SONGS CEP Compilation of Public Email Communications

February 17 thru May 12, 2026

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1. For Awareness: Recent Utility Dive Article – Will DOE's nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses' solve the US nuclear waste problem?

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2026 2:09 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; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Recent Utility Dive Article - Will DOE's 'nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses' solve the US nuclear waste problem?

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share a recent article in the Utility Dive digital media publication regarding the DOE's plans for nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses and the practice and policy changes that remain. The link and full article are provided below.

Will DOE's 'nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses' solve the US nuclear waste problem? | Utility Dive

DEEP DIVE

Will DOE's 'nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses' solve the US nuclear waste problem?

The Department of Energy wants to collaborate with states that agree to take in and possibly recycle used nuclear fuel, and some have responded positively. But practical and policy challenges remain.

Published May 7, 2026



Herman K. Trabish Contributing Editor



Four anti-nuclear power protestors stand holding a banner reading 'nuclear waste' on Three Mile Island near Harrisburg, Pa., in 1979. For decades, state and local opposition has stymied attempts to deal with the nation's estimated 95,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel. *Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images via Getty Images*

After decades of stalemate over what to do with radioactive waste from nuclear power plants, the U.S. Department of Energy is hoping states can be convinced to take in some of that used fuel as part of a broader effort that could include advanced industries, power generation, data centers — and the promise of long-term jobs.

Many states have responded positively against a backdrop of rising demand for electricity and a bipartisan interest in non-fossil firm power. Recycling and reusing nuclear fuel – as France has done for years – is seen by many as key to reviving the U.S. nuclear sector.

But many of the same financial, policy and practical challenges remain that stymied previous efforts to find a lasting solution for the country's estimated 95,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel. That could impede a burgeoning nuclear renaissance and the Trump administration's ambition of adding some 300 GW of nuclear capacity over the next two decades, federal officials, utility planners, nuclear technology providers and analysts told Utility Dive.

"The generations who got electricity from the nuclear reactors should solve the problem and not kick the can down the road."

Manuel C. Camargo
Principal Manager, Decommissioning, Southern California Edison

Manuel C. Camargo, the principal manager of decommissioning for Southern California Edison, said the utility supports the idea of the DOE's "nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses," as the department is calling them, as well as the department's collaborative approach. SCE owns the San Onofre nuclear plant, which was retired in 2013, but decommissioning cannot be completed until the spent fuel is offsite, Camargo said.

In the meantime, SCE must pay rent to the Navy, which owns the land, until the federal government "delivers on its legal and contractual obligations" to dispose of the waste, he added. SCE would like to see a commitment to reliable funding for the spent fuel repositories as part of any new efforts, he said.

"Not solving spent fuel storage could impede deployment of advanced reactors" to help meet "exponential electricity demand growth," Camargo said. "The generations who got electricity from the nuclear reactors should solve the problem and not kick the can down the road."

How we got here

The first nuclear generation came online in Pennsylvania in 1957, and licensing peaked in the 1970s.

As radioactive waste accumulated at the sites of these power plants, concerns about safety in the 1980s led policymakers to tighten Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing requirements and address the spent fuel storage question.

In 1987, Ronald Reagan signed legislation designating Yucca Mountain, Nevada, as the United States' sole site for a permanent depository deep underground. But work on it stalled over the next 20 years in the face of state and regional opposition, and in 2011, the Obama administration effectively terminated it through defunding.

But without Yucca Mountain, the DOE could not assume responsibility for U.S. nuclear plants' spent fuels by 1998, as required by the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act.



Canisters of nuclear waste
DOE. Retrieved from Blue Ribbon report.

Utilities and independent nuclear plant developers complained about their mounting costs to store and secure spent nuclear fuel.

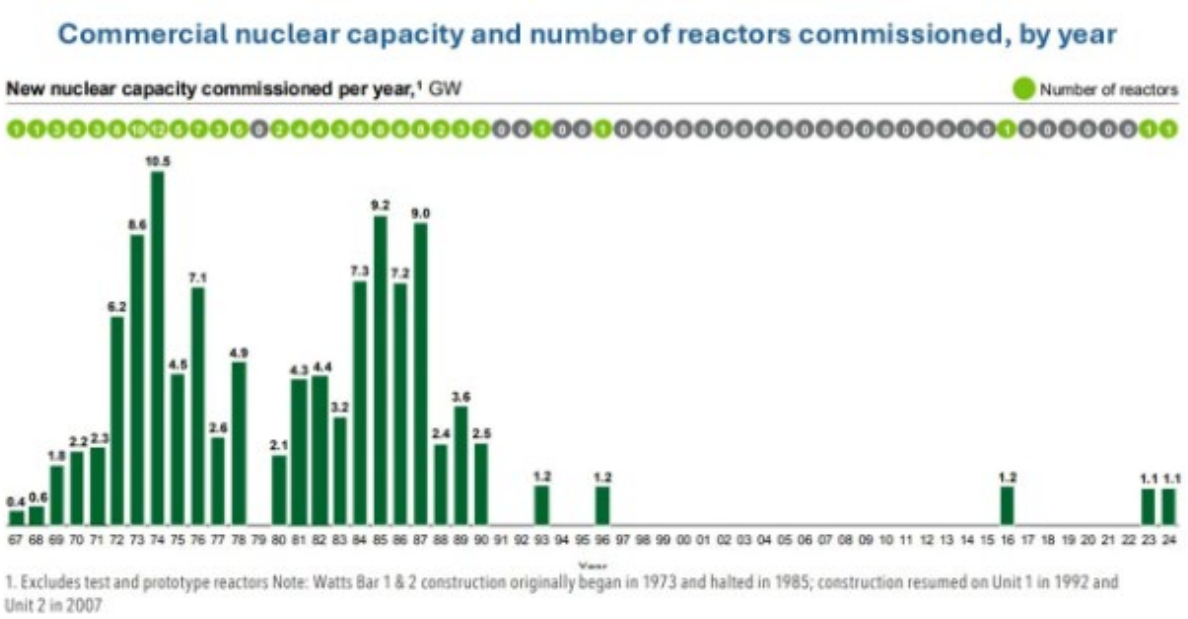
A 2012 DOE Blue Ribbon Commission spotlighted the issue. Then a series of federal court decisions, made between 2013 and 2017, found in favor of the Decommissioning Plants Coalition of 13 shuttered plants.

"The court could not order DOE to act because Congress had not appropriated funds," recalled Tim Smith, who helped form the coalition and also founded the advocacy group Governmental Strategies. "But it acknowledged a partial breach of contract and the litigants' right to costs incurred."

As spent fuel accrues across the country by an estimated 2,000 metric tons per year, so too do taxpayer obligations.

In 2025, the taxpayer liability for DOE's failure to fulfill its legal obligation was $56.5 billion, and it continues to grow, Representative Mike Levin, D-CA, noted during a recent House hearing. He also emphasized bipartisan efforts to address the issue, including through the Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus.

"We have to be realistic about the Trump administration's intention to build a lot more nuclear," Levin said. "We should not be siting new nuclear power projects until we fix the back end of the fuel cycle."



(from the 2025 update to the Department of Energy's ***Pathways to Commercial Liftoff: Advanced Nuclear***)

DOE. (2025). "Pathways" [pdf]. Retrieved from DOE.

DOE's solution

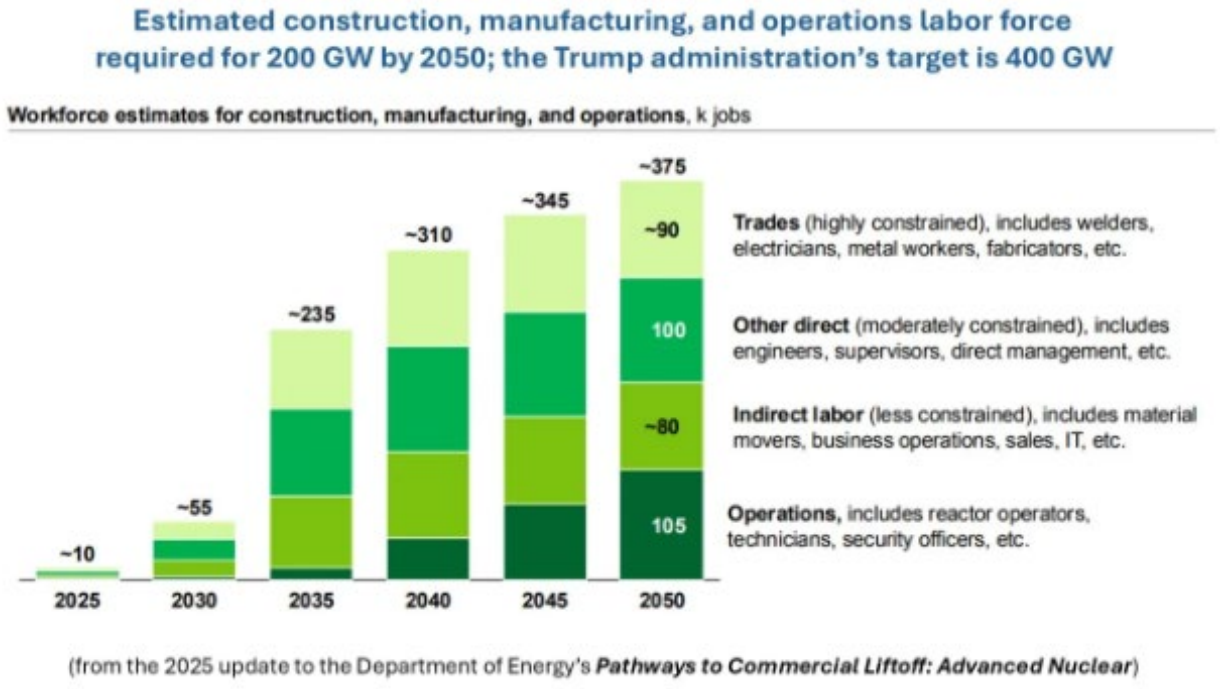
In January, the DOE issued a request for information seeking "input from states interested in hosting potential Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses to anchor integrated, full-cycle nuclear ecosystems that could co-locate and support the entire nuclear value chain while exploring durable pathways for managing used nuclear materials in a safe, secure, and fiscally responsible manner."

It said the campuses "must" support functions such as fuel fabrication, enrichment, nuclear fuel reprocessing or recycling and disposition of waste. They "could additionally support functions such as advanced reactor deployment, power generation, advanced manufacturing, and co-located data centers."

States were invited to submit "their proposed appropriate scope of the Innovation Campuses and the specific funding structures," with emphasis on prioritizing private and state money while relying on "targeted, conditional, and time-limited federal support, subject to the availability of appropriations and statutory authority."

"DOE envisions these campuses would be deployed quickly, with initial facilities online in the 2027 timeframe," the RFI says.

The deadline for states to respond was April 1. The department has not said when it will announce which proposals it chooses.



DOE. (2025). "Pathways" [pdf]. Retrieved from DOE.

Of the 28 state responses to the RFI, Utah, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington signaled significant interest, the Nuclear Newswire reported April 1. A joint response from 11 states through the National Association of State Energy Officials suggested improvements.

Responses from Utah, Tennessee, Idaho and Nebraska included letters from their Republican governors describing potential private sector partners, sites, workforces, policy support and stakeholder concerns.

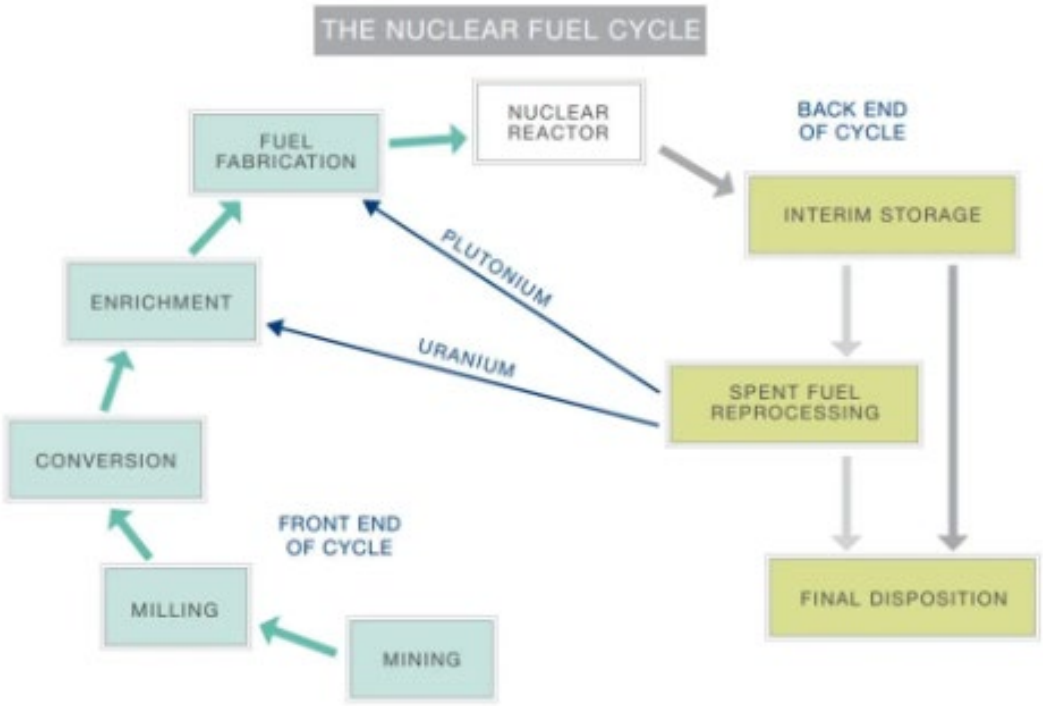
This was distinctly different from Nevada's historic resistance to Yucca Mountain and more recent pushback in Texas and New Mexico.

Marla Morales is DOE's acting deputy assistant secretary for spent fuel and high-level waste. In an interview with Utility Dive, she said pairing waste storage with nuclear sector economic growth opportunities was a "game-changer."

"States and communities have the opportunity to become part of the national and international economy and develop multi-generational economic growth, jobs and revenues if they are willing to help the federal government with its used fuel responsibility," Morales said.

The DOE's approach is reflected in its preference for the term "used fuel" over "spent fuel" or "waste" because it suggests "an asset that still holds 90% of its innate energy," she added.

"Yucca Mountain is still the codified repository" under the 1982 law, but Energy Secretary Chris Wright has made it clear it is not the solution, Morales said.



(from the 2012 Secretary of Energy's *Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future*)

DOE. (2012). "Blue Ribbon Report" [pdf]. Retrieved from DOE.

Bipartisan support for used nuclear fuel storage and recycling

Both Republican and Democratic administrations have acknowledged the need for spent fuel storage and recycling to support the development of advanced nuclear.

"Nuclear has an essential role in the energy transition as a clean firm complement to renewables," according to a report issued by the DOE under President Joe Biden. "The U.S. will need at least ~700–900 GW of additional clean firm capacity…[and] nuclear is one of the few proven options that could deliver this at scale."

Among the key changes needed to support nuclear development is "a consent-based approach to siting federal consolidated interim storage and disposal facilities," the report said.

While President Donald Trump has derided concerns about climate change, he has pushed an aggressive plan to expand nuclear power for artificial intelligence data centers and advanced manufacturing. In May 2025, he directed DOE to

authorize advanced reactor demonstration projects outside of national labs, and 11 pilots are underway.

In March, the NRC issued its first commercial nuclear reactor construction permit in nearly 10 years to a subsidiary of Bill Gates' TerraPower for a 345-MW plant planned near the site of a retiring coal plant in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Other tailwinds for used nuclear fuel include a federal ban on uranium imports from Russia set to take effect in 2028, which will increase pressure to move toward a closed fuel cycle, or at least increase nuclear fuel recycling domestically.

Examples of advanced nuclear reactors coming to market

	Gen III+	Gen IV		
Coolant	Light water	Gas	Liquid metal	Molten salt
Examples	• Pressurized water reactor • Boiling water reactor	• High temperature gas reactor • Gas fast reactor	• Sodium fast reactor • Lead fast reactor	• Fluoride high temperature reactor • Molten chloride fast reactor
Typical fuel	LEU, LEU+	HALEU	HALEU	HALEU
Outlet temperature	~300°C	~750°C	~550°C	~750°C
Power output	Large, small	Small, micro	Small, micro	Small
Example reactor designers	• GE Hitachi • Holtec • NuScale • Westinghouse	• BWXT • General Atomics • Radiant • X-energy	• ARC • TerraPower • Oklo	• Kairos • Terrestrial

(from the 2025 update to the Department of Energy's ***Pathways to Commercial Liftoff: Advanced Nuclear***)

DOE. (2025). "Pathways" [pdf]. Retrieved from DOE.

'Ever-changing leadership and uncertain funding'

"Theoretically, all 95,000 metric tons of stored U.S. used fuel could be reprocessed," said Joseph Faldowski, a senior program manager for used fuel and high level waste at the Electric Power Research Institute.

But it depends on "the reprocessing process and type of reactor," he acknowledged.

France, which generates more than 65% of its power from nuclear, routinely transports used fuel to reprocessing facilities where all its spent fuel is reprocessed, Faldowski said. According to Orano, the state-owned nuclear fuel company, 96% of spent nuclear fuel can be reused to manufacture new fuel. But even its world-leading LaHague facility has only reprocessed about 40,000 metric tons in 55 years of operation.

Technology aside, some of the biggest practical challenges to storing and recycling nuclear fuel have to do with the timelines and the financing.

"America's past recycling programs have been costly and short-lived," according to a recent report by the Energy Innovation Reform Project and nuclear startup Oklo that sought to make a case for commercial recycling of used nuclear fuel.

However, "technology, policy, and markets have evolved rapidly," it said.

A different paper funded by the University of British Columbia's School of Public Policy and Global Affairs and written by former NRC Chair Allison MacFarlane and former DOE official for spent fuel Lake H. Barrett said the Nuclear Waste Fund has been used for decades by Congress to offset the national debt and is kept "inaccessible" for use "to develop a nuclear waste disposal solution."

"The Trump administration deserves credit for prioritizing the issue, but the [FY2027] budget request for this program is $102 million," said Smith. "That is not nearly enough for development of the campuses, because DOE will only provide land, technical expertise, and policy support, and it is not clear what private investment is available."

Other aspects of economic viability may burden DOE's plans.

Much of the U.S. spent fuel is "old and cold" and "may not be economical to reprocess," said Rod Baltzer, CEO of Deep Isolation, which sells drilling and storage services for nuclear waste.

"Theoretically, all 95,000 metric tons of stored U.S. used fuel could be reprocessed."

Joseph Faldowski
Senior Program Manager for used fuel and high level waste at the Electric Power Research Institute

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Levin said he has "helped secure more than $248 million to advance long-term management of spent nuclear fuel," he said. "None of this is happening fast enough, but we have momentum and we are seeing progress."

And while the DOE has said it wants to see some of its innovation campuses "online" in 2027, Energy Secretary Chris Wright acknowledged the long-term nature of the commitment when he told the House Appropriations Committee in April that the government may need to form a "single purpose entity" to administer them.

A single purpose entity is one of the keys to closing the U.S. nuclear fuel cycle, according to the paper by MacFarlane and Barrett.

"First and foremost, the U.S. needs an entity that can successfully implement a solution," the paper said. "What has become clear is that using a government agency, severely constrained by ever-changing leadership and uncertain funding, is challenging."

Smith, of Government Strategies, echoed that sentiment.

"Canada, Sweden, and Finland are already designing permanent waste repositories because they set up organizations outside of government to dialogue and establish trust with the public," he said.

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: San Clemente Times Article: Transporting Spent Nuclear Fuel Focus of SONGS Engagement Panel

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2026 8:35 AM
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; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: San Clemente Times Article: Transporting Spent Nuclear Fuel Focus of SONGS Engagement Panel

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share a recent article in the San Clemente Times regarding our March 19 CEP meeting with guest speaker Dr. Erica Bickford, director of the Office of Storage and Transportation within the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy, who outlined the department's High Burnup Research Cask project and a planned cross-country shipment of spent nuclear fuel in 2027.

https://www.picketfencemedia.com/sanclementetimes/eye-on-sc/transporting-spent-nuclear-fuel-focus-of-songs-engagement-panel/article_dcac5a8a-7021-49de-a715-fc11524128fa.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share
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Transporting Spent Nuclear Fuel Focus of SONGS Engagement Panel

- By Angélica Escobar



Spent nuclear fuel remains stored on-site at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) as federal officials continue planning for future transportation and removal. Photo: Angélica Escobar

A federally led plan to transport spent nuclear fuel across the country — and what it could mean for the eventual removal of nuclear waste from San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station — drew detailed discussion and public concern during the March 19 Community Engagement Panel meeting.

The virtual meeting, hosted by Southern California Edison, focused largely on a presentation from Dr. Erica Bickford, director of the Office of Storage and Transportation within the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy, who outlined the department's High Burnup Research Cask project and a planned cross-country shipment of spent nuclear fuel in 2027.

"This is very much a model for how future large-scale transportation of used nuclear fuel from nuclear power plants to future federal storage and disposal facilities will go," Bickford said.

The project centers on a research cask currently stored at the North Anna Power Station in Virginia, containing 32 assemblies of high burnup nuclear fuel — fuel that remains in reactors longer to generate more electricity. The cask has been monitored since it was placed in dry storage in 2017 and is expected to be transported by rail to Idaho National Laboratory, where it will undergo further study.

Bickford said the purpose of the research is to better understand how high burnup fuel performs over time, particularly as nuclear plants nationwide increasingly rely on it.

"As the nuclear industry moves through time … pretty much all the fuel that's discharged from reactors is high burnup," she said.

The shipment itself will involve moving a cask weighing approximately 181 tons using a specialized rail system developed by the Department of Energy. The transport will include an Atlas rail car designed specifically for high-level radioactive material, buffer cars, armed escorts and a dedicated escort vehicle.

Because of the weight of the cask, rail is the only viable option, Bickford said, noting that the legal weight limit for trucking is around 40 tons.

Ahead of the actual shipment, the department plans to conduct a dry run in spring 2027 using an identical cask without radioactive material to test equipment, coordination and procedures.

The planned route will span 14 states and pass near or through multiple tribal areas. Bickford said routing decisions are based on rail clearances and infrastructure limitations, including tunnel dimensions and bridge capacity.

In the eastern United States, for example, the route must avoid certain older infrastructure, requiring the train to travel south before heading west toward Idaho.

While federal law allows such shipments to pass through states if they meet regulatory requirements, Bickford acknowledged that coordination with state and tribal governments remains a significant part of the process.

“There is not an avenue for states or tribes to agree to ship anything,” she said, noting that freight rail carriers are required to transport regulated materials under federal law.

The shipment would be the first of its kind in more than two decades, and Bickford said the Department of Energy is treating it as a test case for future large-scale transport of nuclear waste from commercial power plants.

“We are really creating a model,” she said. “We’re not reinventing the wheel every time.”

The long-term implications of that model are particularly relevant for San Onofre, where more than 3.5 million pounds of spent nuclear fuel remain stored on-site following the plant's closure in 2013.

Bickford said it remains unclear when or in what order nuclear waste will be removed from sites across the country. Federal law currently outlines an "oldest fuel first" approach, but includes flexibility that could allow priority for shutdown sites like San Onofre.

"It is unknown which sites will be first," she said.

She added that future decisions could also be influenced by emerging interest in recycling or reprocessing nuclear fuel, which may prioritize certain types of material.

During the meeting, members of the public raised concerns about safety, infrastructure and the timeline for removing nuclear waste from coastal communities.

One speaker questioned whether U.S. rail infrastructure is capable of safely transporting such heavy and hazardous materials.

Bickford responded that freight rail systems in the United States are generally in strong condition and that routes are carefully selected to avoid infrastructure limitations.

"If there's older infrastructure … it will be routed around that infrastructure," she said.

She also noted that federal agencies, including the Federal Railroad Administration, conduct inspections and coordinate with rail operators to ensure safe transport conditions.

Another question focused on whether San Onofre, given its coastal location and exposure to erosion and natural hazards, would be prioritized for removal.

Bickford said that while it is possible, no determination has been made and multiple factors — including policy decisions and operational considerations — will influence the final sequence.

Security concerns were also raised, including the potential for drone attacks. Southern California Edison representatives said there are currently no credible threats and that security measures follow federal guidelines.

“SCE does not have any credible threats at this time,” a company representative said, adding that the facility remains in a monitoring posture.

The meeting also included broader updates on the decommissioning of SONGS.

Fred Bailly, SCE vice president of generation and chief nuclear officer, said dismantlement of above-ground structures is more than halfway complete and remains on track to finish by the end of 2027, with final site work expected to conclude around 2028.

“We’re confident we should be able to wrap this by the end of 2028,” Bailly said.

He emphasized that safety, stewardship and transparency continue to guide the project, noting that spent fuel will remain on-site until a federal solution is available.

"We're the stewards of the site and of the safe storage of our fuel until the Department of Energy ultimately removes it," Bailly said.

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: Radwaste Magazine Article by Lake Barrett and Allison Macfarlane - Nuclear Waste in the U.S.: A New Approach

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 10:13 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; Victor Cabral; VictorCabral; 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; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Radwaste Magazine Article by Lake Barrett and Allison Macfarlane - Nuclear Waste in the U.S.: A New Approach

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share an article from the Radwaste Magazine by Lake Barrett and Dr. Allison Macfarlane regarding a new approach for spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste.

Lake H. Barrett is a retired nuclear engineer and former official with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Department of Energy (DOE). He is currently recognized as an independent expert and consultant in the nuclear industry.

Dr. Allison M. Macfarlane is a Professor and the Director of the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs (SPPGA) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), where she has been reappointed to lead until 2031. She is an expert in nuclear energy policy and waste management, bringing extensive experience from her previous role as chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Dr. Macfarlane will be our guest speaker at the 2Q CEP meeting on June 4, and plans to discuss the path forward for nuclear waste in the U.S.
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Nuclear Waste in the U.S.: A New Approach

By Lake Barrett and Allison Macfarlane



With a new generation of nuclear reactors developing in the United States, the need to have a solution for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, of which over 100,000 metric tons already sits at existing reactor sites, is more urgent than ever. At the same time, progress on disposal of spent fuel from commercial nuclear power generation in the U.S. has been stuck for years. Congress last provided funds to work on Yucca Mountain, the site they selected for a mined geologic repository, 16 years ago.

To address this challenge, we gathered a bipartisan group of experts with many decades of experience in nuclear waste policy, including representatives of the nuclear industry, former government officials, members of public interest groups, academics, and representatives of states, Native American tribes, and communities that host waste storage.

We have identified a new approach to nuclear waste disposal that we believe will be successful in the U.S. as it has elsewhere. This new approach requires two major reforms: that of the organization that carries out nuclear waste disposal and the financing of it. Our proposed solution addresses both. What follows is an excerpt from our report, *The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the U.S.* [1]

The implementer

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. In the U.S., the implementer under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA), as amended, is the Department of Energy, which initially set up the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management to do the job. The DOE disbanded this office in 2010, when Congress stopped funding the Yucca Mountain repository program.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC) concluded in 2012 that a new organization was necessary to manage SNF and HLW, including establishing a geological repository for waste disposal [2]. The basis of its conclusion was that the DOE would likely never be able to lead the country to the successful siting of a repository due to a lack of public trust and because it is continually subject to politics and focused on other priorities, including managing the nuclear weapons complex and energy technology development. The BRC concluded that only an implementer with the single focus of managing and disposing of the nation's nuclear waste, and with control over needed finances, would be able to complete the job.

A number of publications over the years have explored the realm of possibilities in designing a more successful implementer, including the Advisory Panel on Alternative Means of Financing and Managing Radioactive Waste Management Facilities report of 1984 [3]; the BRC report; and the Reset of America's Nuclear Waste Management, Strategy and Policy report of 2018 [4].

We also evaluated how countries that have made successful siting decisions and progress have structured their implementers. In particular, we considered Canada, which selected a repository site in 2024 [5]; Sweden, which selected a site in 2009 and has begun construction of a repository [6]; Finland, which began excavation of its repository deposition tunnels in 2021 and plans to emplace the first waste in the next few years [6]; and Switzerland, which selected a site in 2022 and plans to make a final parliamentary decision by 2031 [7].

In response to its Seaborn Report in 1998 [8], Canada restructured its nuclear waste disposal plans through new legislation. Canada's Nuclear Fuel Waste Act of 2002 [9] required reactor owners and Canada's national nuclear laboratory to establish an independent nonprofit corporation, Canada's Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), to implement its disposal program. We also looked at both Sweden and Finland, and their respective implementers, SKB and Posiva Oy, which are also independent corporations set up by the reactor owners that are required by law to manage and dispose of the nuclear waste they produce. Finally, we looked at the Swiss implementer model, NAGRA,

Continued

which is a cooperative that is jointly owned by reactor owners and the federal government. Of NAGRA's nine board positions, one seat is held by the federal government, which provides 3 percent of the financing.

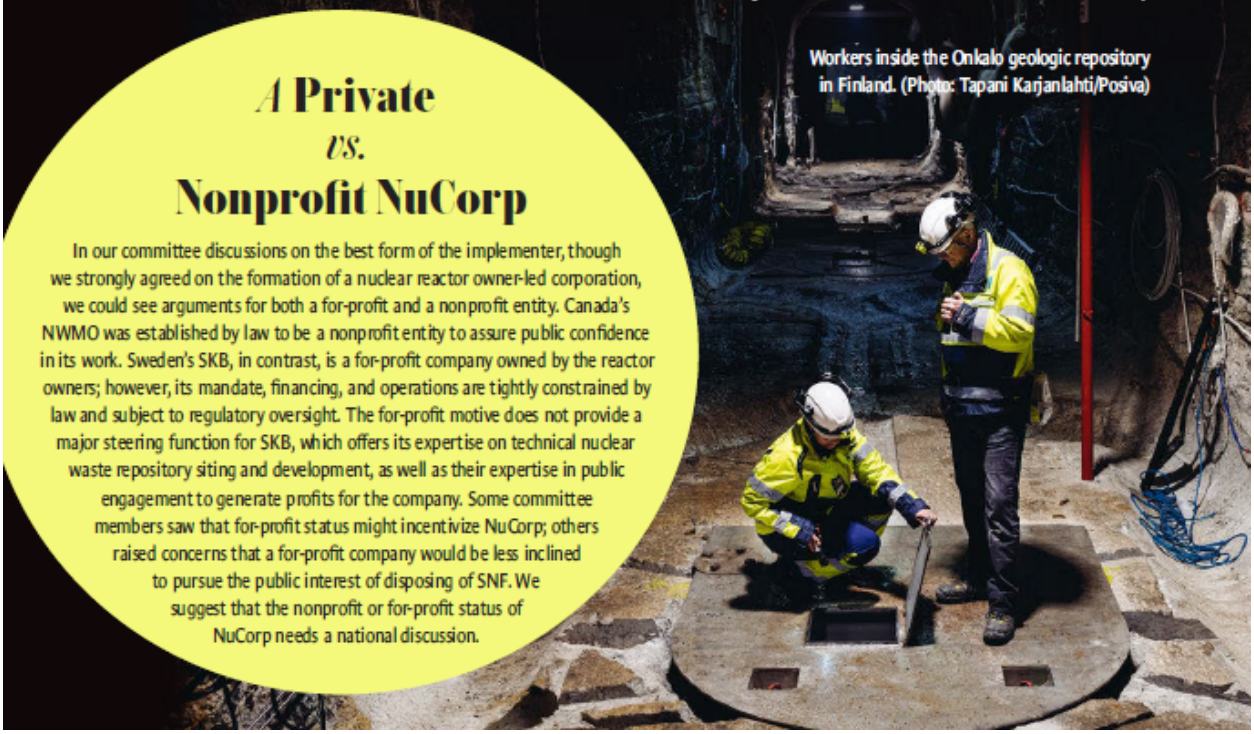
Using these examples as models, we recommend that the implementer for our country be a *Nuclear Corporation*, or NuCorp, a nuclear reactor owner-led corporation, either an independent public benefit corporation or a nonprofit corporation. Under both models, the company is obligated to work toward a public 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. This corporate structure should ensure that the entity will adhere to good corporate management practices and generally accepted accounting principles. The corporation would be designed to treat all members or shareholders without discrimination in managing their nuclear wastes.

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 United States. 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.

What NuCorp would do

NuCorp would be responsible for the management, transportation, possible storage, preparation for disposal, and disposal of commercial SNF, specifically all waste that is covered by the existing standard contracts under the NWPA. NuCorp would also be authorized to enter into disposal contracts with new reactor licensees to dispose of SNF or HLW from their operations. Thus, new entrants into the reactor field could use NuCorp services to meet the Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing requirement that they have disposal contracts in place. Should DOE or other federal government entities choose to use its services, NuCorp would be obligated to contract for the disposal of such SNF or HLW, subject to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement with the federal government. We concluded that it would be mutually advantageous for the DOE to contract with NuCorp for disposal services for the department's SNF and HLW.

In accordance with applicable NRC and Environmental Protection Agency standards, NuCorp would be responsible for siting, licensing, construction, operation, and decommissioning of a deep geologic repository or repositories. It would also be responsible for the transportation of SNF from reactor sites to storage facilities and a repository or repositories. The NRC, as part of the licensing process, would be responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy



Workers inside the Onkalo geologic repository in Finland. (Photo: Tapani Karjanlahti/Posiva)

A Private *vs.* Nonprofit NuCorp

In our committee discussions on the best form of the implementer, though we strongly agreed on the formation of a nuclear reactor owner-led corporation, we could see arguments for both a for-profit and a nonprofit entity. Canada's NWMO was established by law to be a nonprofit entity to assure public confidence in its work. Sweden's SKB, in contrast, is a for-profit company owned by the reactor owners; however, its mandate, financing, and operations are tightly constrained by law and subject to regulatory oversight. The for-profit motive does not provide a major steering function for SKB, which offers its expertise on technical nuclear waste repository siting and development, as well as their expertise in public engagement to generate profits for the company. Some committee members saw that for-profit status might incentivize NuCorp; others raised concerns that a for-profit company would be less inclined to pursue the public interest of disposing of SNF. We suggest that the nonprofit or for-profit status of NuCorp needs a national discussion.



Act (NEPA), including preparation of an environmental impact statement. NuCorp could use its resources for the siting, licensing, construction, operation, and decommissioning of one or more consolidated storage facilities, were it to deem them appropriate to accompany an operating deep geologic repository for final disposal. These functions would be carried out in accordance with NRC standards. Once the repository site(s) are permanently closed, responsibility for monitoring and long-term security would revert to the federal government. During operations, NuCorp would be required by NRC regulations to develop a perpetual care fund to pay for post-closure expenses.

NuCorp would be authorized to partner with private recycling/reprocessing companies that may be interested in collocating their facilities with NuCorp's facilities, as long as they do not use the Nuclear Waste Fund monies that are designated for a permanent solution to pay for recycling facilities' capital, operating, maintenance, or other costs. Of course, the safety and security of these facilities would have to be demonstrated in accordance with NRC regulations. Such ventures would have to be supported by private investors.

NuCorp would be responsible for creating, through extensive public engagement, a set of ethical principles that would guide all aspects of the organization's activities, from site selection to the decommissioning of the repository or any other facility NuCorp establishes. One model is suggested by the NWMO in Canada, which has a set of principles that could be a model for NuCorp, including a focus on safety standards that exceed minimum regulatory requirements, finding an informed and willing host community, the right to withdraw, and shared decision making, among others. NuCorp principles should also incorporate respect for future generations, respect for all life, peoples, and cultures, justice, fairness, and dedication to productivity and cost effectiveness.

NuCorp would be expected to use a collaborative siting process in establishing a site for the repository. Thus, it would be responsible for entering into a required, voluntary hosting agreement for any of its facilities with the affected host state and local government, as well as any Native American tribes if impacting their reservations or trust lands, before licensing and construction of said facility.

The structure *of* NuCorp

Board of directors

NuCorp would be governed by a board of directors that would be responsible for providing the management, direction, and oversight of NuCorp. That board of directors would be composed of members who represent a cross-section of nuclear reactor owners who are chosen by the owners of spent fuel. More on board membership is discussed below in the sidebar on the following page.

The board would have fiduciary responsibilities and NuCorp would follow generally accepted accounting principles. The board would have committees such as a finance committee, an audit committee, a membership committee, and other standing or special purpose committees, as it deems appropriate. The board would be required to implement a policy regarding conflicts of interest.

NuCorp would be managed by corporate officers such as a chief executive officer and a chief financial officer, and others as appropriate. For example, it may be advantageous to add officers such as a chief of public engagement to its board.

Continued

Board Membership

In our discussions of membership on the board of directors, the committee agreed that the board would be expected to have representatives from decommissioned and operating plants, geographically diverse members, and those with differing capacities and public oversight (i.e., large and small reactors, merchant and regulated plants). The board could also add external members that could include host state and host local communities and affected tribes. If ownership of NuCorp was shared between the reactor owners and federal government, then the board would also have a representative from the federal government on it, but the majority of the board would be made up of reactor owners. On the topic of whether board membership would be decided by NuCorp itself or written into law, the committee was split. Some saw an advantage in specifying board composition, including requiring government representation, in law. Others thought NuCorp should be allowed to develop board composition and that it should be allowed the flexibility to develop over time, as other corporate boards manage their membership. Certainly, this topic requires debate at the national level.

As an organization formed in the public interest, NuCorp and its board would operate in the public view and be subject to independent oversight, as described below.

Advisory committee

To ensure that NuCorp operates fairly and according to its principles, it would, by law, be required to establish an independent advisory committee that would report periodically to the board and to Congress. The law would specify the composition of the advisory committee and require the board to develop and implement a policy regarding conflicts of interest for the members of the advisory committee (see more on membership in the sidebar, right). The advisory committee would hold annual or more frequent public meetings on the work of NuCorp in management and disposal of nuclear waste, reporting on the challenges faced and successes achieved by NuCorp in its mission. The advisory committee would be responsible for examining both technical and sociopolitical issues.

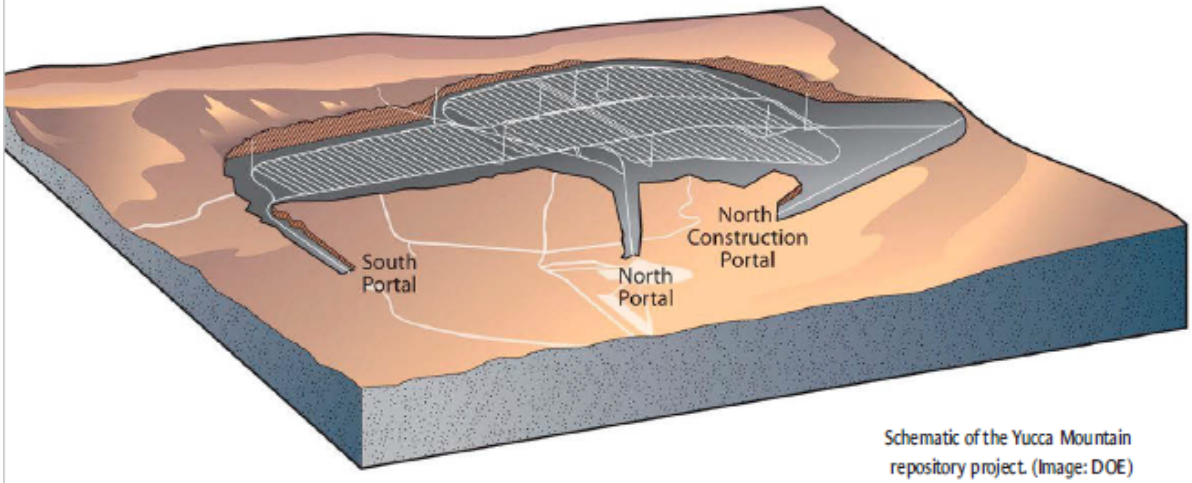
The advisory committee would represent a broad range of expertise and interests, including technical expertise that reflects the many scientific and engineering disciplines involved in management and disposal of nuclear waste; expertise in social sciences, especially in the fields of organizational culture, behavior psychology, and governance; practitioners in public participation; expertise in traditional Native American knowledge (if there are affected tribes); and representatives of local and state governments and Native American tribes, as well as local members of the public near the affected site.

Given the broad scope of responsibilities of the advisory committee, it could assign work to subcommittees with expertise in particular areas, such as the technical aspects of siting (similar to the work of the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board), public engagement in siting, fiduciary oversight, and others.

As a result of the establishment of NuCorp and its advisory committee, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, which is advisory to the DOE, would no longer need to exist. All documentation that it produced should be transferred to the advisory committee and continue to be publicly available.

Advisory Committee Membership

Another complex issue that had varying committee member views was that of the selection of members of the advisory committee. Some thought that the board of directors should choose diverse advisory committee members; others saw that as removing an important oversight capability, were the board to stack the advisory committee with friendly members, even employees of reactor owners. As a result, we suggest how advisory committee members could be identified and leave the final process to a larger national discussion. We agreed that advisory committee members should serve three-year terms, with one additional reappointment possible. Either way, the following organizations could supply individual recommendations or nominees for the advisory committee for final approval by the board or as standalone members. Affected local and state governments (or the National Governors Association or National Conference of State Legislatures prior to a siting decision) could nominate representatives to serve three-year terms; technical and social science expertise could be sought from the U.S. National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. Native American committee members could be solicited through organizations such as the Nuclear Energy Tribal Work Group, the National Congress of American Indians, the United and South and Eastern Tribes.



Schematic of the Yucca Mountain repository project. (Image: DOE)

Financing waste disposal

NuCorp's financial needs will vary over time. There will be high financial needs when the repository is under construction and in operation, for instance. Thus, NuCorp must have assured access to funds when and where it needs them to complete its mission. Given that there is an existing Nuclear Waste Fund established by law and paid into by nuclear power plant operators, of which most was recovered from their electricity customers (at a rate of $0.001/kWh), NuCorp will need to acquire access to the Nuclear Waste Fund. Initially, legislation should stipulate that interest earned on the Nuclear Waste Fund (currently approximately $1.8B/year) [10] be transferred to NuCorp without need for further congressional action. If NuCorp does not use this amount in a given year, it would put the unused funds into an escrow account for future use. Eventually, there will be a need to ensure access to the corpus of the fund to allow the corporation to fulfill its mission.

Making the monies paid into the Nuclear Waste Fund available to any implementing organization is a complex legislative matter. As documented by the BRC, the funding mechanism Congress hoped to create in the NWPA has not been carried out during implementation. Instead of a "user-financed" trust fund, policies of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, as well as subsequent legislative enactments (for example, the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, popularly known as Graham-Rudman-Hollings Act), have resulted in a fund where revenues are valued as a deficit reduction tool similar to tax collections, and funds needed for the mission of securing a permanent disposal facility are forced to compete with other priorities in an annual appropriations battle. Planning for and executing a multigenerational program in this environment presents any implementer with untenable obstacles.

Fixing this element of the program will require bipartisan support in both the legislative and executive branches in order to overcome arcane legislative "scoring" rules created in an effort to control increasing budget deficits. A number of options were adopted by the BRC after consideration of a commissioned paper noted in Appendix D of the final report [11].

More recently, the 116th Congress passed, and the president signed, the Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152), which established a new National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund where revenues deposited in the fund were to be made available for specified purposes "without further appropriation or fiscal year limitation" (54 USC 200402(c)) and similarly clarified that revenues deposited into the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund would be available after fiscal year 2021 "without further appropriation or fiscal year limitation" (54 USC 200303(a)).

Continued

We believe this model needs to be a part of the national debate and given serious consideration by Congress and the executive branch in fashioning a path forward. As progress is made, NuCorp would decide when and if it is necessary to reinstate an appropriate and reasonable nuclear waste fee and would be given this authority by amendment to the NWPA. NuCorp would transmit any proposed fee reinstatement to Congress. The amount of any future fee would be based on well-documented estimates of actual costs necessary to provide disposal services based upon the characteristics of the SNF or HLW requiring disposal.

The Nuclear Waste Fund would continue to be used solely for the purpose of disposal and preparation for disposal of SNF from commercial nuclear power plants in a deep geologic repository. As noted above, NuCorp would be authorized to partner with privately funded recycling interests to collocate their facilities, provided they meet NRC safety and security requirements. Commensurate with these partnerships, NuCorp could offer contracts to the recycling/reprocessing companies for disposal of their high-level wastes. For exotic spent fuels and other waste forms requiring treatment prior to disposal, NuCorp would be required to assure that the costs of such treatment or processing are paid by the waste generators.

Conclusions

The U.S. is now at a point of needed action. To make progress, we have developed a roadmap for Congress to write new legislation to finally move the country forward on nuclear waste disposal. Seventy years after the first reactor provided electric power to the grid, it is time to turn the implementation of nuclear waste disposal over to the experts: the nuclear industry. An independent reactor-owner-led corporation, required by law, financed by Nuclear Waste Fund money, can make progress that hasn't occurred in the 39 years since the NWPA was last amended. It is time to move forward. ■

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Lake Barrett is a retired DOE executive and ran the DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management.

Allison Macfarlane is director and professor of the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia.

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: Trump era rules juice nuclear power industry, downplay safety concerns

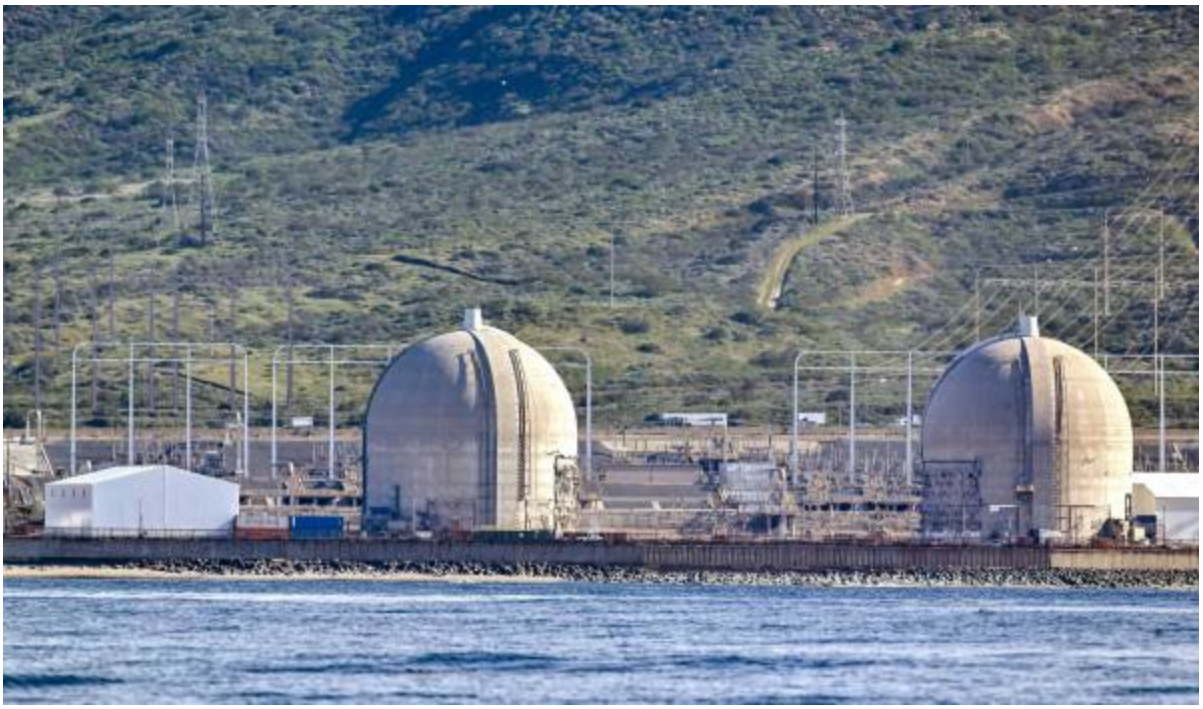
From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 1:20 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; Victor Cabral; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Marni Magda; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: OC Register Article - Trump era rules juice nuclear power industry, downplay safety concerns

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

The following is a recent article in the Orange County Register regarding Executive Order 14300 and recent actions by the DOE to pair back environmental and security rules, and reactions from others including Union of Concerned Scientists. The article references roles that the NRC and DOE currently play in oversight of SONGS decommissioning and spent fuel, as well as the introduction of California Assembly Bill AB 2647.

Trump era rules juice nuclear power industry, downplay safety concerns

Column: 'This deeply troubling development confirms my worst fears'
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The decommissioned San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in San Diego County, CA, on Tuesday, February 24, 2026. (Photo by Jeff Gritchen, Orange County Register/SCNG)



By **TERI SFORZA** | tsforza@scng.com | Orange County Register
PUBLISHED: March 6, 2026 at 7:00 AM PST | UPDATED: March 6, 2026 at 10:23 PM PST

Too harsh a taskmaster? Public safety overkill? Stifling an industry vital to America's economic future?

U.S.NRC
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Protecting People and the Environment

Yes, yes and yes, if you ask the Trump administration, which is overhauling the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (which oversees the teardown of San Onofre) and paring back rules for experimental reactors at the Department of Energy

(which is responsible for eventually removing the highly radioactive nuclear waste stranded at San Onofre).

National Public Radio recently reported that the DOE secretly drafted new rules slashing environmental and security requirements for next-generation *experimental* nuclear reactors. (And, in Sacramento, lawmakers have proposed a bill that would exempt advanced nuclear reactors from California's prohibition on new reactor construction.)

Meanwhile, Trump's Executive Order 14300 blames onerous NRC regulations (rather than the plethora of other variables at work, such as market forces, cheap natural gas and strong public distaste) for the dearth of new *commercial* nuclear plants in America. A "wholesale revision" — some might say "neutering" — is under way at the NRC that could empower nuclear power to ramp up nationwide.

On March 4, the NRC crowed proudly about issuing the first commercial reactor construction permit in a decade — and the first approval for a non-light water reactor in more than 40 years. A TerraPower subsidiary plans to build a sodium-cooled, advanced reactor design near an existing coal-fired power plant in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Industry applauds the moves as long overdue. Officials at the NRC and DOE say the redux will make things better.

But some scientists, economists and lawmakers are sounding alarms.



NuScale VOYGR™ SMR power plant (SOURCE: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission)

'Deeply troubling'

"This deeply troubling development confirms my worst fears about the dire state of nuclear power safety and security oversight under the Trump administration," said Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists, in a statement. "… The Energy Department has not only taken a sledgehammer to the basic principles that underlie effective nuclear regulation, but it has also done so in the shadows, keeping the public in the dark. These longstanding principles were developed over the course of many decades and consider lessons learned from painful events such as the Chernobyl and Fukushima disasters. This is a massive experiment in the deregulation of novel, untested nuclear facilities that could pose grave threats to public health and safety.



Ed Lyman (Union of Concerned Scientists)

"These drastic changes may extend beyond the Reactor Pilot Program," Lyman said, referring to moves Trump made last year to circumvent the more rigorous licensing rules employed by the NRC.
"While the DOE created a legally dubious framework to designate these reactors as 'test' reactors to bypass the NRC's statutory authority, these dramatic alterations may further weaken standards used in the broader DOE authorization process and propagate across the entire fleet of commercial nuclear facilities, severely degrading nuclear safety throughout the United States."

If the pilot program reactors want to go mainstream and produce commercial power for our utilities, they'll still have to get licenses from the NRC. But Lyman noted that the NRC has agreed to greatly restrict the scope of additional safety and security reviews for projects that have DOE authorizations.

"The push to rapidly license new nuclear plants is part of the Trump administration's plan to provide massive amounts of power for the data centers that tech giants such as Amazon, Meta and Microsoft are pursuing to support artificial intelligence," Lyman said.



Jeff Bezos, from second left, Donald Trump Jr., Sundar Pichai, Elon Musk, Usha Vance, Doug Burgum and Vice President JD Vance applaud during the 60th Presidential Inauguration in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. (Kenny Holston/The New York Times via AP, Pool)

It's the image of those titans of industry at Trump's inauguration that U.S. Rep. Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, sees keenly in his mind's eye.

"You had the heads of Amazon, Google, Met, and then they all went and donated huge amounts of money," he said. "These are the companies that are backing these new reactors. They have a direct interest in seeing regulations disappear."

The build-out required to meet the energy demands of their AI projects should be paid for by the companies, not the ratepayers, Levin said.

David Victor, professor at UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy and the former chair of the San Onofre Community Engagement Panel, doesn't

think the DOE/NRC changes are “alarming” just yet, but they are a cause for concern.

“The Nuclear Regulatory Commission had already streamlined the approval process for new reactor designs and made it quite easy for new reactors to get licenses while demonstrating their safety characteristics,” Victor said. “So removing more regulations, in some ways, is a solution looking for a problem that didn’t really exist.

“There are many reasons to believe that the new reactors are intrinsically much safer and should need less regulation. But the issue of keeping public confidence in the nuclear industry overall remains of paramount importance and regulation is one major part of that.”

Critics have long accused regulators of being too chummy with the industries they regulate. In their eyes, the administration’s recent spate of changes could make things much worse. Expect some fireworks at the first public meeting on Trump’s executive order remaking the NRC from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday. Details of how to attend online are at https://bit.ly/4scDDYw.

‘Irrational results’

Trump’s executive order lays the blame for the stagnation of nuclear power at the NRC’s feet.



TOPSHOT – US President Donald Trump gestures as he boards Air Force One before departing Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida, on March 1, 2026, on his way back to Washington, DC. The United States and Israel launched massive bombardments against Iran and killed its supreme leader on February 28, with attacks ongoing Sunday. The US military on Sunday said three service members have been killed and five seriously wounded in the

war against Iran — the first casualties announced on the US side. (Photo by Mandel NGAN / AFP via Getty Images)

"Instead of efficiently promoting safe, abundant nuclear energy, the NRC has instead tried to insulate Americans from the most remote risks without appropriate regard for the severe domestic and geopolitical costs of such risk aversion," the order said. "The NRC utilizes safety models that posit there is no safe threshold of radiation exposure and that harm is directly proportional to the amount of exposure. Those models lack sound scientific basis and produce irrational results, such as requiring that nuclear plants protect against radiation below naturally occurring levels. A myopic policy of minimizing even trivial risks ignores the reality that substitute forms of energy production also carry risk, such as pollution with potentially deleterious health effects….

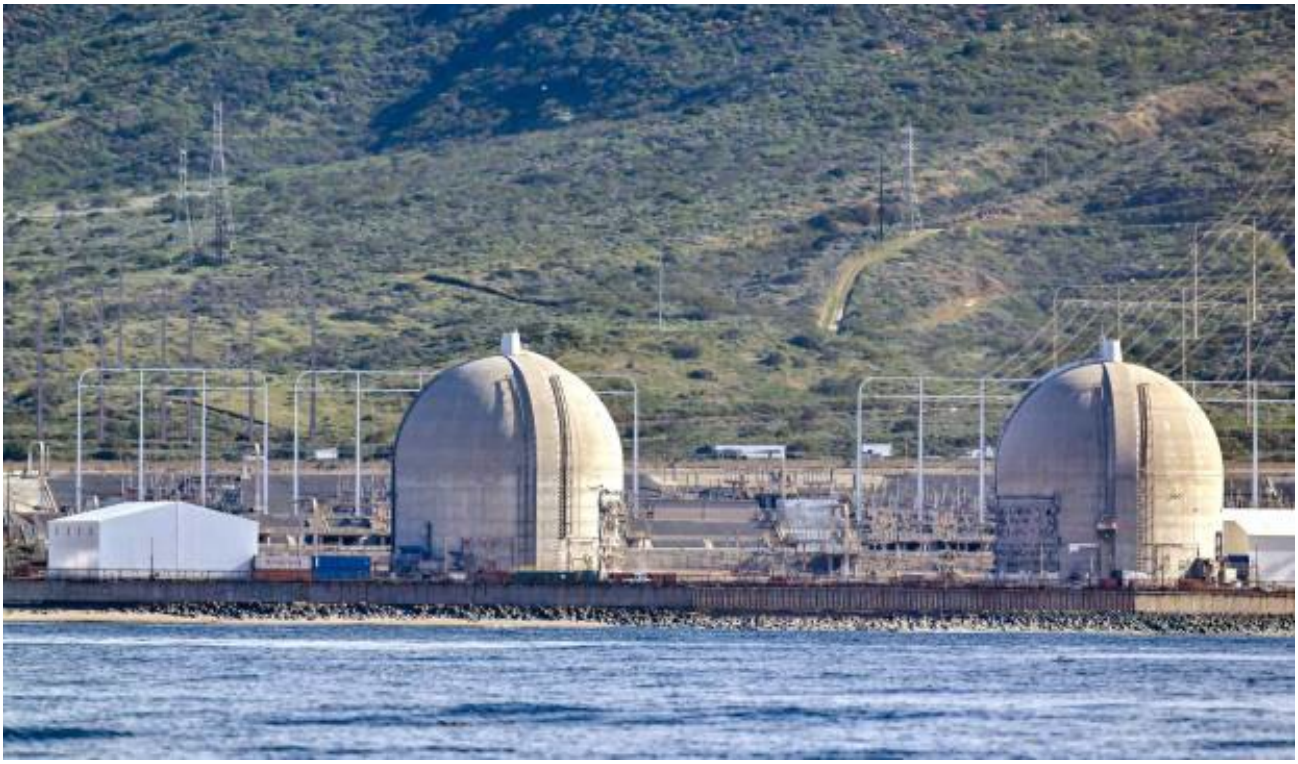
"(M)y Administration will reform the NRC, including its structure, personnel, regulations and basic operations. In so doing, we will produce lasting American dominance in the global nuclear energy market, create tens of thousands of high-paying jobs and generate American-led prosperity and resilience."

The industry is pleased.

"It is encouraging to see DOE and the NRC working closely together to ensure a coordinated approach that supports innovation during testing while maintaining safety oversight for commercial deployment," said Andrew Mauer, senior director of regulatory affairs at the Nuclear Energy Institute. "Given the need to modernize outdated DOE and NRC processes and requirements, there is clearly significant opportunity to enhance efficiency without impacting public health and safety."

Yes, the NRC is the only agency that can license commercial nuclear plants. But the DOE has long had the authority to authorize and oversee, test and research reactors, he said. Trump's Executive Order 14301 declared that advanced reactors not yet deployed — i.e., that do not produce commercial electric power — are for research and, as a result, are in the DOE's domain.
Trump's order was issued in May. The DOE's Reactor Pilot Program was born in June.
It "establishes a new DOE pathway for advanced reactor demonstration to fast-track commercial licensing. The program aims to leverage DOE's authority to expedite the research and development of advanced nuclear reactor

technologies with the larger goal of reaching criticality for at least three advanced nuclear reactor concepts located outside of the national laboratories by July 4, 2026."



The decommissioned San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in San Diego County, CA, on Tuesday, February 24, 2026. (Photo by Jeff Gritchen, Orange County Register/SCNG)

Like, four months from now.

"DOE authorization enables learning and innovation during the testing phase, while NRC oversight governs commercial deployment and long-term operation, with coordination between the agencies to ensure continuity," Mauer said.

Which is to say, any DOE-authorized reactor that moves beyond testing into commercial power production for our homes and businesses must still be approved by the NRC. But like many federal agencies in the wake of DOGE, the NRC is down hundreds of workers, many of whom held jobs that are highly specialized and technical.

The NRC had 2,885 workers the day before Trump's inauguration, according to documents provided to the U.S. Senate. There have been about 500 departures and 50 new hires since then, spokesperson Scott Burnell said. That means the NRC workforce is down nearly 16%.
"The NRC continues to meet its mission of safely enabling the use of civilian nuclear technologies, and implementing Executive Order 14300 and the ADVANCE Act to accelerate the safe deployment of advanced civilian nuclear reactor technology, maintaining American energy dominance and national security," Burnell said.

All this doesn't necessarily give the Union of Concerned Scientists a great deal of confidence. The group says the DOE has rewritten the entire body of safety and security directives used to authorize experimental nuclear reactor construction, slashing hundreds of pages of detailed requirements and replacing them with "vague and difficult-to-enforce standards," leaving "significant discretion" to the private companies building these reactors.

NRC staff is recommending changes to its Reactor Oversight Process inspection program that could shrink the hours spent on direct inspections by 38% a year. Meanwhile, the nation still has no idea where to put the millions of pounds of commercial nuclear waste that have piled up over the past 50 years. The NRC has pulled the plug on three proposed rules for securing spent fuel.
If this administration has its way, more waste — perhaps much, much more — is on the way.

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: OC Register Article - Nuclear reactors at March base head for Utah in a first-of-its-kind airlift

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 12:57 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; Matthew Pagano
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Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: OC Register Article - Nuclear reactors at March base head for Utah in a first-of-its-kind airlift

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

I write to share a recent article in the Orange County Register regarding the March Air Reserve Base which was used to transport unfueled nuclear reactors from Southern California to northern Utah in the first airlift of its kind on Sunday morning, Feb. 15.

The link to the OC Register and the article are provided below.

https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.ocregister.com/2026/02/15/nuclear-reactors-at-march-base-head-for-utah-in-a-first-of-its-kind-airlift/__;!!FPmBsh4YZ_RhLneAcPkcnpFqxg!QnxuP_hfdmbKxhNI4W9pN41fnjzv4TZN68psyJLj7MmkliE5kJhZ9WAAkzZvBFr9MLQBQXtrnlns9oanBi4$

Nuclear reactors at March base head for Utah in a first-of-its-kind airlift



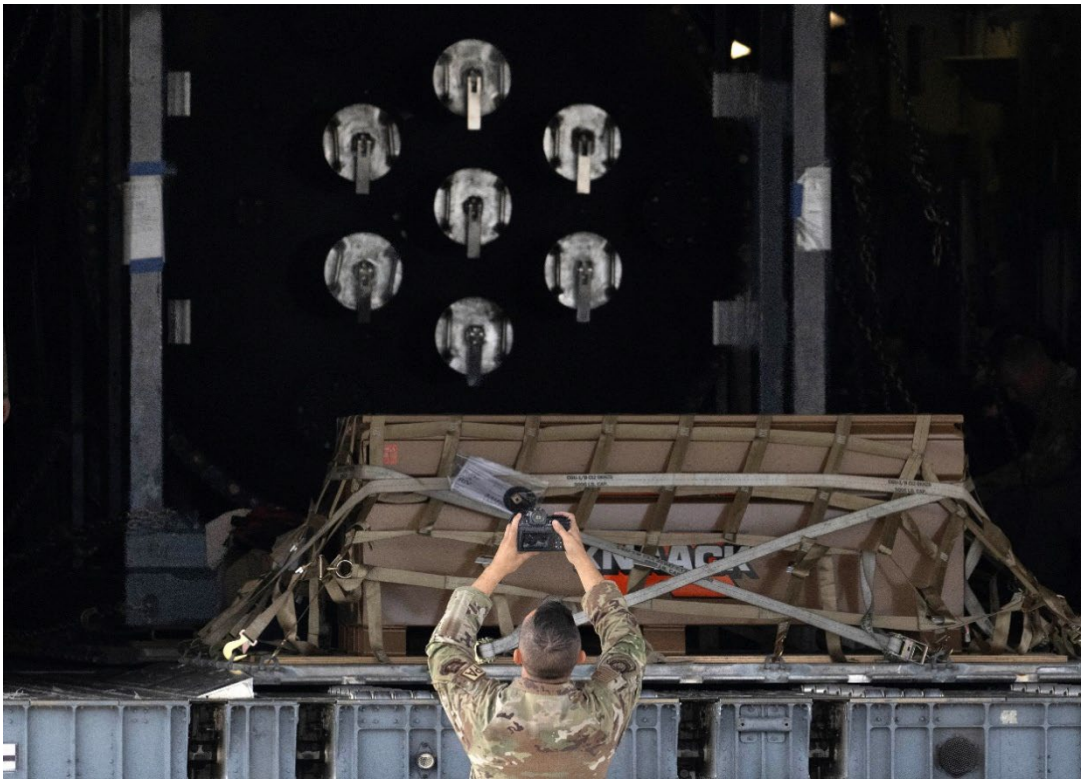
An Air Force C-17 is loaded with a “next-generation” nuclear reactor that will be flown from March Air Reserve Base near Riverside on Sunday, February 15, 2026, to Hill Air Force Base in Utah. Operation Windlord is part of the Nuclear Energy Initiative run by the Department of War and the Department of Energy. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)




By **FIELDING BUCK** | fbuck@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise and **JEFF HORSEMAN** | jhorseman@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise
PUBLISHED: February 15, 2026 at 2:18 PM PST | UPDATED: February 15, 2026 at 3:19 PM PST

March Air Reserve Base was used to transport unfueled nuclear reactors from Southern California to northern Utah in the first airlift of its kind on Sunday morning, Feb. 15.

The flight advances President Trump's goals for nuclear energy, which include rapidly building reactors to power artificial intelligence data centers for defense, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.
The six nuclear modules were supplied by El Segundo-based Valar Atomics, a nuclear energy startup, which has a research and development site in Hawthorne.

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Before the cargo bay of an Air Force C-17 is closed, a last minute photo is taken of a new nuclear reactor that will be flown on Sunday, February 15, 2026, from March Air Reserve Base near Riverside, to Hill Air Force Base in Utah where it will undergo testing and evaluation. (Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)

A convoy of cargo aircraft carried the "next-generation" modules from March, just outside Riverside city limits, to Hill Air Force Base, which is near the Great Salt Lake, about 30 miles north of Salt Lake City on the 15 Freeway.

From there, the modules are destined for the Utah San Rafael Energy Lab in Orangeville, Utah, for testing and evaluation, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of War. They will ultimately be part of a reactor called Ward 250 that Valar is shooting to make operational by July 4, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
Valar was founded by entrepreneur Isaiah Taylor. He named Ward 250 after his great-grandfather Ward Schaap, who was a chemist on the Manhattan Project during World War II.

Valar's website describes the Ward 250 as being part of a "second Manhattan Project," and the flight was called Operation Windlord, "the first-ever airlift of a nuclear reactor and ancillary systems via C-17, opening a wide aperture for strategic nuclear deployment around the world."

Secretary of Energy Chris Wright was on the flight, as was Michael Duffey, Undersecretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment and Taylor.

A small press pool was invited to the event, and about a dozen reporters came in from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. Reporters got to see the modules from a distance in the C-17. They looked a little like positive ends of gigantic AAA batteries.

Reporters weren't provided the dimensions of the modules, but C-17s are capable of hauling more than 85 tons.

The payload included several box lunches from Panera Bread for the passengers.

Valar's goal is to create "abundant and cheap gas out of thin air using atomic energy," according to its Linkedin page.

On May 23, Trump signed Executive Order 14301, aimed at kicking off a "nuclear renaissance." They include speeding up nuclear licensing with the goal of having at least three advanced nuclear reactors producing energy by July 4, 2026, the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

ALSO SEE: Here's how museums in Southern California will celebrate America 250
The U.S. Department of Energy Reactor Pilot Program relaxes rules by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which was established by President Gerald Ford in 1974 to ensure that radioactive materials are used safely.

March tankers and bombers were on alert as part of America's nuclear deterrent force during the Cold War, according to the Air Force.

March is is the third oldest Air Force base in the nation, having started out as March Field in 1918. Bob Hope performed his first USO broadcast there on May 6, 1941.
In the early days, little surrounded the airfield. Today, the base is sandwiched between Riverside and Moreno Valley, surrounded by warehouses and thousands of residents lured by the Inland Empire's logistics boom and the promise of more bang for the housing buck.
More than 100,000 vehicles a day travel on the stretch of the 215 Freeway just west of March. More than 9,000 people work at the base, making it one of the Inland Empire's largest employers.
Today, the base is home to KC-135 Stratotanker planes, F-16 Fighting Falcon jets and MQ-9 Reaper drones. In the next few years, the KC-135s will be phased out and 12 state-of-the-art KC-46A Pegasus tankers will move in after $250 million in renovations are done.

ALSO SEE: Hearing postponed on proposed air cargo facility at March Air Reserve Base
Over the decades, World War II bombers, nuclear-armed B-52 Stratofortresses are among the warplanes that have flown out of what used to be March Air Force Base.

In 1996, the base downsized to an air reserve base, a move that cost thousands of jobs and created more 4,000 acres of surplus land, much of it abandoned buildings and infrastructure.

Much of that land is now a business park and other amenities. But as the area around March has grown, so have concerns about having military aircraft close to homes and schools.
In 2019, an F-16 crashed into a warehouse near March. No one was killed and only minor injuries were reported in the accident, which was blamed on a loss of hydraulic pressure in the jet.

Best Regards,
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