



SONGS Community Engagement Panel Meeting

US Department of Energy
Used Nuclear Fuel Project Updates
27 August 2026

Key Takeaways

The SONGS CEP hosted a [virtual meeting](#) with updates from DOE on: (1) the Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus initiative that includes used fuel disposal and (2) automated canister monitoring technology for multipurpose canisters that may be demonstrated at SONGS in 2027.

The DOE NLIC initiative offers an attractive value proposition to host states and communities, with used fuel disposal facilities as part of a broader fuel cycle design that offers thousands of permanent jobs, billions in tax revenue, and considerable capital investment. Some 26 states responded to an RFI and in July DOE signed MOUs with Utah, Idaho, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Louisiana. Hosting agreements with a subset of final states are expected to be executed as early as the end of September. The federal government must be prepared to enter transparent and enforceable long-term partnerships. If so, one or more of these Innovation Campuses may take SONGS used fuel as feedstock for recycling and reprocessing into fresh fuel.

While SCE and other utilities continue to use robotic inspections for canisters, DOE is looking ahead to the prospect of co-locating canisters from reactor sites across the country, for which a scalable, automated monitoring approach can offer greater efficiency. A demonstration project is anticipated to take place at SONGS in 2027 using a test canister that is artificially heated, does not contain used fuel, and therefore is easier for workers to handle. If successful, the CEP postulated whether the NRC could eventually revise its regulatory framework such that the technology could be rolled out to commercial nuclear plants nationwide.

SCE updated the community on a recent detection of the smell of diesel fuel and an elevated volatile organic compound that prompted notification of a state agency which triggered an NRC notice. This was a non-radiological matter with no risk to workers or the public.

A decommissioning general contractor representative explained a recent penetration of a wall in a basement below the water table. Groundwater from the basement is being included in batch releases which will increase in volume and frequency until the hole is patched. Processed water is sampled and analyzed prior to release, with a focus on adjusting pH, and ensuring total suspended solids are within regulatory limits (tritium levels are a small fraction of regulatory limits). All releases remain within safe regulatory limits.

Shareables

- Read the [DOE news release](#) on state finalists for Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses
- Learn about the prospect of [automated monitoring](#) of used nuclear fuel canisters
- Join the [Spent Fuel Solutions coalition](#) and support efforts to clear San Onofre of used fuel
- Plan to tune in to the [SFS webinar](#) titled "Governing Long Promises: The Long Arc of US Spent Fuel Policy" with anthropologist and former DOE official Vincent Ialenti at 8 am PT on Sept. 10
- Learn about how used fuel is safely stored at San Onofre by visiting the [SONGS website](#)