

Citizens' Oversight Projects (COPs)

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CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT PROJECTS
CitizensOversight.org

Deal Struck to Move Nuclear Waste from San Onofre

Citizens' Oversight settles with Southern California Edison in a “practical solution that respects safety concerns”

SCE, experts will investigate alternatives to move spent fuel from SoCal beach to an alternative site

SAN DIEGO (2017-08-28) -- Citizens' Oversight today announced that it has reached a deal with Southern California Edison that requires the utility to use its efforts relocate the approx. 3.6 million pounds of nuclear waste from the San Onofre beach. The agreement sets up an overarching plan, including the use of top experts in spent nuclear fuel transportation, nuclear engineering, spent fuel siting and licensing, and radiation detection and monitoring to advise on issues related to proposed relocation to an offsite storage facility away from the delicate ocean ecosystem.

Ray Lutz, founder of Citizens Oversight and an engineer, said, “Leaving the spent fuel only 100 feet from the ocean with no other options being developed is simply unacceptable. Our agreement plots a prudent strategy that aims to moving the fuel off our coast more promptly and avoids the possibility that it would just be left on the beach indefinitely due to inaction. This is a practical solution that respects safety concerns.”

On October 6, 2015, the California Coastal Commission voted to approve a permit to install and use a new “Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation” (ISFSI, also called “spent fuel dry storage”) only 100 feet from the seawall at San Onofre. After speaking in opposition at the meeting, Citizens Oversight founder Ray Lutz joined with activist Patricia Borchmann and the law firm of Aguirre & Severson LLP, to file a lawsuit against the Coastal Commission to revoke the permit. Southern California Edison (SCE), the majority owner of the failed San Onofre nuclear plant, is the party of interest in the case. The lawsuit asserts that the permit was improper due to lack of public review, numerous ex parte meetings, and lack of consideration of technical issues.

Just one week before the court hearing scheduled for April 14, 2017, the parties agreed to settlement discussions. With the ISFSI in the process of being built, a cooperative settlement process was considered to be the best alternative.

But even with this agreement, moving the nuclear waste to a better location is not a done deal. The agreement does not attempt to reach conclusions on the actual implementation plan, which is to be determined by a set of experts which will be hired by SCE. The expert team will investigate alternative

sites and develop a transportation plan and a strategic plan to move the waste using “commercially reasonable efforts.” The agreement requires reporting at regular intervals so that Citizens Oversight can monitor the progress, inform the public, and can turn to the court if necessary to enforce the deal.

SCE must evaluate at least two options: Palo Verde nuclear plant in Arizona near Phoenix, which is partially owned by SCE, and “consolidated interim storage” (CIS) sites which have been proposed for western Texas and eastern New Mexico. But the agreement does not limit the review of considered sites to just those two. In that regard, Citizens Oversight plans to propose to the expert team to review all other feasible sites, including two which were suggested by the public in recent public meetings:

- 1) several miles from the coast in Camp Pendleton, and
- 2) somewhere between San Onofre and Yucca Mountain along the rail line and far from dense populations, ocean corrosion, delicate aquatic ecosystems, seismic fault lines and tsunami risks.

Another big win in the settlement is the requirement that SCE develop: 1) an “inspection and maintenance program” and 2) a written plan addressing contingencies for damaged or cracked canisters at an accelerated schedule from that originally required by the Coastal Commission permit. These must be done in 2020, according to the settlement agreement, and must be developed in accordance with NRC regulations.

We are cautiously encouraged by the recent announcements of “consolidated interim storage” options under development in the eastern New Mexico and western Texas region. These options must be carefully evaluated by the expert team in the robust “commercially reasonable” standard. In addition to scientific and technical factors, safety is a leading consideration in the evaluation of potential offsite options for facilities.

Key to the success of this settlement will be the long-term monitoring of the agreement and continued involvement by the public. Citizens Oversight is the only environmental or watchdog organization that stepped up to the plate on this extremely important issue. We must ensure that Citizens Oversight will continue to be a viable concern for years to come so we may continue our watchful eye over this agreement and continue to be a conduit of information. We, therefore, offer the opportunity for members of the public to help support this project by becoming a member of Citizens Oversight and participating in a recurring contribution plan. Please visit <http://citizenoversight.org/donate> for details.

We believe we, as a nation, must begin to seriously address these nuclear waste problems. With this settlement agreement, we will no longer say “we’ll figure it out later.” It is later. We must figure this out now.

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: Press Conference

WHERE: Steps in front of the San Diego Superior Court, 330 W. Broadway, San Diego

TIME: 4:30 pm, Monday, 2017-08-28

Facebook Event (RSVP): (Not available yet).

More information can be found at this web page: <http://copswiki.org/Common/StopNukeDump>

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