Community Engagement Panel Meeting
SONGS Dismantlement Update
Thursday, March 19, 2026, 2:00 – 4:30 pm (PT) via Microsoft Teams
Meeting Minutes

1) Community Engagement Panel (CEP) member attendance:

1) Present: Dan Stetson (CEP Chairman/Trustee-Executive Director, Nicholas Endowment), Michelle Anderson (Orange County Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management Director), Hunter McDonald (alternate for Hon. Jim Desmond, San Diego County Supervisor, 5th District), Marni Magda (Sierra Club), Rob Howard (City of Oceanside Representative), and Daniel Whitley (Camp Pendleton Community Plans and Liaison Officer)
2) Absent: Hon. Victor Cabral (CEP Vice Chairman/San Clemente Council Member), Martha McNicholas (CEP Secretary), Garry Brown (Orange County Coastkeeper), Mike Balsamo (Sr. VP, Government Relations Rancho Mission Viejo and South Orange County Economic Coalition Board Member), Scott Kibbey (California State Parks, South Sector Superintendent), Hon. Michael Villar (Dana Point City Council), Valentine "Val" Macedo (Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 89), Lisa Davis, (President, Capistrano Unified School District Board of Trustees), Ted Quinn (American Nuclear Society), Hon. Jim Desmond, (San Diego County Supervisor, 5th District and Spent Fuel Solutions coalition Co-chair), Hon. John Taylor (San Juan Capistrano City Council), Hon. Katrina Foley, (Orange County Supervisor, 5th District and Spent Fuel Solutions coalition Co-chair), Captain Mel Vernon (San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians), and Kelvin Barrios (alternate for Val Macedo, Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 89)
3) SCE Representatives: Fred Bailly (SCE Vice President of Generation and Chief Nuclear Officer), Manuel Camargo (SCE Principal Manager, Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Engagement), and Ron Pontes (SCE Environmental Oversight and Site Closure Manager)

2) Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams convened by Chairman Stetson at 2:00 p.m.

NOTE: VIDEO OF THIS MEETING, SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS, AND A TRANSCRIPT ARE AVAILABLE HERE; THIS DOCUMENT PROVIDES A SUMMARY

A planned cross-country shipment of commercial spent nuclear fuel by the US Department of Energy (DOE) was the focus of the 1Q 2026 SONGS CEP meeting on March 19. Dr. Erica Bickford, director for the Office of Storage & Transportation within DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, provided an overview of the High Burnup Research Cask (HBURC) transportation project through which a cask of commercial spent fuel will be shipped by rail from Virginia to Idaho in late 2027. A dry run shipment without spent fuel will take place in the spring of 2027.

The shipment will utilize the now-certified Atlas railcar which was discussed by Dr. Bickford at an October 2023 CEP meeting. Transporting the HBURC to the Idaho National Lab (INL) will provide data to support safe storage of spent fuel at DOE's future federal staging facilities as well as to support Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing for extended onsite storage. From a macro perspective, the project will illustrate the DOE's ability to safely transport commercial spent fuel and coordinate effectively with tribal, state, and federal partners.

The transportation project takes place against a backdrop of a DOE request for information to the states seeking interest in hosting Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses that include spent fuel storage and disposal facilities. Multiple responses are expected by the April 1 deadline.

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Dr. Bickford provided a brief update on the newly established Center for Used Fuel Research that will operate out of INL that is, in part, exploring deployment of technology to monitor spent fuel canister integrity in real time with a test potentially deployed at SONGS in 2026.

Ron Pontes, SCE Environmental Oversight and Site Closure Manager, delivered an update on liquid batch releases. In 2025, the last of high activity water was processed and released. Dose in batch releases is sharply trending down (2023=0.0244 mrem, 2024=0.00616 mrem, 2025=0.000592 mrem). What remains for release from SONGS is rainwater and dust suppression water. Due to the low levels of radioactivity in this water, an inline radiation monitor is no longer necessary. Still, processed waste water continues to be sampled and analyzed prior to release to confirm compliance with regulatory requirements.

The 2Q CEP meeting scheduled for June 4, will focus on a January 2026 bipartisan report, *The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the US*, and related issues that merit discussion.

Shareables

- Learn more about the DOE High Burnup Research Cask transportation project
- DOE-FRA Safety Coordination & Compliance Oversight Plan - https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/safety-coordination-and-compliance-oversight-plan-rail-transportation-high-level
- DOE RFI on Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses - https://www.energy.gov/articles/department-energy-seeks-hosts-nuclear-lifecycle-innovation-campuses
- Read about the Atlas railcar that is certified for operation on major freight railroads
- Check out the bipartisan report, The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the US
- Join the Spent Fuel Solutions coalition and support efforts to clear San Onofre of spent fuel
- Visit the dedicated SONGS website

3) Manuel Camargo (SCE) facilitated the public comment period on behalf of Victor Cabral and Martha McNicholas

a) Alice McNally (Coalition for Nuclear Safety) - CEP engagement and rail infrastructure
b) Stephen Sharma - the need for 1160 GW new power
c) Nadia Khawja (Samuel Lawrence Foundation) - SONGS spent fuel and repository priority
d) Nina Babiarz (Public Watchdogs) - CEP charter, cost of CEP meetings, member term limits
e) Tony Leshinskie - Is high burnup fuel from one manufacturer or multiple?
f) Rudy Salazar - Randsburg Project Plan B
g) Kalene Walker - difference in canisters, gouges and scratches cause pitting, need a hot cell
h) Daryl Gale - San Diego desalination plant and levels of tritium in ocean water

4) Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.