SONGS CEP Compilation of Public Email Communications

June 16 thru August 5, 2026

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1. For Awareness: OC Register Article – San Onofre: New tech could monitor nuclear waste 24-7

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2026 5:33 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; 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 - San Onofre: New tech could monitor nuclear waste 24-7

Dear CEP Members and Alternates,

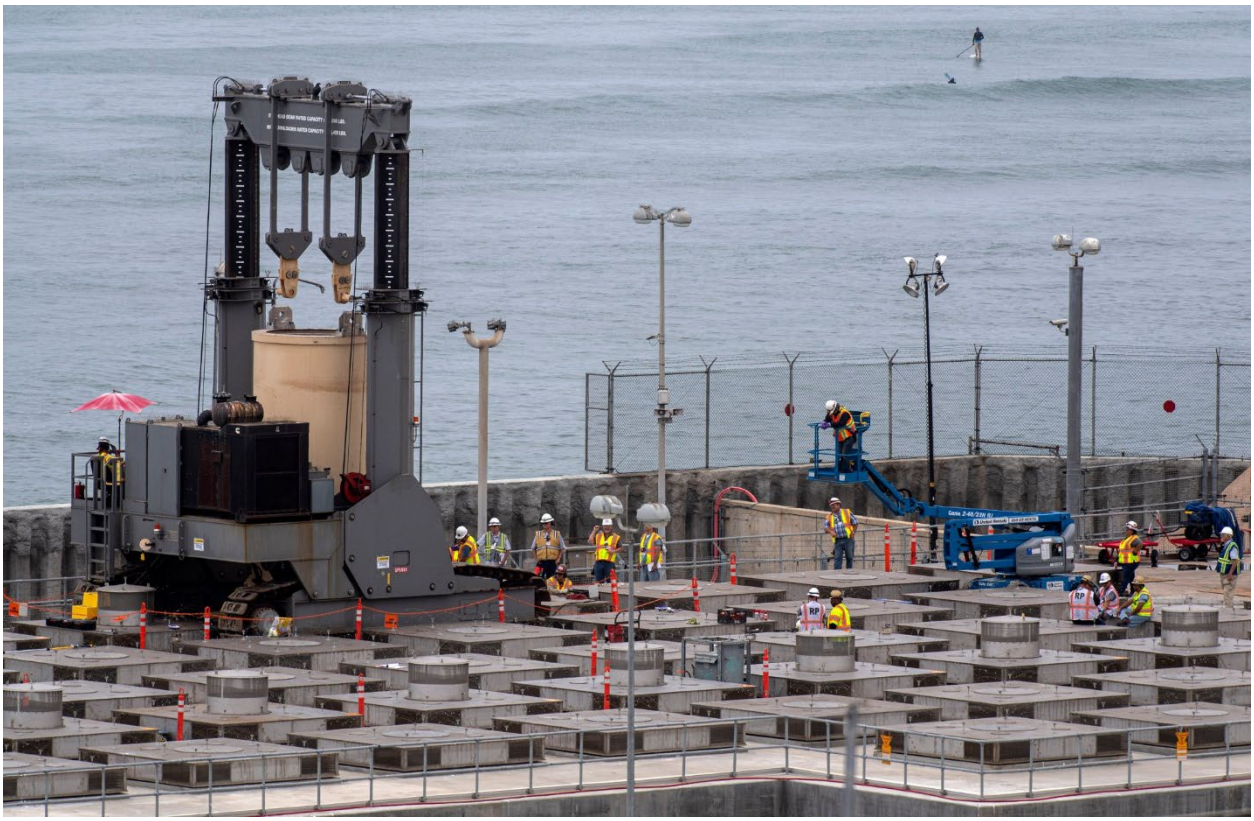
I write to share a recent article in the Orange County Register regarding the Department of Energy's plans to demonstrate new acoustic emission technologies for automated monitoring of used nuclear fuel dry storage canisters at SONGS.

Here is the link and the full article is provided below:

https://www.ocregister.com/2026/06/11/san-onofre-new-tech-could-monitor-nuclear-waste-24-7/

San Onofre: New tech could monitor nuclear waste 24-7

Column: What does a crack sound like? Demonstration project will put ears on the cannisters at San Onofre.



In July, 2019, workers at San Onofre's dry fuel storage facility ready a newly placed canister for its 35,000 pound closure lid. The canister is placed inside the yellow shield cask as it is moved from the fuel handling building to the storage facility. Once in position, the canister is lowered 20 feet into a steel enclosure surrounded by concrete. (File Photo by Mindy Schauer, Orange County Register/SCNG)



By **Teri Sforza** | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: June 11, 2026 at 7:00 AM PDT

How will we know if a steel canister filled with highly radioactive nuclear waste is starting to crack?



A scratch on one of the canisters at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, as detected from an inspection done by robotic camera. (Southern California Edison)

This is an oft-expressed worry of people living near the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, where more than 100 waste storage canisters sit encased in concrete, just feet from the salty Pacific, awaiting a permanent home. The canisters were designed to last 100 years, but are licensed for 20. Most everyone agrees that an earthquake zone near 8 million people is not the ideal place to park them for decades on end.

While the nation agonizes over where to put this waste permanently, San Onofre is slated to test new technology that promises constant monitoring of every cask, every day.

That's not quite how things work right now.

Currently, Southern California Edison's aging management tools are designed to catch problems before they start by deploying robots and cameras to crawl into vaults and over canister surfaces to measure scuffs and scratches. Other robots can find and fix damage by applying a metallic overlay of nickel, effectively sealing any trouble spots. There's also a test canister — devoid of nuclear waste but

heated to mimic what it would be like if it did have such stuff — that can be extracted at any time and inspected for degradation.

This inspection schedule has Edison looking at the test canister every 2.5 years, and examining two loaded canisters every 5 years. If problems arise, officials expect to see them in the test canister first.

This inspection regimen is way more frequent than what is required by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but it still makes some critics nervous. They liken these once-every-few-years glimpses to searching via strobe light rather than spotlight. They want more frequent inspections, and they want to examine more canisters.

The upcoming demonstration project, slated for a test run at San Onofre this spring, might be what they're hoping for.



The U.S. Department of Energy's Center for Used Fuel Research announced this month that it has selected two companies to demonstrate "acoustic emission technologies for automated monitoring of used nuclear fuel dry storage canisters."

Guidedwave and Sensible Photonics rose to the top of a competitive field and were chosen for what the Department of Energy described as their "capacity to enable continuous, remote monitoring of canister structural health, and for their potential to reduce or eliminate the need for repeated deployment of inspection equipment."

Translation, please?

"We want to detect the initiation of a crack long before a crack forms. When it starts forming, it makes noise. Noise travels very, very well in solid materials," said Jerry L Stephenson, Edison's head of engineering.



The robot is lowered into a vault in the Holtec Hi-Storm UMAX dry storage system at San Onofre. (Courtesy Southern California Edison)

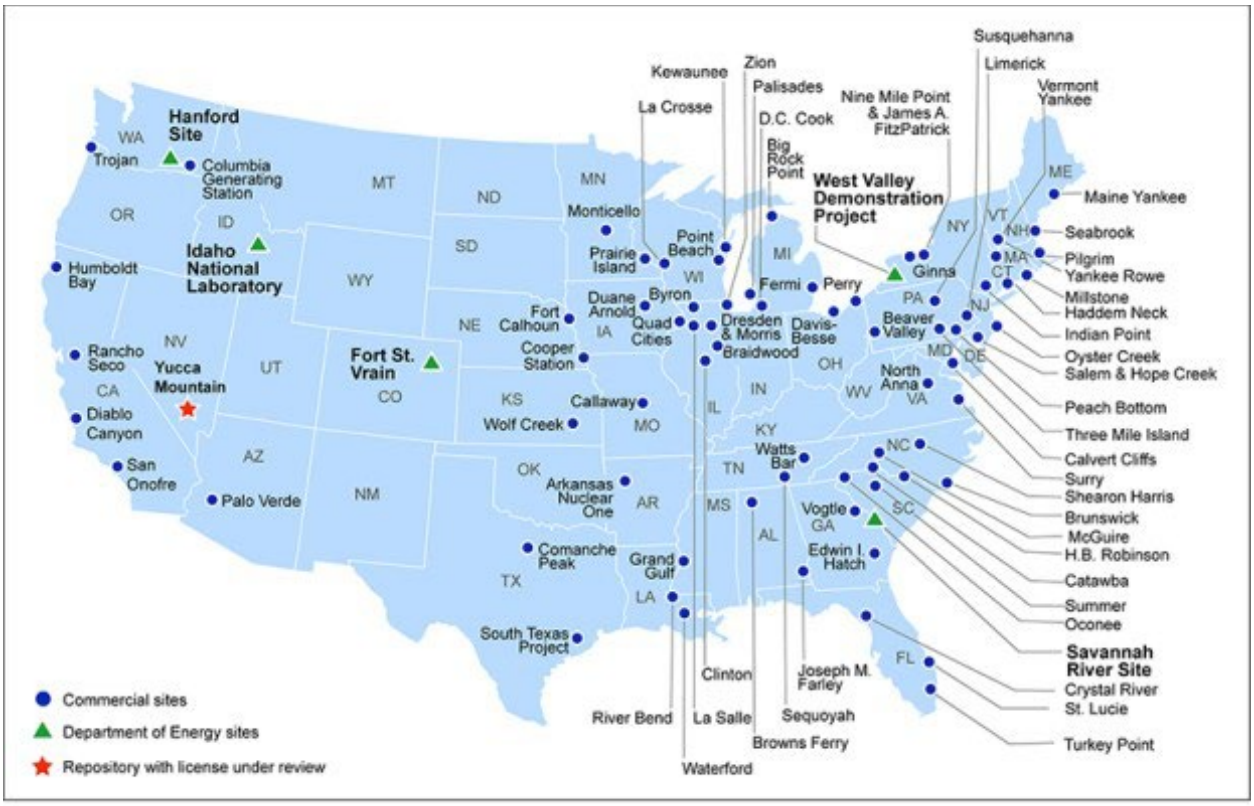
So sensitive acoustic sensors and arrays, originally developed to monitor pipeline integrity, would be placed in different parts of waste canisters. The sounds collected would be run through sophisticated electronics that could identify the distinctive sound of a crack beginning to form.

“This is purely research at this point, but the tech is there,” Stephenson said. “We have two competing technologies that use acoustics in different ways. They will do testing in the lab, but they need to go out to the field to measure background noise. It wouldn’t do any good if you could detect a crack — and 100 other noises that sound like a crack. Can they differentiate a crack from background noise?”

How do they know what a crack sounds like, you ask? It involves pushing a No. 2 graphite pencil until the lead breaks. That’s what the start of a crack sounds like.

Both companies proceed to “pre-demonstration testing” at Idaho National Laboratory (home to the DOE’s Center for Used Fuel Research) this summer, with one selected for a full-scale demonstration on San Onofre’s test canister, hopefully in the spring, when it’s slated to get its next inspection. “We have the only test canister anywhere in the world,” Stephenson said. “We’re proud of it and we enjoy sharing it, especially with the research labs.”

The tests also will look at the system’s longevity to ensure it keeps working.



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.

The prospect of being able to monitor every canister in a nuclear waste storage system, all the time, with real-time reporting, would be a great boon. "The demonstration is a proof of concept for potential deployment of automated monitoring and inspection technologies for aging management of all used fuel canisters in on-site storage facilities at more than 74 operating and shut down commercial nuclear power plants nationwide, and at a future DOE federal staging facility for used nuclear fuel," the DOE announcement said.

It's currently easy enough for Edison, with 123 canisters, to do regular robotic inspections. But when the DOE progresses to the point of collecting hundreds upon hundreds of canisters from commercial reactors all over the nation, that approach would be an awful lot of work, said Manuel Camargo, Edison's decommissioning manager. He's hopeful this means that the DOE is optimistic about the future of its "Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus" model, which would support everything from fuel enrichment to energy generation to reprocessing to, yes, waste storage. Several states have already expressed interest in hosting one, eager to take the canisters off our hands.

Fingers crossed. No one ever meant for San Onofre to become a long-term nuclear waste dump.

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: OC Register Article – Several States seem eager to host San Onofre's waste

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2026 3:24 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; 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 - Several states seem eager to host San Onofre's waste

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share a recent article from the Orange County Register regarding our June 4, 2026, CEP meeting and the states who seem eager to host our used fuel. The link and the full article are provided below.

> Several states seem eager to host **San Onofre's** waste - Orange County Register
> Orange County Register
> ... nuclear annihilation. This happens at most every **San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station** Community Engagement Panel meeting — that's the volunteer ...
> Flag as irrelevant

Several states seem eager to host San Onofre's waste

Column: But don't get too excited. 'Keep the political screws on. It's going to take a lot of political pressure to make progress.'
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On Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025, demolition continues in the surrounding areas near Unit 2 (l) and Unit 3 (r) at the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **TERI SFORZA** | Orange County Register
PUBLISHED: June 15, 2026 at 7:00 AM PDT | UPDATED: June 15, 2026 at 7:33 AM PDT

Unhappy that 3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive nuclear waste is being stored in your backyard, on a beach, prone to earthquakes, near 8 million people?

Buck up, Southern California. Your knight in shining armor may have just sauntered in on a white horse.

May we introduce you to Utah?

The connection came toward the bitter end of a multi-hour, marathon meeting on how we might finally, permanently, once and for all, dispose of this stuff, during the oft-interminable period set aside for public comment, when folks tend to call Southern California Edison names and share visions of nuclear annihilation. This happens at most every San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Community Engagement Panel meeting — that's the volunteer group advising Edison on the plant's teardown. So I was pondering what shoes I'll wear to my eldest daughter's graduation, when I heard….

"This is Jeremy Pearson with Utah Office of Energy Development… thought it would be worth jumping on for a second just to say 'hello'… Just wanted to say… that we are very much interested as a state in working with other states on finding a solution to this problem…."

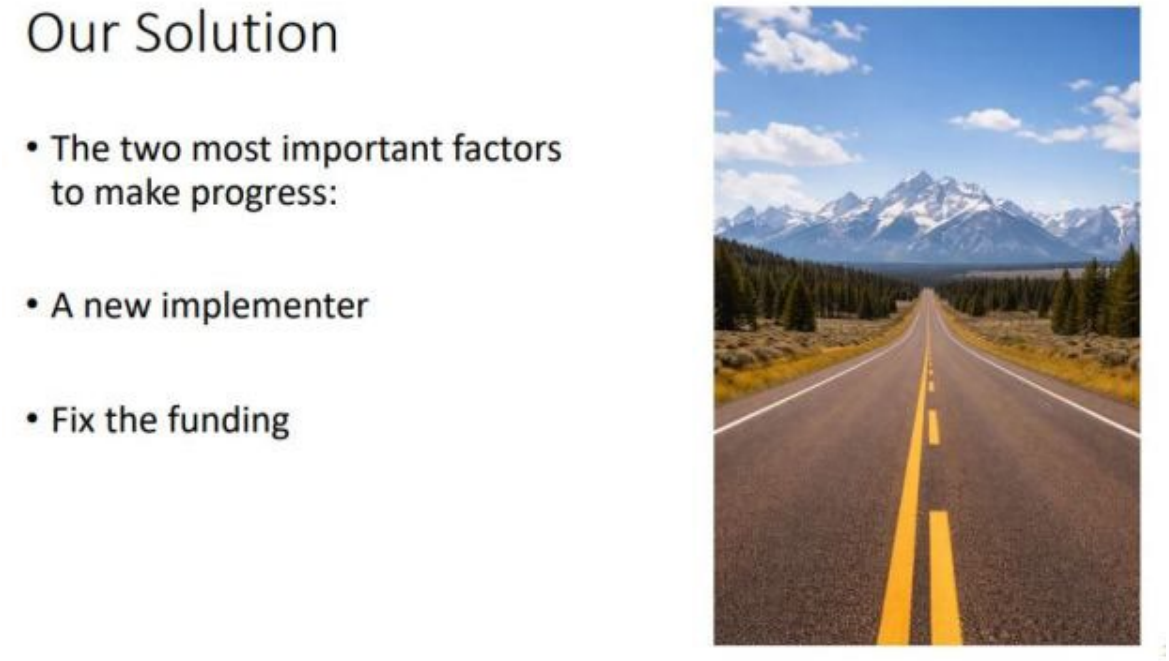
What?! I sprang to attention like a dingo suddenly spying a human baby (credit: "Megamind"). A state is willing and eager to host America's nuclear waste?!



This gathering, on June 4, was all about "The Path Forward for Nuclear Waste in the U.S.: A Bipartisan Solution to the Nuclear Waste Problem," as envisioned by 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) and colleague Lake Barrett, nuclear energy and materials consultant to government and business.

We told you about their thunderclap back in January: *Take the job away from the federal government, which has failed miserably to get anything useful done over the past 40 years, and entrust it to the industry that's stuck babysitting the waste, knows how to handle it, and is eager to get rid of it.*

What's important here is that the change in presidential administrations has brought, of course, an entirely new approach to nuclear. Trump is aggressively gung-ho and wants to create these "Nuclear Lifestyle Innovation Campuses" to support everything from fuel enrichment to energy generation to reprocessing to storage and disposition at the back end of the fuel cycle. The idea is that the campuses would bring jobs and scientists and technicians (along with nuclear waste) to town.



From "Path Forward," by Macfarlane and Barrett

In addition to Utah, Tennessee, South Carolina and Nebraska have also stepped forward, willing to do all of the above. Another two dozen or so states/territories are willing to do some of the above, though maybe not the waste part. The U.S. Department of Energy hopes to announce candidates in July and break ground on at least one campus next year.

Seems exciting! But we'll remind you that just a couple of years ago, the Biden administration's DOE was all over "consent-based siting," awarding $26 million to enlist communities interested in hosting the nation's nuclear waste. And before that, the first Trump administration tried hard to resurrect the moribund Yucca Mountain project. And before that, the Obama administration scrapped Yucca and convened the aforementioned Blue Ribbon Panel to chart a bold new path forward.

And we have gotten exactly nowhere.

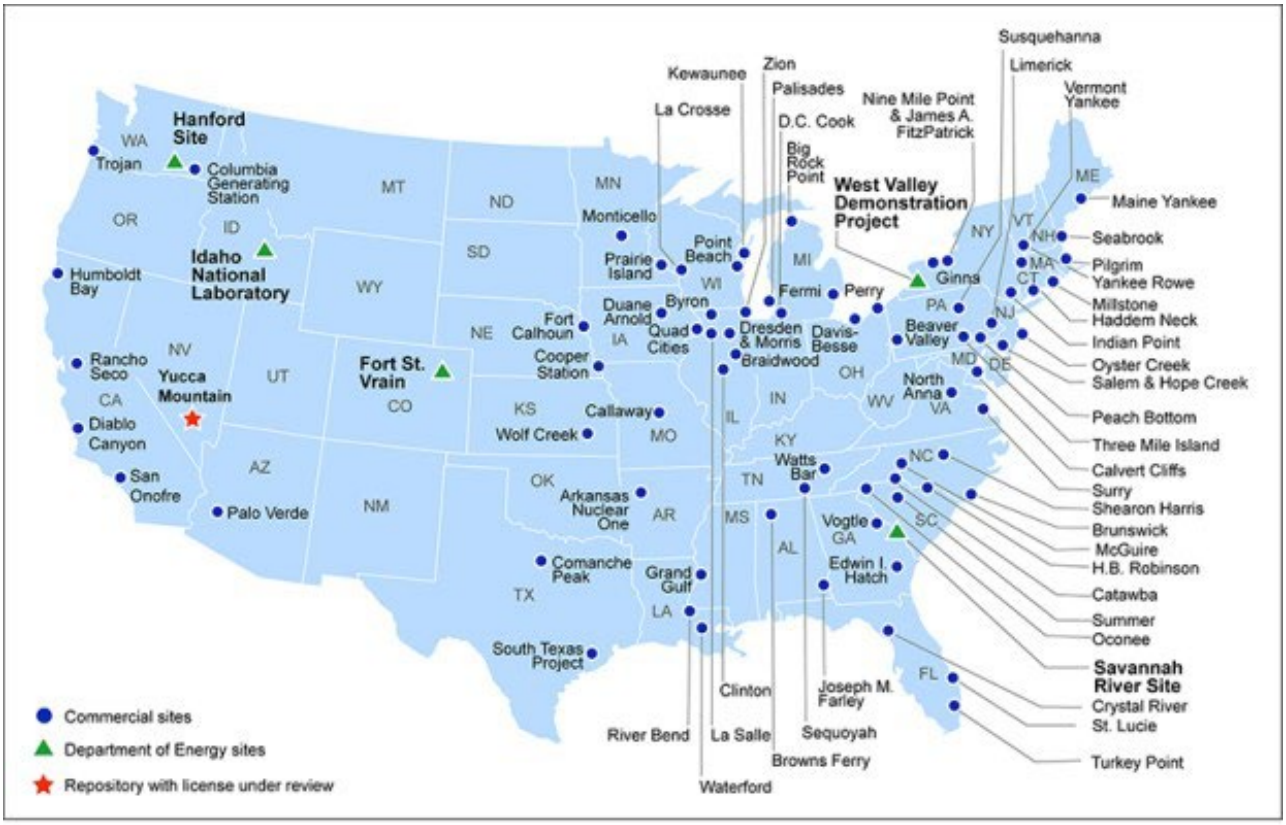


Inside Morgan Collins' "The Kaleidoscope of Curiosity" in 2019. (File photo by Drew A. Kelley, Contributing Photographer)

Point here is, U.S. nuclear waste policy is like looking through a kaleidoscope. A pretty image when you gaze through the eyepiece, until a new administration rotates the tube and creates an entirely new image, which is maybe also nice, until yet another administration comes along and rotates the tube yet again and creates yet another entirely new image. And so on.

This is why nothing gets done. To fix it, Macfarlane and Barrett say we must strip the responsibility from the federal government and give it to a mythical-sounding NuCorp ("a nuclear reactor owner-led corporation, either an independent public benefit corporation or a non-profit corporation." That's what they do in Finland, Sweden, Canada and other nations that leave us in the dust, nuke-storage-wise. They also say we should free the $50 billion in the Nuclear Waste Fund, money that's paid by ratepayers like us, for permanent waste disposal, but essentially locked inside a government version of Gringott's Bank and guarded by the fierce three-headed dog Fluffy so no one can get at it to accomplish anything meaningful.

Congressman Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, is one of the few in Washington poking the bear here.



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.

He has been working on bipartisan legislation to do what Macfarlane, Barrett and the nations making real progress say we must do: Remove the task of nuclear storage off the DOE's crowded plate and create a sole purpose entity

responsible for spent fuel disposal, and *only* spent fuel disposal. That, Levin said, would stabilize, and de-politicize, the task. The job will stretch across many decades and many administrations, and success depends on stability and unity of purpose. Which is to say, it should not be a kaleidoscope.
This will require changes to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act — the law that said the DOE would start accepting commercial waste for disposal in, er, 1998. But we've split atoms and put men on the moon people. We can do this.

Every day of delay siphons millions from taxpayer pockets. While that $50 billion in ratepayer money sits locked away, the utilities stuck with the waste have sued the DOE for breach of contract to cover the costs of said babysitting — and won. So far it has cost all taxpayers – not just ratepayers – about $12.2 billion, and will cost another $40 billion or so before it's over.

Fixing the Funding

- Funding Problems
  - Nuclear Waste Fund (est'd by NWPA) is now $50 billion
  - Dedicated fund paid by electricity customers but treated like tax dollars
    - Appropriations are subject to Graham-Rudman-Hollings Act
  - Currently used by Congress to offset the debt
  - Breach of contract against DOE under NWPA resulted in a ruling for a Judgment Fund – taxpayer money to reimburse reactor owners
    - To date, paid out $12 billion to store spent fuel
    - $40 B, or more, is projected to be spent in future



"This is a broken system. I think we've proven that," Macfarlane said. "If we keep going with the DOE-government agency model, we'll be having the same conversation in 20 years."
Finland will open its deep geologic repository for nuclear waste before 2030. Sweden is starting construction on its repository. Canada selected a site in 2024 and is already in the licensing process. France is in the licensing process, too, and Switzerland will finalize its site by 2031.

"This is at least the fifth report to look at what we need to do. All five of them come to basically same conclusion: Take the responsibility out of DOE and get

the new entity access to the funds it needs to do that job," said Tom Isaacs, an Edison advisor on nuclear waste management.

"What we need is legislation to get this back on track. It's too easy to do nothing and push this down the road. Doing nothing has consequences and we will wind up paying for it. We need to accept the sense of urgency."



Google image of San Onofre Nuclear Generation Station, 2026

There were squabbles about who might run a single-purpose waste disposal agency —- government? industry? some combination of both? — as well as the virtues and vices of reprocessing and recycling spent nuclear fuel.

But there also is cautious optimism that the Innovation Campus concept might survive a twist or two of the kaleidoscope: Rather than saying, "Raise your hand if you want America's nuclear waste!," it reframes the question as a larger economic and educational opportunity. Maybe Innovation Campuses can even make their way into the amendments to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act that'll be required for progress. Those sorts of changes typically come during lame duck sessions of Congress, one of which will commence this fall.

"Keep the political screws on," Macfarlane said. "It's going to take a lot of political pressure to make progress."

At attention in the wings is the California company Deep Isolation, which specializes in deep borehole technology — drilling way down into the earth, inserting waste canisters and sealing it all up permanently. Based in Berkeley, the company boasts more than 100 patents worldwide, and positions itself as the big answer to the big questions.

“The Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus effort is complementary to what Deep Isolation is working to advance,” said the company’s CEO, Rod Baltzer, via email. It “has helped jumpstart momentum around used nuclear fuel disposal by encouraging states to voluntarily explore hosting future disposal solutions, which we view as a positive and important step forward for the industry.”

Utah, at least, seems eager to help. Pearson, the guy who introduced himself to the Community Engagement Panel, said Utah would love for folks to reach out and review its federal proposal to host a campus (https://bit.ly/3Q559dl). Pearson grew up in Southern California, did his Ph.D. at UC Irvine, and was there when San Onofre powered down for the last time, 14 years ago. “We really know and understand your concerns down there,” he said.

Incidentally, Utah has deep salt beds, perhaps thicker than those at the nation’s only deep geologic nuclear waste repository, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico (solely for Defense Department, not commercial, nuclear waste). Swoon. California. Swipe right.

(Online presentation slides displayed below)

Our Solution

- The two most important factors to make progress:
- A new implementer
- Fix the funding



- **1 of 6**
  From "Path Forward," by Macfarlane and Barrett

Fixing the Funding

- Funding Problems
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  - Dedicated fund paid by electricity customers but treated like tax dollars
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  - Currently used by Congress to offset the debt
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    - To date, paid out $12 billion to store spent fuel
    - $40 B, or more, is projected to be spent in future



2 of 6
From "Path Forward," by Macfarlane and Barrett

The Implementer

- Need a trusted, funded, single-focus organization
- DOE
  - Lacked public trust
  - Constrained by political processes
- Based on success elsewhere and past studies, we suggest a NuCorp as implementer (*Nu*clear *Corp*oration)
- Nuclear reactor-owner-led corporation



3 of 6
From "Path Forward," by Macfarlane and Barrett

The Implementer

- NuCorp would manage, transport, store, and dispose of commercial spent fuel
  - Could contract with new reactors for disposal
  - Would be obliged to dispose of DOE owned waste (subject to a mutually acceptable contract)
- NuCorp would
  - use a collaborative siting process
  - enter into a hosting agreement with the state and local govt and Indian Tribe (if on their lands)
- Board of Directors
  - NuCorp would be governed by a board of directors
    - members selected by operating and decommissioned plants
  - Board would determine future waste disposal fees, if needed

4 of 6



5 of 6

From "Path Forward," by Macfarlane and Barrett



6 of 6

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: Expert Explains How to Fix America's 100,000-Ton Nuclear Waste Crisis

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2026 10:27 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Dan Whitley; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; 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: Expert Explains How to Fix America's 100,000-Ton Nuclear Waste Crisis

Hello CEP Members, and Alternates,

I write to share a video featuring Allison Macfarlane on nuclear waste from the Wall Street Journal.

https://www.wsj.com/video/series/pro-perfected/expert-explains-how-to-fix-americas-100000-ton-nuclear-waste-crisis/35954B46-4DD9-4105-9D49-3EC308A16A9F?mod=djemwhatsnews .

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: DOE Announces 5 Finalist States to Host Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses & Recent Politico Article on Nuclear Waste

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2026 10:00 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: DOE Announces 5 Finalist States to Host Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses & Recent Politico Article on Nuclear Waste

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share an announcement from the Department of Energy and a recent Politico article on nuclear waste. Links and full articles are provided below.
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Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses Contenders Announced | Department of Energy

Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses Contenders Announced

DOE announces Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Idaho as potential hosts to modernize the nation's nuclear fuel cycle

Energy.gov
July 28, 2026

Estimated Read Time 4 min

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced the selection of Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Idaho as potential host states for Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses, a new effort to strengthen and modernize the nation's full nuclear fuel cycle. The campuses will attract significant investment, expand domestic manufacturing, and create thousands of new high-paying jobs in their respective regions.

Following record levels of interest in the application process, U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright signed Memorandums of Understanding with the five states to continue exploring opportunities to host Innovation Campuses and support President Trump's bold vision for American energy dominance and national energy security.

"I'm pleased to announce that after reviewing 28 applications from 26 states, the Energy Department has selected five initial contenders to further explore building Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses," **Secretary Wright** said. "These campuses will be massive generators of economic growth, create thousands of high-paying jobs, and be crucial to unleashing America's nuclear renaissance. The innovative concept is a direct result of President Trump's leadership and ambitious directives to restore the domestic nuclear fuel cycle and get America's nuclear industry growing again."

"Utah welcomes the chance to help America reclaim its leadership in civil nuclear energy," said **Utah Governor Spencer J. Cox**. "We're building the

advanced technologies that will drive affordable, abundant power across our country. Through Operation Gigawatt, Utah is developing the entire nuclear lifecycle, from fuel production to advanced reactor deployment—strengthening our national security while helping secure America's energy independence. This campus will accelerate that work."

"As the global epicenter of nuclear energy, Tennessee is honored to be selected as a potential host for a Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus," said **Tennessee Governor Bill Lee**. "As our state answered the call during the Manhattan Project and helped shape the course of history, Tennessee stands ready once again to advance the safe, reliable energy solutions our nation depends on. I thank President Trump and Secretary Wright for their leadership as we strengthen America's energy dominance and create new opportunities for Tennesseans."

"Oklahoma has always been the leader in energy production and innovation, from the oil boom of the early 1900s to the shale revolution in mid-2000s," said **Oklahoma Governor J. Kevin Stitt**. "Today marks a new frontier—the chance to add nuclear to our energy abundance agenda. This opportunity is an all hands on deck moment, and I look forward to working with communities across our state to make this campus a reality. I'm grateful to President Trump and Secretary Wright for their leadership and considering Oklahoma, and for the companies, research institutions, and leaders across our state who have already pulled a seat up to the table to be a part of this project."

"Louisiana shares the President's vision for nuclear power and America's energy future. We appreciate Secretary Wright's leadership and the opportunity provided by the Department of Energy to further America's energy dominance!" said **Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry**. "Our state has a long and proud history of energy innovation, and we are ready to lead the next era of nuclear energy."

"Idaho is honored to have been selected as one of five initial contenders to further explore the development of Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses. For more than 70 years, Idaho has been at the forefront of nuclear innovation, and we are grateful to President Trump, Secretary Wright, and the U.S. Department of Energy for recognizing our unmatched expertise and legacy. We look forward to working with DOE to continue advancing every stage of the nuclear lifecycle, strengthening our nation's energy security, creating good-paying jobs, and ensuring Idaho remains the home of America's nuclear renaissance," said **Idaho Governor Brad Little**.

The proposed campuses are designed to support activities across the full nuclear fuel lifecycle, including fuel fabrication, enrichment, reprocessing used nuclear fuel, and final disposition of used nuclear fuel. Depending on state priorities and regional capabilities, the campuses may also host advanced reactor deployment, power generation, advanced manufacturing, and co located data centers.

The proposed innovation campuses have the potential to attract up to $50 billion in capital investment, generate as much as $10 billion in state and local tax revenue, and create nearly 25,000 jobs with an establishment of a campus.

Earlier this year, DOE invited states to submit clear statements of interest and constructive feedback on the structure of the Innovation Campuses. In their submissions, states outlined how a campus would advance goals such as workforce development, infrastructure investment, economic diversification, or technology leadership and described the scope of activities they envision hosting. States submitted responses by April 1, 2026.

States that choose to pursue hosting an innovation campus will sign hosting agreements with the Department at a later date.

Learn more about Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses.

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https://www.politico.com/news/2026/07/27/leaked-document-reveals-white-house-nuclear-waste-plan-01012663?nname=california-currents&nid=00000189-315c-d8dd-a1ed-797dc9f10000&nrid=00000161-9f58-d81f-a9e9-df5b55ed0000

Leaked document reveals White House nuclear waste plan

The Trump administration is seeking to move past Yucca Mountain as the nation's sole repository and store waste in willing states.



Nuclear waste storage silos in 2022 at Columbia Generating Station near Richland, Washington. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

By **HANNAH NORTHEY** and **FRANCISCO "A.J." CAMACHO**
07/27/2026 04:00 PM EDT

The White House is pushing Congress to break a decades-long impasse around the handling of nuclear waste and entice states to get on board, according to a document obtained by POLITICO.

The Trump administration is seeking changes to federal law to allow the Department of Energy to partner with states willing to store waste generated at the nation's nuclear reactors, according to the document laying out "legislative principles." It has been circulating on Capitol Hill and among nuclear industry leaders.

When asked about the document, a White House official said Monday that the administration "is always looking for ways to advance our civil nuclear energy sector."

The legislative blueprint comes as President Donald Trump pushes to quadruple America's production of nuclear power over the next 25 years, despite there being no long-term solution for the waste piling up at active and decommissioned reactors across the country.

The document calls for scrapping Yucca Mountain in Nevada as the nation's sole site for storing high-level nuclear waste and instead allow states to step up.

The White House is seeking legal changes to allow DOE to choose one or more sites "in willing states" to host so-called nuclear life-cycle innovation campuses for nuclear activities — including fuel production, recycling and disposition.

The plan would allow the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to revamp the way waste is classified to provide states with more flexibility and restart a fee on nuclear generation for waste disposal that courts halted in the past.

In exchange for bolstering nuclear fuel production and storing waste, the White House indicated states could see a surge of new business, including nuclear power plants and energy-intensive data centers.

"This initiative will establish campuses across several states that will host a fully integrated nuclear fuel cycle including conversion, enrichment, fuel fabrication, recycling, and disposition as well as advanced reactors, data centers, and manufacturing facilities," the document states.

Further, the administration wants Congress to allow the federal government to "provide interim storage for reprocessing at the" campus sites, according to the draft.

While the administration has been telegraphing for months that it plans to seek changes to federal law, the draft document is the first list of distinct details officials are seeking.

DOE in January, for example, asked states to host these campuses as part of an effort "to modernize the nation's full nuclear fuel cycle and strengthen America's leadership in advanced nuclear energy."

"Change in legislation is a must," said one industry official granted anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. "Current law only

allows the federal government to dispose of nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain and only allows money to be collected and spent for Yucca Mountain."

'Regional economic zones'

More than 95,000 metric tons of nuclear waste has accumulated across the country, mostly from the fleet of reactors built decades ago that provide the U.S. with a fifth of its electricity.

Congress sought to address the challenge in 1987, designating Nevada's Yucca Mountain as the sole spot the Energy Department could look at to host a federal repository.

It took another 15 years for Congress to formally approve the Yucca project — before it ultimately pulled the plug in 2012 by defunding the work amid sharp opposition from Nevada lawmakers, voters and tribal groups.

Still, Yucca Mountain remains the only legal option for permanently storing waste, reflecting Congress' inability in recent decades to agree on any bipartisan alternative that could pass into law.



Pete Vavricka conducts an underground train from the entrance of Yucca Mountain in Nevada in April 2006. | Isaac Brekken/AP

Energy Secretary Chris Wright earlier this year said that 28 states had weighed in on the department's life-cycle innovation campuses request. Utah and Tennessee both submitted proposals that included potential for waste storage and fuel reprocessing.

DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy recently told POLITICO the department expects it'll make a selection announcement "later this summer."

"It's growing. It's expanding. It's not going to go away if we just ignore it," Wright told members of Congress in April, referencing nuclear waste. "If we want a nuclear future in our country, we simply have to fix this problem."

Bipartisan support for reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel has grown in recent years — though a small handful of lawmakers remain skeptical. The U.S. in 1977 under former President Jimmy Carter placed an indefinite ban on nuclear fuel reprocessing, a move reversed several years later by former Republican President Ronald Reagan.

"When the Indians popped their bomb in 1974, that changed everything," said Lake Barrett, a former DOE official from the George W. Bush administration. "They did it through reprocessing, recycling the plutonium. All right. So all of a sudden, reprocessing, recycling became an international issue."

Most nuclear experts say that reprocessing nuclear fuel does not eliminate the need for longer-term storage sites, like a repository.

"You're going to need a long-term repository, even if you do reprocessing because there's still waste products that derive from the reprocessing facilities that will need to be disposed of," Rep. Mike Levin (D-Calif.), co-chair of Congress' Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus, said last month.

Pavan Acharya and Nico Portuondo contributed to this report.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
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5. For Awareness: LA Times Article – U.S. moves to abandon a landmark nuclear safety rule

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 10:16 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: LA Times Article - U.S. moves to abandon a landmark nuclear safety rule

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share a recent LA Times article on the NRC's new rulemaking efforts regarding radiation exposure.

U.S. moves to abandon a landmark nuclear safety rule



BY JENNIFER MCDERMOTT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing to eliminate a foundational safety principle that has for 50 years minimized the radiation people in the United States are exposed to and that has been adopted around the world.

Currently, facilities such as nuclear plants, hospitals or academic institutions that use radioactive materials must ensure radiation exposures are kept "as low as reasonably achievable" — the ALARA principle. The NRC proposal would abandon that philosophy while keeping a separate standard on maximum radiation exposure.

COOLING towers in Waynesboro, Ga. The Trump administration has sought to expand U.S. nuclear power. (Mike Stewart Associated Press)

The two standards have worked together in radiation safety. Dose limits set the maximum amount of radiation the public and radiation workers can be exposed to, while ALARA kept radiation exposure as low as practical under those limits. Research shows radiation exposure increases a person's chance of getting cancer, a risk that increases as the dose goes up.

The dose limits are not changing. But the NRC, which regulates civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials, now wants to replace ALARA with a "graded approach" that includes several actions facilities must take depending on the potential dose of radiation to workers. More rigorous radiation protection measures would be required when approaching dose limits to ensure they aren't exceeded.

This comes as President Trump attempts to quadruple domestic nuclear energy production because of surging electricity demand amid a data center and artificial intelligence boom. Reforming the NRC is one way Trump is trying to speed up nuclear reactor development. He instructed the federal agency in an executive order last year to "adopt science-based radiation limits."

The Energy Department, which oversees national energy policies, has already stopped using ALARA. The NRC expects to finalize its radiation protection regulations in the coming months.

NRC Chairman Ho Nieh said the commission is not lowering the bar on safety.

"We're just removing the ambiguity," he said in a call with reporters. "But the standard for exposure to workers and the public, those are not changing. We're just putting in place greater clarification."

Nieh doesn't expect major changes within the nation's existing fleet of large, traditional reactors. But companies designing and building new, smaller reactors could move faster with a clearer picture of the radiation protection requirements, he said.

Radiation limits

The NRC said radiation exposure limits are set well below levels associated with health effects, and it expects remaining standards and industry practices to keep radiation doses far below the limits. There's incentive to do so — it's more expensive and time-consuming to work in areas with higher radiation because access must be restricted and more surveys are required.

The nuclear industry's trade association agrees with the NRC.

"We will always continue to look at what can we do to reduce the dose to workers, and maintain our doses to the off-site public as low as possible," said Doug True, chief nuclear officer at the Nuclear Energy Institute. "It's not like we're just going to throw open the doors and let everything run up to the limits."

ALARA created a "moving target" for regulation, said Justin Friedman, a nuclear energy consultant who previously spent three decades at the U.S. State Department. Getting rid of the rule would allow NRC scientists to make more rational decisions about appropriate levels of manageable risk, he added.

Improving ALARA

Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists, cautions that some parts of the NRC proposal could raise permissible radiation doses in certain cases, while still staying below the cap. Lyman highlighted a proposed revision to radionuclide emissions standards, in particular.

Radiation exposure to the general public is limited to 100 millirem per year. A typical dose of radiation from a chest X-ray is 10 millirem.

The NRC wants to increase its radionuclide emissions standards from a conservative, 10 millirem per year dose to 25 millirem per year, based on a hypothetical person living in a house at the property line for a nuclear plant.

The NRC says actual doses to the public would remain far lower because, in reality, people live farther from nuclear sites and benefit from dispersion in air and water.

The NRC should improve, rather than eliminate, ALARA, Lyman said, to protect the public and workers. ALARA has become a political target because some people mistakenly believe radiation exposures have to be as low as possible no matter the cost, Lyman said. In reality, it allows trade-offs.

Katy Huff, a former U.S. assistant secretary for nuclear energy, said in some cases, the requirement may be challenging to regulate. Additional clarity would improve the regulatory environment without harming the public, added Huff, a professor and department chair at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

However, Huff said, she thought the NRC was going to clarify what "reasonably" means in ALARA without scrapping it. She said she's open to being convinced the graded approach will be just as effective.

A mixed bag

The National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements, chartered by Congress to provide independent scientific guidance, has not formally weighed in yet. Council President Kathryn Higley said she likes some things in the 180-page document but thinks others are problematic.

The NRC should look at the whole picture for managing risk, she said. For instance, if a worker at a nuclear power plant were to enter an area where airborne radioactive materials are present, in keeping with ALARA, they might wear full personal protective equipment with respirators, said Higley, professor emeritus at Oregon State University. That makes them move slower, potentially subjecting them to heat stress that could hurt them more than a low dose of radioactivity, she said.

A concern with the proposal, Higley said, is that it maintains the current occupational dose limit for adult radiation workers at 5 rem, or 5,000 millirem, per year. With ALARA in place, the average dose to workers has been well below that cap.

The International Commission on Radiological Protection recommends an occupational dose of 2 rem per year on average. The NRC previously found it wasn't justified to match that, because workers were exposed to less than that and changing regulations is costly.

Higley said the U.S. may need to align with the international community if ALARA is going away.

McDermott writes for the Associated Press.

Best Regards,
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6. For Awareness: San Diego Union Tribune Article: A glimmer of hope for the disposal of nuclear waste at San Onofre

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 3:34 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; VictorCabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: San Diego Union Tribue Article: A glimmer of hope for the disposal of nuclear waste at San Onofre

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share an article in the San Diego Union Tribune regarding the five states willing to host nuclear lifecycle innovation campuses with quotes from Dan Stetson and Representative Mike Levin.

https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2026/08/04/a-glimmer-of-hope-for-the-disposal-of-nuclear-waste-at-san-onofre/

A glimmer of hope for the disposal of nuclear waste at San Onofre?

Five states raise their hands for a Department of Energy plan to develop nuclear energy and potentially take spent fuel
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A portion of the storage facility at the north end of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. The site holds 3.55 million pounds of nuclear waste. (Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **ROB NIKOLEWSKI** |
PUBLISHED: August 4, 2026 at 5:53 PM PDT | UPDATED: August 4, 2026 at 6:11 PM PDT

Leadership at Southern California Edison's Community Engagement Panel is hopeful that last week's announcement that five states will consider hosting "nuclear campuses" may eventually lead to the removal of the 3.55 million pounds of nuclear waste at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

"We're cautiously optimistic that there's a potential light on the horizon," panel chairman Dan Stetson said.
Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Idaho have signed memorandums of understanding with the U.S. Department of Energy to strengthen and modernize what's called the nation's "full nuclear fuel lifecycle" — which includes a disposal site for the spent nuclear fuel rods and other debris.

The radioactive waste at San Onofre is stored in more than 120 stainless steel canisters at the now-shuttered generation station, known as SONGS, because the federal government has yet to find a permanent repository to send it.

It's the same case for the more than 95,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel that has piled up at nuclear power plants across the country.

Originally, Yucca Mountain in Nevada had been slated as a permanent site to take the waste. But in 2010 the Obama administration cut off funding for Yucca, following years of protests from lawmakers in the Silver State who had long opposed it.
The Department of Energy said it received 28 applications from 26 states that expressed interest in hosting Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses before DOE winnowed the field to five states last week.
"These campuses will be massive generators of economic growth, create thousands of high-paying jobs, and be crucial to unleashing America's nuclear renaissance, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said.

DOE touts the proposed innovation campuses as having the potential to attract up to $50 billion in capital investment, generate as much as $10 billion in state and local tax revenue, and create nearly 25,000 jobs.

The campuses look to host advanced reactor deployment, power generation and co-located data centers — topics that have gained attention due to anticipated growth in electricity demand to meet the needs of artificial intelligence.

The potential sites would also explore reprocessing and/or recycling spent fuel so that it could be used again in reactors.
While it remains unclear what will come from the agreements with the five states, the announcement may indicate that progress — however tentative and glacial — is being made toward ending the nuclear storage stalemate that has persisted for decades in the U.S.

"I think overall, the message is that it's great that the administration is taking a look at the problem of spent nuclear fuel," Stetson said.

Rep. Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, applauded the selection of potential nuclear innovation campuses, saying the news "is a monumental step in the right direction … for the first time, states are raising their hands."

At the same time, Levin said there's plenty of work to do.

"The hard part is still ahead of us," he said last week. "The federal government has a bad track record on nuclear waste and has not kept its promises to communities for many decades."
Levin has been a leading voice on Capitol Hill on nuclear disposal issues and pushed for legislation that would give priority to move spent fuel from reactors that are no longer active and located in areas that could pose risks to public safety.

Since SONGS is located just yards from the Pacific Ocean and in a region with a history of earthquakes, the waste at San Onofre would meet the criteria.

"Any development of new nuclear energy hinges on our country having a workable answer to the spent nuclear fuel challenge," Levin said.

But while the five states may express interest in developing nuclear in general, it appears to be an open question about their respective appetites for storing the legacy stockpile of waste and for how long — and whether the states receive financial compensation from the federal government for doing so.

Cally Younger, administrator of the Idaho Office of Species, Mineral and Energy Coordination, told the Idaho Statesman the Gem State is unlikely to accept a deal that only brought jobs and tax revenue if it meant storing spent fuel in perpetuity.
"That's great, and that's what got us to apply," Younger said of the potential economic boost, "but if we're really talking about permanent storage, they're going to have to pay."

Stetson said a representative from the Department of Energy will discuss projects dealing with nuclear waste at the next meeting of the SONGS Community Engagement Panel.

The discussion is open to the public and will be held via Microsoft Teams on Aug. 27 from 2 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. The link can be found at songscommunity.com/community-engagement/meetings/cep-regular-meeting-department-of-energy-used-nuclear-fuel-project-updates.
Southern California Edison operates SONGS, which stopped producing electricity after a leak in a steam generator in 2012 led to the plant's closure. The facility is in the midst of an eight-year dismantlement project.

But until the federal government finds a place to take the 3.55 million pounds of spent fuel, the waste sits at a pair of dry storage facilities on the north end of SONGS.

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 are 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.

Best Regards,
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