once Unit 3 is gone, work on Unit 2 will begin. It takes about eight months to bring down each dome, so the timeline predicts that by December 2027, both domes will be gone.

"They are iconic, everybody sees them," Pontes said. "So (their demolition is) going to have some obvious visual impact to people who travel on the freeway. Going to lose that marker, right?"

What's inside the domes now

Large components inside Units 2 and 3 have been removed. That includes steam generators, pumps and pressurizers. They are now in the process of being demolished, with the debris going into railcars to be shipped away.

What remains in each unit is a reactor vessel — thick steel containers that held nuclear fuel in the reactor core and provided one of several barriers to keep radioactive material out of the environment.

The vessel in each unit needs to be segmented and removed. That work is nearly complete in Unit 3 and about to start in Unit 2.

With the steel in the reactor vessels from 9 to 12 inches thick, workers take them apart using a torch.

“We actually unfastened a reactor vessel from its support and lifted it with an internal tool that was built,” Pontes said. “We lift it up a little bit, we’re able to turn it and we’ve got a torch that’s stationary. As you turn the reactor vessel, it cuts it into small segments.”

The chunks go to the disposal site in Utah.

Pontes said the project at SONGS was informed by efforts at other nuclear plants across the country, such as Zion Nuclear Power Station in Illinois that took about 10 years. It employed a “rip and ship” process.

“It’s really a brute force approach, to break the plant up into literally smaller and smaller chunks so you have manageable waste streams that can be transported out of here,” Pontes said.

Perhaps the starkest representation of the project comes from a photo taken Aug. 6, 2024, showing the inside of the SONGS control room — what used to be the nerve center of the power plant — just before it was completely demolished.



A photo taken on Aug. 6, 2024, inside what was once the control room at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, just before it was completely demolished. (Southern California Edison)

Not completely done by 2028

SONGS stopped producing power in 2012 after a leak in a steam generator led to the plant’s closure.

While the demolition efforts in San Onofre are expected to wrap up in about three years, dismantlement does not mean SONGS has been decommissioned.

There are still a pair of dry storage facilities on the facility's north end, housing canisters filled with 3.55 million pounds of nuclear waste.

One storage facility contains 73 stainless steel canisters containing spent fuel that have been lowered into vertical cavities. The other holds 50 canisters that are stacked horizontally.

Another 13 canisters of material from the dismantlement that classified as greater than Class C waste sit in the horizontal storage site.

The canisters rest a little more than 100 feet from the Pacific, protected by a seawall.

Until there's a place to send them, SONGS will not be considered fully decommissioned.

Charles Langley, executive director at La Mesa-based Public Watchdogs and longtime nuclear power critic, said his group has more anxiety about the canisters at SONGS than about Edison's dismantlement efforts.

"They're engineers. They ought to be able to take stuff apart as well as they can build it," Langley said. "We just wish they had engineered a better solution for the nuclear waste and, unfortunately, there aren't any easy solutions."

Langley and others have expressed worry about the stainless steel canisters remaining so close to the ocean for years on end.

"Our concerns are almost exclusively with the nuclear waste," Langley said, "because it's eternally deadly."



The vertical storage facility at the north end of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. Specially designed outlet vent covers were placed atop of the enclosures in 2024 as a precautionary measure to avoid wind-driven rain from entering the vaults. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

The canisters stay parked at SONGS — just as they are at other nuclear sites across the U.S. — because the federal government has yet to find a place to store the roughly 91,000 metric tons of spent fuel that has accumulated over the years at commercial facilities.

Yucca Mountain in Nevada had been slated as a permanent waste site but the Obama administration cut off funding for Yucca in 2010, after years of protests from lawmakers in the Silver State who had long opposed the project.

With Yucca off the table, federal officials have gone back to the drawing board, looking at potential sites to accept some or all of the waste, either on an interim (still-to-be-determined period) or permanent basis.

Edison officials have long insisted that the canisters at SONGS are robust and can withstand events that include rising sea levels, earthquakes and tsunamis.

"We generated that spent nuclear fuel due to the operation of the plant," Pontes said. "It's our responsibility to take good care of it, and we're going to fulfill that responsibility … Now the federal government will eventually solve this problem. I just don't know when it's going to happen. It will happen. (The waste at SONGS) is safely stored where it is."

Once the demolition work is finished, all that is expected to remain at SONGS will be two dry storage facilities; a security building with personnel to look over the waste; a seawall 28 feet high, as measured at average low tide at San Onofre Beach; a walkway connecting two beaches north and south of the plant, and a switchyard with power lines.

The switchyard's substation without transformers stays put because it houses electricity infrastructure that provides a key interconnection for the power grid in the region.

The $4.7 billion spent to dismantle SONGS will be paid from a decommissioning fund collected through rates paid by Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric customers when the power plant produced electricity.

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Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)
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2. For Awareness: 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake in Vicinity of San Onofre at 12:36 pm Today – No Impact to the Site

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Sunday, December 7, 2025 4:37 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; John Gabbard; Mike Sappingfield; Ken Schultz
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Cc: Fred M Bailly; Manuel Camargo; Liese Mosher
Subject: For Awareness: 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake in Vicinity of San Onofre at 12:36 pm Today - No Impact to Site

Hello CEP Members,

Today, Sunday, Dec. 7 at 12:36 pm, a 3.1 magnitude earthquake was experienced in the vicinity of San Clemente. While the quake was felt at the shuttered San Onofre nuclear plant, there was no impact to the site.

Following procedures, the SONGS Security team walked down the Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation, and no damage was found. Recall San Onofre's Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation is designed to withstand the maximum credible earthquake (and any other credible threat) without releasing radioactive material.

Note that when assessing the seismic safety at nuclear facilities, "peak ground acceleration" at the facility's location is a more meaningful way to measure an earthquake's potential impact, rather than magnitude. As approved by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Units 2 and 3 at SONGS (including the spent fuel pools) were built to withstand a peak ground acceleration of 0.67g (g refers to the force of gravity). The dry spent fuel storage systems were constructed to withstand 1.5g, more than double the design of the nuclear plants. For comparison, current California Building Codes require buildings in the vicinity of SONGS to be designed to withstand a peak ground acceleration of 0.38g.

More information on seismic impacts can be found here on SONGSCommunity.com.

Please let us know if you have questions.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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3. For Awareness: Recent Articles Re: SONGS Plant Demolition Enters Final Stages and Efforts by City of Irvine to Address SONGS Waste

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 2:45 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; John Gabbard; Mike Sappingfield
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Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Recent Articles Re: SONGS plant demolition enters final stages and Efforts by City of Irvine to Address SONGS Waste

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share three recent articles regarding SONGS decommissioning and the City of Irvine's efforts to address the spent nuclear fuel at SONGS.

San Onofre nuclear plant demolition enters final stages | cbs8.com https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/local/san-onofre-nuclear-plant-demolition-enter-final-stages/509-aefe04f7-cc27-42dd-a518-4d7221a2db40

https://voiceofoc.org/2025/12/irvine-eyes-helping-secure-san-onofres-radioactive-waste/

ALL TOP STORIES

Irvine Eyes Helping Secure San Onofre's Radioactive Waste



BY **ANGELINA HICKS** Dec 11, 2025 Why you can trust Voice of OC



View of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station past the sea wall in San Clemente on Nov. 15, 2020. Credit: OMAR SANCHEZ, Voice of OC

The City of Irvine is slated to join local groups working to safely secure millions of pounds of spent nuclear fuel remaining at the decommissioned San Onofre power plant, located about 30 miles from the city.

Irvine City Council members voted 4-3 during their Tuesday night meeting to join the Spent Fuel Solutions Coalition and take an active role in Congressman Mike Levin's Spent Nuclear Fuel Task Force.

The groups consist of experts, local officials, environmental representatives and community members working to address the hazardous waste in San Onofre and study temporary and permanent solutions, like creating an off-site storage facility for the spent nuclear fuel.

The Spent Fuel Solutions Coalition is co-chaired by Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley.

Tuesday's vote also directed city staff to draft and return with a resolution supporting the safe removal of spent nuclear fuel and help recruit members of Congress to join the bipartisan Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus.

Councilmembers Mike Carroll, Betty Martinez Franco and Mayor Larry Agran voted no.

The vote came after Agran had proposed creating a team of experts and stakeholders to draft a plan to address radioactive waste at San Onofre.

During Tuesday night's meeting, the move Agran proposed was to ask staff to create a draft roster for that expert team and return to the council in February with the proposed member list.

But Councilmember Kathleen Treseder offered a different proposal, emphasizing that the city should join groups that have already been working on this issue for years instead of creating a separate body of experts.

"I want to make sure that we boost and amplify the current experts who are working on this," Treseder said at the meeting. "I don't want to be duplicating efforts and maybe inadvertently slow down current efforts."

"Congressman Levin has been working very diligently," she continued. "I'm so impressed with him. He very much cares about this issue, and he's seen a lot of wins already. I don't want to, in any way, make that more difficult for him. I would just rather be a team player and work with those who are already on the ground."



Councilmember Kathleen Treseder talks on the phone during a recess of the Irvine City Council meeting on Jan. 28, 2025. Credit: ERIKA TAYLOR, Voice of OC

Agran called her substitute motion a “very hostile act” and emphasized he wants Irvine to be a leader, not a follower, in handling San Onofre’s leftover toxic waste.

“We have some truly unique talent,” he said. “I really wanted to see if we could explore if we could bring some true value added right away to all of this.”

Councilmember Melinda Liu agreed with Treseder, saying she doesn’t want Irvine to go about this process alone.

“We can still be a leader in a group by joining,” Liu said. “We can be active, but I just don’t see how we can do this on our own since there’s already a bipartisan effort on the Congressional level. This is a federal matter that we don’t technically have the jurisdiction here in Irvine as a city.”



The San Onofre sea wall was built to withstand and protect the plant against a tsunami wave. Credit: OMAR SANCHEZ, Voice of OC

The San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station was decommissioned in 2013 and currently stores approximately 3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive waste, calling into question health and safety implications for millions of Southern California residents who live in the region.

While the U.S. government is supposed to clean up and restore the area, there's no clear timeline for when federal leaders will get that process going.

Agran argued that the city shouldn't keep waiting on the federal government and was calling for all the waste to be moved from the empty plant to a fortified storage facility at Camp Pendleton that's behind the 5 Freeway and further from the coastline.

[***Read***: Irvine Looks to Become Local Leader for Handling Toxic Waste]

But the council majority didn't support Agran's proposal to create a team of experts at this time.

Treseder said they could bring back his idea if they don't see enough traction after the city joins existing clean up efforts.

"It's Irvine setting up our own storage planning team and maybe attempting to reinvent the wheel that I'm concerned about," she said.

Teseder's proposal for the city to join local groups followed a suggestion made by Dan Stetson, an Irvine resident who serves as chair of the community engagement panel for the decommissioning of the San Onofre plant.

During public comment at the Dec. 9 meeting, he recommended all four points that Treseder proposed and the council ended up approving by a slim majority.

"For decades, we've seen plans to remove the spent nuclear fuel," he said at the meeting. "The problem isn't making the plan. The problem is implementing them."

"The problem isn't technical; it's political will and institutional reform," he continued. "We all want the spent fuel removed quickly and safely. We know what needs to be done. We just need to finally do it."

The Samuel Lawrence Foundation — an organization that advocates for the safe removal, relocation and management of nuclear waste at San Onofre — expressed disappointment in the council's vote in a Wednesday afternoon news release.

"San Onofre is a ticking time bomb," Bart Ziegler, president and founder of the foundation, said in the statement. "Instead of pursuing proactive, forward-thinking governance, the Council has fallen backwards. Their choice to wait for someone else on this vital issue places our lives, communities, oceans, and economy at risk."

Angelina Hicks is the Voice of OC Collegiate News Service Editor. Contact her at ahicks@voiceofoc.org or on Twitter @angelinahicks13.

Https://enewspaper.ocregister.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=843cdf9b-8511-4fa0-9e5c-611e48fa2edf&share=true

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Irvine to join local efforts to address nuclear waste

Leaders support aiding San Onofre cleanup, but balk at contributing city finances

By Victoria Le
VictoriaLe@scng.com

Should Irvine look to take a lead in relocating and storing San Onofre's 3.6 million pounds of radioactive waste?

The Irvine City Council is split.

Overlooking the coastline from its 84 acres on the northern edge of Camp Pendleton, just south of San Clemente, the shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Plant has housed millions of pounds of spent nuclear fuel sealed in 123 stainless-steel canisters much longer than originally advertised.

The plant was decommissioned in 2013 after its steam generators were found to be faulty. The federal government vowed to find a permanent resting place for the byproduct, but as of 2025, no nuclear waste has been picked up for permanent disposal.The waste remains just 25 minutes away from Irvine and within 50 miles for about 8 million people. There is interest in moving the storage to higher ground on Camp Pendleton, on the east side of the 5 Freeway, while it waits for the federal government.

In late September, Mayor Larry Agran convened the City Council for a special study session on the delay in removing the waste, suggesting "Plan B" of a local solution be considered, including maybe Irvine playing a role.

This week, Irvine leaders had an official discussion on what the council thought the city should do.

And a majority decided the city will join the Spent Fuel Solutions Coalition — a group of local governments, elected officials and organizations who support the relocation of the San Onofre plant's nuclear waste to a federally licensed

off-site facility. But at least Agran and Councilmember Mike Carroll argued the city should do more and play a starring role in efforts.

“I’m very concerned about the spent fuel being stored where it is right now,” said Councilmember Kathleen Treseder, who pushed for joining the coalition.

Treseder said as part of Congressman Mike Levin’s Spent Nuclear Fuel Task Force, “I’ve really learned a lot.”

“There are so many experts on that task force … a lot of engineers, community leaders, a lot of grassroots leaders,” she said. “I want to make sure that Irvine supports their efforts.”

But, she said she isn’t going “to support any funding coming from the city for moving the spent nuclear fuel. That could be astronomical in cost.”

“There are already funds that are allocated for doing this,” she said. “Again, I just want to be working with the folks who are already there.”

Agran pushed for the creation of a city-led team of experts to plan the relocation of San Onofre’s spent nuclear fuel. He brought that idea to this week’s council meeting and support from his colleagues would have directed staff to come back in February with names for that team, a timeline and a financial game plan for removing the waste.

“We absolutely want to work with these other organizations,” Agran said. “We have the ability, however, to do some unique things here.”

Other councilmembers echoed Treseder’s financial concerns.

“I have to ask myself, will this make life better for Irvine families? Does this improve our safety services or neighborhoods? Also, is this something that Irvine residents have asked for?” Councilmember James Mai said.

“We can be supportive of this,” he said. “But I don’t believe in spending an enormous amount of money, any sort of money, on it.”

Councilmembers also vowed to help recruit members of Congress to join the bipartisan Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus, to take an active role on that

Spent Nuclear Fuel Task Force and to later pass a resolution supporting safe removal of spent nuclear fuel.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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4. For Awareness: Three Recent Articles Re: SONGS Dismantlement Progress, 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake South of the Plant Irvine Becoming a Leader for Spent Nuclear Fuel

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 2:31 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; John Gabbard; Mike Sappingfield; Ken Schultz
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Three Recent Articles Re: SONGS Dismantlement Progress, 3.1 Magnitude Earthquake South of Plant and Irvine Becoming Leader for Spent Nuclear Fuel

CEP Members and Alternates,

For awareness, I write to share three recent articles related to the SONGS plant regarding dismantlement progress, the 3.1 magnitude earthquake on Sunday, December 7, and the City of Irvine becoming a leader for spent nuclear fuel.

Demolition of iconic containment domes at San Onofre to start next year

About 350 people are working on the $4.7B project to dismantle the nuclear power plant, where 5,500 rail shipments over several years are transporting more than 1.1 billion pounds of rubble to a disposal facility in Utah.

By **Eric S. Page** • Published 4 hours ago • Updated 4 hours ago
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SoCal Edison A screen grab of the containment domes at San Onofre that was shot this week.

The iconic domes at San Onofre nuclear power plant that have served as landmarks for millions of drivers on Interstate 5 passing through Camp Pendleton for more than four decades will be demolished starting next year, an official at SoCal Edison told NBC 7.

The site came online back in 1967 with Unit 1, which was later demolished. It, too had a dome, though officials called it a "beach ball," not the term most San Diegans have referred to the pair of cylindrical structures — Units 2 and 3 — that started generating power in '83 and '84, respectively. They were retired in June 2013.



A screen grab of video shot inside one of the containment domes. Photo courtesy of SoCal Edison

Ron Pontes, SoCal Edison's site-closure manager, has been working on the demolition project since 2014, methodically deconstructing dozens of structures on site. These days, he's joined by about 350 other people on the project

"Unit 3 will be first, and we anticipate starting deconstruction of the building — of the exterior part of the building — in fourth quarter of 2026, and we think it's gonna take about eight months to remove the Unit 3 building, and then, once we finish it, Unit 2 should be ready to come down," Pontes said on Tuesday. "It may even start a little bit earlier."

Both domes are expected to be completely demolished by mid-2027.

Taking down the domes, which are essentially 4-foot thick concrete structures reinforced with structural steel and rebar — is not as complicated as one might think, Pontes said.

"The way we deconstruct them is use hydraulic hammers … big machines that will hammer away at the concrete on the exterior part of the building," Pontes said.

The hammers will tool around the building's base, about 500 feet, until it weakens enough, and gravity kicks in and settles what remains of the building. Then crews will be carting away the debris to a nearby structure — basically a large tent to keep the dust down — that is in the process of being built for that purpose, and will then be pulverized further, then loaded onto capped rail cars and taken to a disposal facility in Clive, Utah.



A lone chair inside the nuclear plant's control room can be seen in this screen grab of demolition of one of the structures already demolished at the site. Photo courtesy of SoCal Edison.

"… the inside of the containment building contains some residual radioactivity in the structures, so we want to control that so we don't disperse that outside into the environment," Pontes said, explaining why it was necessary to erect the tent.

Gradually, virtually imperceptibly, the top of the domes will float toward the ground.

"And you just repeat that process over and over, and slowly the building comes down until it's all gone," Pontes said, other than the cap, which the excavators will demolish on the ground, making their way from the perimeter to the center.

With this method, the dome generally settles kind of uniformly as it comes down, a technique employed elsewhere, Pontes said, including, most recently, at the Zion Nuclear Power Plant north of Chicago.

Before any of this happens, though — in the next nine months or so — the structures INSIDE the containment building need to be dismantled and demolished.

Once the rubble is loaded onto the rail cars, they will be "surveyed, demonstrated to be clean of any radioactivity," Pontes said, adding later that they've never had to unload a rail car.



Demolition underway at San Onofre nuclear plant (2021) The San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station should be gone by 2030, reports NBC 7's Joe Little

"The residual radioactivity that exists in this material is really small, very tiny," Pontes said. "It's really hard even to detect."

When the dust finally settles on the cleared site, Pontes said, they expect to have removed about 1.1 billion pounds of material in about 5,500 rail shipments.

As one might imagine, the demolition comes with a steep price tag, $4.7 billion, which was paid for utility customers in Orange and San Diego counties during the lifetime of the plant, money which was put into a trust till now. Anything left over, Pontes said, would be refunded to ratepayers.

While Pontes won't be getting a bonus if the project comes in under budget, there are other, less-tangible rewards for his efforts, including his proximity to Trestles, the popular surf spot off the shore of Camp Pendleton.

"I get the bonus of working here right next to San Onofre State Beach," Pontes said. "I have a beautiful view. When I step out of this office here, I look down over the bluff and there are surfers in the water there every day."

While the iconic domes will be gone, there is another landmark that some may lament will remain: The towering transmission wires that march across the landscape to the east.

"Well, a number of lines terminate here, so they join here, so the power [flows] across the state," Pontes said.

With one significant exception, Pontes said, the site will be scraped (three feet down, in fact) and left to return to a natural state in 2028 when the work is done.

"There will be the independent spent-fuel storage installation," Pontes said, adding, "that's where the spent fuel from the operation of Units 1, 2 and 3 are stored on-site. That spent nuclear fuel will remain here until the government, the United States government, finds a location for it."

The radioactive material has been sealed in stainless-steel canisters and housed in reinforced steel-and-concrete structures.

Unfortunately, there's no plan at this time for its removal.

"That has been a particular problem for our industry because the government has not, you know, delivered on its promise to pick up the spent nuclear fuel," Pontes said. "They were supposed to start picking up spent fuel from commercial nuclear plants in 1998, and they have not done so."

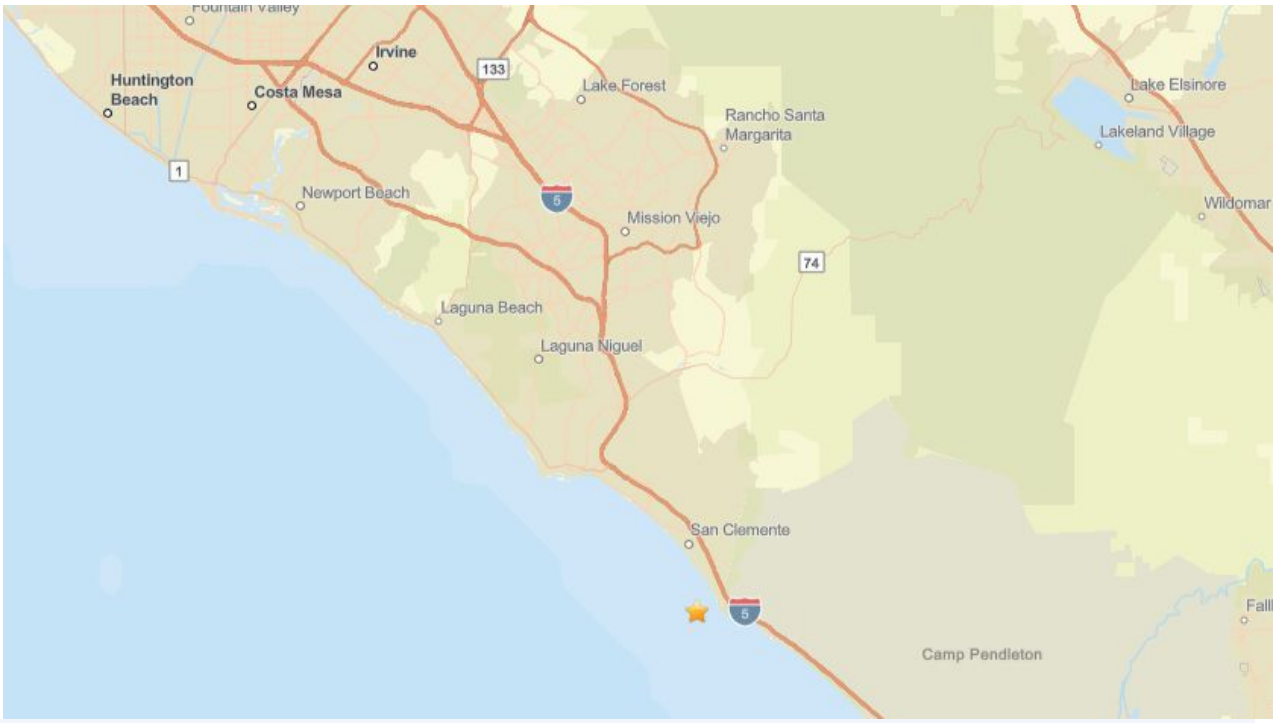
The spent-fuel storage area is located to the north of where the domes are now.

Pontes said that, once their work is done, they don't expect the site and its 84 acres to be open to the public.

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https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/southern-california/earthquake/2025/12/07/3-1-magnitude-earthquake-in-san-clemente

SPECTRUM News 1



(Photo courtesy of U.S.G.S.)

EARTHQUAKE

3.1 magnitude earthquake recorded in San Clemente area

BY SPECTRUM NEWS STAFF SAN CLEMENTE
PUBLISHED 1:43 PM PT DEC. 07, 2025

A 3.1 magnitude earthquake was recorded just over three miles south of San Clemente at 12:36 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The quake, which was recorded between San Clemente State Beach and San Onofre, was a preliminary magnitude 3.3 earthquake, but was later revised to a 3.1 magnitude earthquake.

Irvine Looks to Become Local Leader for Handling Toxic Waste



BY **ANGELINA HICKS** AND **NOAH BIESIADA**3 hours ago Why you can trust Voice of OC



The San Onofre sea wall was built to withstand and protect the plant against a tsunami wave. Credit: OMAR SANCHEZ, Voice of OC

Irvine residents might soon find their city taking a larger role in handling toxic waste amid a push from Mayor Larry Agran for the city to take the lead in storing more than three million pounds of nuclear waste remaining at the decommissioned San Onofre power plant.

Agran is set to ask his colleagues on Tuesday night to let staff draw up a plan to get involved, but it remains unclear how interested the rest of the city council is in handling the nuclear waste dump after nearly half the city council left a study session early on the issue in September.

Slated for the same meeting, city council members are also set to discuss ways to keep their household hazardous waste disposal program alive amid plans to permanently end the program on New Year's Eve.

While city council members haven't previously discussed their hazardous waste disposal program, Agran's been pushing for city leaders to take a stronger look at San Onofre for months.

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station was decommissioned in 2013 and currently stores approximately 3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive waste, calling into question health and safety implications for millions of Southern California residents who live in the region. Irvine is located about 30 miles from San Onofre.

While the U.S. government is supposed to clean up and restore the area, there's no clear timeline for when federal leaders will get that process going.

Agran argued the city can't wait several more decades for an answer from the federal government, calling for all the waste to be moved from the empty plant to a fortified storage facility at Camp Pendleton that's behind the 5 Freeway and further from the coastline.

"There appears to be broad agreement among stakeholders — including residents, academic experts, regional partners, and community organizations — that the approximately 3.6 million pounds of spent nuclear fuel at SONGS [San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station] should be moved

to an above-ground fortified storage facility, while long-term federal solutions are pursued," reads a memo from Agran included with the Dec. 2 agenda.

"There is also support for Irvine to take the lead in initiating a locally generated, near-term planning effort for fortified storage," the memo continues.



Mayor Larry Agran at the Irvine City Council meeting on Jan. 28, 2025. Credit: ERIKA TAYLOR, Voice of OC

During a special meeting on Sept. 30, council members held a study session to receive input from the public and experts to understand the conditions at San Onofre and identify measures the city can take to promote the safe storage of spent nuclear fuel.

"When Southern California Edison decided to start decommissioning SONGS [San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station] in 2013, many of us — myself included, of course — breathed a sigh of relief," Agran said at the Sept. 30 meeting. "But then came the question: what to do with the accumulated radioactive nuclear waste?"

He emphasized that the canisters used to store nuclear waste on site were never meant to be there permanently.

“Why is this extremely dangerous, highly radioactive nuclear waste stored on site?” he continued. “Because there is no national repository for nuclear waste.”

Agran said Irvine can be a leader in creating a plan for safer storage while they wait for federal action.

“The way I see it, we in Irvine, hopefully joined by other nearby cities and working with the Spent Fuel Solutions Coalition, can be instrumental in funding and otherwise leading in the preparation of that plan — let’s call it Plan B,” he said. “This would be a plan for the near-term, safer storage of San Onofre spent nuclear fuel.”

Experts at that meeting included representatives from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the San Onofre Nuclear Generation Station Community Engagement Panel, Southern California Edison and the University of California, Irvine.

Gregory Jaczko, former chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, spoke to the council about how efforts at the local level can help the situation and emphasized that the current system is not appropriate for permanent storage.

“Until the fuel is moved, every effort must be made to identify and secure interim and ultimately permanent storage facilities for the San Onofre fuel,” Jaczko said. “I think today there’s too much acceptance, and the permits and authorizations [for the spent fuel to remain in place] will simply be extended as long as needed.”

Irvine’s Household Hazardous Waste Facility Set to Close

During Tuesday night's meeting, council members are also set to discuss the city's Household Hazardous Waste Facility, which is set to close at the end of the year.

Councilmember Mike Carroll is asking his colleagues to prevent the closure of the facility and allow it to remain open for residents to conveniently and locally dispose of hazardous waste.

"Forcing Irvine families and business owners drive 40 miles and pay more to dispose of waste safely is unacceptable," Carroll wrote in a Thursday text message. "My email inbox shows it, people rely on this center. So if it's not broken, don't fix it."

He emphasized that he led the effort to earn Irvine's "California Clean City" designation, and he said keeping the center open is essential to maintaining that progress.

"We need to protect the environment," Carroll wrote, "and this is one of the ways that Irvine leads the nation in quality of life and protecting our residents."

Angelina Hicks is the Voice of OC Collegiate News Service Editor. Contact her at ahicks@voiceofoc.org or on Twitter @angelinahicks13.

Noah Biesiada is a Voice of OC reporter. Contact him at nbiesiada@voiceofoc.org.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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5. For Awareness: Recent Articles Related to SONGS – What's up with dead lobsters at San Onofre State Beach? And Jim Desmond's smart idea on removing San Onofre's nuclear waste.

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Monday, January 5, 2026 2:05 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; John Gabbard; Mike Sappingfield
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Recent Articles Related to SONGS - What's Up with dead lobsters on the beach? and Jim Desmond's smart idea on removing San Onofre's nuclear waste

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

Happy New Year!

I write to share two recent articles in the San Diego Union Tribune regarding the recent lobster shells on State Beach on Jan.1, as well as a piece from the UT editorial board regarding SONGS spent fuel storage and the need for a comprehensive US policy.

What's up with dead lobsters at San Onofre State Beach?

Scores of carcasses are scattered on the shore, but state officials are not sounding any alarm bells yet



A Dec. 30, 2025 photo shows one of many lobster carcasses that have washed ashore at San Onofre State Beach. The domes of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station can be seen in the background. (Rob Nikolewski/The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **Rob Nikolewski** | rob.nikolewski@sduniontribune.com | The San Diego Union-Tribune

PUBLISHED: January 1, 2026 at 6:00 AM PST | UPDATED: January 2, 2026 at 10:24 AM PST

A large number of lobster carcasses have washed ashore in recent days at San Onofre State Beach. While state officials are monitoring the situation, thus far they say there is no cause for alarm.

"California State Parks has not observed anything unusual or concerning related to marine life at San Onofre State Beach," a parks spokesperson said in an email to the Union-Tribune. "While staff have seen lobster exoskeletons along the shoreline, these observations are consistent with typical conditions and do not indicate an abnormal mortality event."

The Union-Tribune also reached out to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. A spokesperson said the department "is looking into it" and has passed information along to its marine division.

The spokesperson went on to say it "would not be uncommon as seals and sea lions feed on lobster as well as other wildlife and we have had some larger swells recently due to the weather systems offshore that can stir the water up as well."

Eurostar suspends Channel Tunnel services after power supply issue

Many of the lobster husks lay scattered, near and immediately north of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, also known as SONGS.

Roger Johnson, a retired neuroscience professor who lives in San Clemente, learned of the carcasses on Dec. 20 after his daughter strolled along the beach and took photographs.

Johnson wonders if the deaths are somehow related to a recent "liquid batch release" of wastewater from SONGS.

"I'm raising the question, considering they did a release the week before and then having all those lobster die," said Johnson, a longtime opponent of nuclear power. "Maybe the lobster die all the time, I don't know."

For more than 50 years, SONGS has discharged wastewater that contains very low levels of radiation. All nuclear plants release some effluents, though the nature and amounts can vary by plant site and configuration.

In the case of SONGS, the "liquid batch releases" go right into the Pacific. Traveling through long conduits, the discharges are sent more than one mile offshore and about 50 feet below the surface. The wastewater must be cleaned up and highly diluted before going into the ocean.

Southern California Edison, the plant's operator, has long insisted the levels are safe for marine life and the humans who swim and surf at San Onofre State Beach.

The most recent discharge came on Dec. 11, when nearly 35,000 gallons were sent into the ocean, according to the SONGS website.

Edison officials say the batch release has nothing to do with the lobster deaths.

"We are aware of no evidence that releases of cleaned up wastewater from SONGS have affected marine life, including lobsters," said company spokesperson Jeff Monford. "We check batches of wastewater prior to release and can confirm they meet drinking water standards — so there is no logical threat to the marine environment."

Monford said the utility sent divers into the ocean near SONGS from Dec. 15 through Dec. 19, "and they saw no issues" as they conducted inspections of the offshore conduits, sampled sediment and refurbished buoys in front of the plant.

Edison says it also has a radiological environmental monitoring program — consistent with U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission requirements — that monitors the local environment to gauge whether radiation is concentrating over time.

"We sample and monitor ocean water, ocean bottom sediment, shoreline sediment, kelp, and marine species at several beach locations north and south of the plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community," Monford said. "The NRC sets strict limit guidelines for commercial nuclear plants. Through this monitoring, we have seen no detrimental impact from SONGS on the local environment."

When SONGS was producing electricity, the discharges came on almost a daily basis. After the plant shut down following a leak in a steam generator in 2012, the facility is now in the midst of a major dismantlement effort and the number of batch releases has dropped dramatically.

In its email to the Union-Tribune, the spokesperson for California State Parks said the agency will "continue to monitor the coastline and coordinate with appropriate agencies if any unusual activity is observed."

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https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2026/01/01/desmond-smart-idea-on-removing-san-onofres-nuclear-waste/__;!!FPmBsh4YZ_RhLneAcPkcnpFqxg!T7vWo-bmBahJFdQTEaQ0F0qlSz0Qu2-0mraW6mh-pEx746Cl5gnN8p247_tvlka8zRTcz6fQNshmAaEErw$

Jim Desmond's smart idea on removing San Onofre's nuclear waste



The San Onofre nuclear power plant was taken offline in 2012 and closed in 2013 after severe problems with Mitsubishi steam generators used to spin turbines and generate electricity. (SCNG)



By **U T Editorial Board**

PUBLISHED: January 1, 2026 at 5:00 AM PST | UPDATED: January 1, 2026 at 10:41 AM PST

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The presence of 3.55 million pounds of nuclear waste stored "temporarily" at the San Onofre nuclear power plant — which was permanently shut down in 2013 after severe problems with key plant equipment — is daunting.

A decade ago, when he was the director of the Program on Environmental and Nuclear Policy at UC Santa Cruz, David Hirsch warned about the risk of having so much spent fuel within 50 miles of 8.5 million residents of San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles Counties and parts of the Inland Empire. “It is the most dangerous stuff on Earth: a witch’s brew of radioactive material,” declared Hirsch, who was a longtime critic of the federal government’s failure to honor promises to store the waste from the nation’s nuclear plants at a never-built storage complex in a remote area.

Since then, additional steps have been taken by Southern California Edison, the manager and primary owner of the plant, to ensure the spent fuel’s safety. Edison says the steel storage containers between the Pacific Ocean and Interstate 5 that now hold all the waste are extremely safe, using a “proven technology [whose] design exceeds California earthquake requirements” and offers strong protection against tsunamis.

Nevertheless, credible critics wonder about the wisdom of storing the waste so close to the ocean near two faults capable of generating a 7.4 magnitude earthquake. They cite the 2011 disaster at the coastal Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which Japanese regulators and the Tokyo Electric Power Co. had long depicted as extremely safe. But when a 9.0 magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami and a power outage, there were core meltdowns in three nuclear reactors, leading to the release of substantial radioactive material into the air and Pacific Ocean. A government investigation found that regulators worked hand in hand with Tokyo Electric for decades to downplay risks from natural disasters.

Why OPEC has increased production

The parallels are not exact. When it comes to evaluating Edison’s safety assertions, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission — unlike, say, the California Public Utilities Commission — has credibility.

Nevertheless, it was still encouraging to read the Monday U-T story that raised the possibility that the risk posed by the San Onofre radioactive waste could be reduced. The key is changing federal policies set in 1977 that ban the reprocessing and reuse of the uranium and plutonium in spent fuel — as has long been done safely in France and other nations — because such plutonium can be used to make nuclear weapons.

Now, however, as county Supervisor Jim Desmond points out, there is a surge in federal and private interest in using the radioactive waste to research promising new types of nuclear plants that could use the spent fuel to generate a large new source of clean energy. On Dec. 9, he won unanimous board support for a measure directing San Diego County to pursue providing the spent fuel at San Onofre to researchers, in particular those

at national laboratories. “It’s time to turn this challenge into an opportunity,” Desmond said then.

The U-T article cited skepticism from those who warn about the safety of anything involving nuclear power, including the alleged extreme risks involved in transporting spent fuel. They are now alarmed at the “nuclear renaissance” seen in the United States in response to both the climate emergency and growing power demands.

But as the U-T Editorial Board has noted over the years, the spent fuel issue is solvable — if the U.S. had a comprehensive, smart nuclear policy like France’s. The possibility of this finally happening has never felt more realistic. This is welcome news for the nation in general — and, in particular, for San Onofre’s nervous neighbors.

Best Regards,

Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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6. For Awareness: OC Register Article Regarding Nuclear Waste – America, meet NuCorp, a mythical answer to nuclear woes

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2026 11:13 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Ron Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: OC Register Article Regarding Nuclear Waste - America, meet NuCorp, a mythical answer to nuclear waste woes

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share a recent OC Register article by Teri Sforza regarding the recently released white paper, “The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the US.” Her column includes comments from Alice McFarland, David Victor, Dan Stetson, and SCE. The link and full article are provided below.

https://www.ocregister.com/2026/01/27/america-meet-nucorp-a-mythical-answer-to-nuclear-waste-woes/
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NEWS Opinion Columnist

America, meet NuCorp, a mythical answer to nuclear waste woes

Column: Experts envision a future nonprofit company, or a similar single entity, that would take responsibility for permanent disposal out of the hands of government once and for all



High power transmission lines near Unit 2 (r) and Unit 3 (l) at the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **TERI SFORZA** | tsforza@scng.com | Orange County Register
PUBLISHED: January 27, 2026 at 7:00 AM PST

How to finally end America's absurd paralysis around nuclear waste: Take the job away from the federal government and give it to private industry!



Allison Macfarlane, courtesy George Washington University

This thunderclap — so obvious, yet so elusive — comes in a new bipartisan plan penned by an esteemed group of nuclear experts, including Allison Macfarlane, erstwhile chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (and member of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, now a professor at the University of British Columbia).
America, meet NuCorp.

"The most important element to make progress on nuclear waste disposal in the U.S. is the establishment of a trusted, capable, properly-funded implementing organization, or implementer, that can be successful," said the study, issued Jan. 15.

"(W)e recommend that the implementer for our country be a Nuclear Corporation, or NuCorp, a nuclear reactor owner-led corporation, either an independent public benefit corporation or a non-profit corporation. Under both models, the company is obligated to work towards a public benefit, which in this case is final nuclear waste disposal. NuCorp would be required by new legislation and established by reactor owners. NuCorp would be federally chartered with a governing Board of Directors. "



THE PATH FORWARD FOR NUCLEAR WASTE IN THE U.S.

A BIPARTISAN SOLUTION TO THE NUCLEAR WASTE PROBLEM

LAKE BARRETT, ALLISON MACFARLANE, KARA COLTON, FRED DILGER, ROD MCCULLUM, TIMOTHY E. SMITH, JACK SPENCER, MARY ANNE SULLIVAN, THOMAS WEBLER, HEATHER WESTRA, GREG R. WHITE

Why yank the task from the federal government's Department of Energy and give it to the companies that run nuclear plants, you ask?

"We looked at what has worked elsewhere, including Finland and Sweden, which are both constructing deep repositories for their nuclear waste, having already settled on a site for the facility," said Macfarlane in a prepared statement. "We realized that the nuclear reactor owners are the real experts on managing nuclear waste because they already do it, and they will be best at aligning efficiencies and doing a safe and cost-effective job."

Which is a nice way of saying that the federal government really stinks at this task.

Reversing failure

The Department of Energy has dithered for a half-century, amassed more than $50 billion from ratepayers for permanent disposal, and accomplished virtually

nothing. (Well, it *has* managed to promise to take possession of commercial waste from utilities by, um, 1998 — and pay out $12 billion to them for failing to do so. It'll cost taxpayers another $40 billion or before we figure this out, but who's counting?)

This federal failure has led to highly radioactive nuclear waste piling up at reactors all across America — including 3.6 million pounds of the stuff at the shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

"While we strongly support a wholly nuclear reactor-owner-led corporation, we also believe that the Swiss model of a corporation jointly owned by the reactor owners and the federal government could also be successful in the US," they said, rather optimistically. "In such a model, the federal government would have a seat on the Board of Directors, giving it a stake in the process and outcomes and recognizing its significant nuclear waste disposal needs."



Simulated nuclear fuel pellets like the ones stored inside canisters at San Onofre's dry fuel storage facility. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

NuCorp, which has a nice ring to it really, would assume responsibility for the management, transportation, possible short-term storage and permanent disposal of America's commercial waste.

It would also be authorized to contract with the new generation of light reactors that are poised to come online, ushering in a new nuclear age.

It would be charged with overseeing a collaborative process to site, license, construct, operate and eventually decommission a deep geologic repository (or repositories); and to develop a "perpetual care fund" to pay for post-closure expenses. Once the repository(ies) permanently closed, monitoring and long-term security would revert to the federal government.
NuCorp would get access to existing Nuclear Waste Fund dollars (paid into by electricity customers at a rate of $0.001/kWh until 2013, when a judge ruled the government could not collect money for a service it wasn't even close to providing), and, eventually, the power to reinstate a Nuclear Waste Fund fee. It might also contract for recycling/reprocessing of waste, something other countries do but which has been shunned here.

NuCorp would, of course, still be subject to NRC, Environmental Protection Agency et al standards. In addition to a governing board and an independent advisory board, NuCorp would be required to provide annual reports to Congress, public utility commissions and the public. Congress, through its committees, would be expected to hold hearings to monitor progress and ensure that funds are properly spent.

"The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the U.S.: A Bipartisan Solution to the Nuclear Waste Problem" was authored by folks from the nuclear industry, former government officials, public interest groups, academics, Native American Tribes, etc.

Reception

The industry is receiving the proposal cautiously.

"As stewards of the spent nuclear fuel stranded at San Onofre, we appreciate the attention the Path Forward report brings to the federal government's obligations for the offsite storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel," said Southern California Edison spokesman Jeff Monford.

"This important issue merits a national discussion. SCE customers are among those across the country who pre-paid for the disposal of spent fuel, and our customers deserve federal solutions. SCE has advocated for solutions for years, and we look forward to continued participation in a national dialogue around reasonable, secure options for clearing San Onofre of spent fuel."

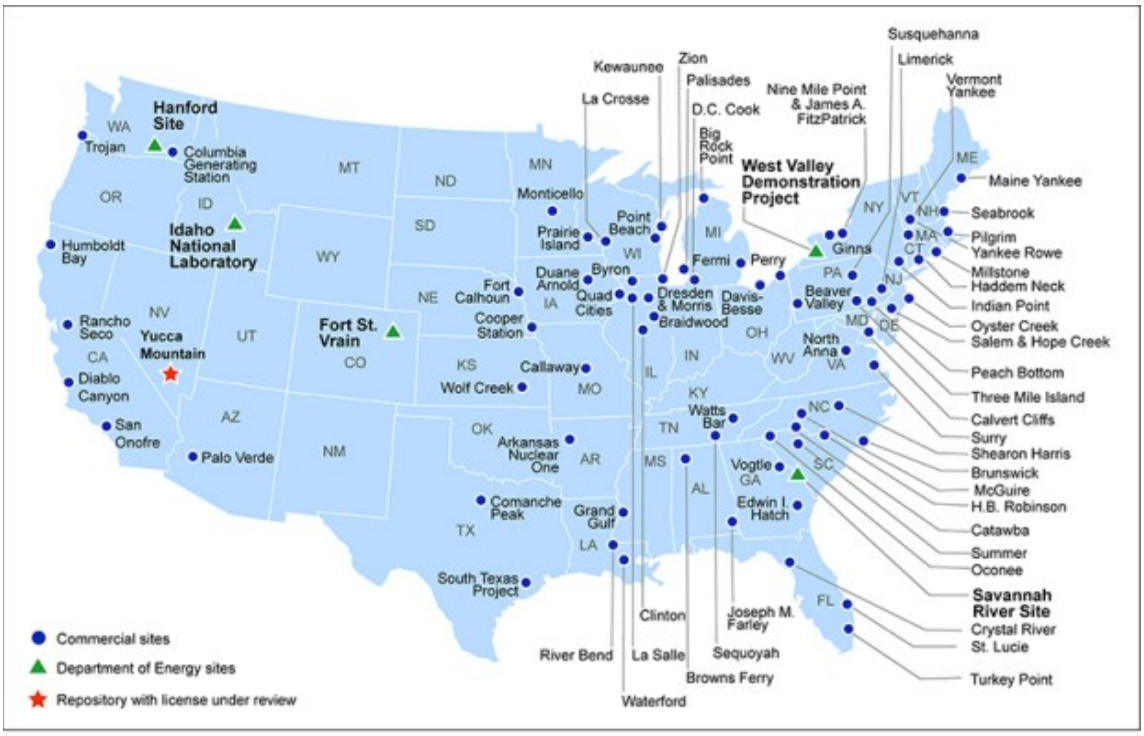
The idea of taking responsibility from the Department of Energy and giving it to an agency devoted solely to solving the waste problem is an old one, and it has broad support from experts. The difference here is divorcing it, or mostly divorcing it, from government.

Dan Stetson, chair of the volunteer San Onofre Community Engagement Panel, likes the idea. "The utilities should take the lead on solving the spent nuclear fuel challenge; they have the experience and expertise," he said. "And, setting up an independent public benefit corporation with access to the nuclear waste fund should prevent the process 'restarting' with every new administration."

David Victor, professor at UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy and former chair of the San Onofre Community Engagement Panel, has his doubts. "Parts of this proposal make complete sense, in particular the need for a long-standing organization that is less subjected to the vagaries of budgets and priorities at the Department of Energy," said Victor. "I'm skeptical that this can be set up as an independent organization run by the utilities but, instead, needs to be more closely connected to government."

The ideas around long-term financing make sense to Victor, and are ideas that experts have been advocating for many years. But the report is missing a crucial point, he believes: That America needs to create strong incentives for communities to WANT to host spent nuclear fuel.

"That way the politics get lined up," Victor said. "Frankly, it doesn't matter whether we have an independent organization at the center of this whole process (if) we don't have strong incentives for communities to line up. That's what's really been missing in this country. By contrast, Canada and Finland have created those incentives and they have been successful in creating the framework for permanent storage adjustment nuclear fuel."



Source: Department of Energy. | GAO-17-174

The U.S. Government Accountability Office's map of sites storing spent nuclear waste in the United States.

It's not impossible

For the last 15 years the U.S. has accomplished virtually nothing to solve the nagging question of how to permanently dispose of this waste, the report's authors said. More than 100,000 tons of spent fuel sit in cooling pools and dry casks on American seashores, lakes and rivers. The numbers will continues to grow as old reactors burn fuel and new ones come online.

This costs American taxpayers dearly, they said (the estimate is $2 million per day), hindering nuclear energy expansion and knee-capping America's ability to compete with nations like Russia "that can demonstrate their ability to offer full fuel management services, including waste disposal."
It's not impossible. Other countries — which handed off power to the nuclear industry — are doing it.

Canada was a particular inspiration. It passed a new law requiring reactor owners and Canada's national nuclear laboratory to establish an independent non-profit corporation to implement a disposal program (Canada's Nuclear Waste Management Organization). Sweden and Finland created independent

corporations for the task, SKB and Posiva. The Swiss model, NAGRA, is a cooperative jointly-owned by reactor owners and the federal government.



The vertical storage units at San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025 in San Diego, CA. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

Canada selected a repository site in 2024. Sweden selected a site in 2009 and has begun construction of a repository. Finland began excavation of its repository tunnels in 2021 and plans to entomb the first waste in the next few years. Switzerland selected a site in 2022 and is slated to make a final decision by 2031.

“We believe the new model we are proposing will have a much higher chance of success,” the report said. “Given that spent fuel will remain radioactive for millions of years, it is essential that the nation find a permanent solution to dispose of this material…. As other countries are actively demonstrating, we can do this.“

Best Regards,
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Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)