

INTERIM STORAGE

DOE to issue request for proposal on facility site

Speaking before the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development on March 3, Rita Baranwal, the Department of Energy's assistant secretary for nuclear energy, said that the DOE has prepared a request for proposal for an interim storage site for radioactive waste. "The intent is for the basic design of an interim storage facility," she said.

For the fiscal year 2021 budget, the Trump administration has requested \$27.5 million to support the "implementation of a robust interim storage program and R&D on alternative technologies for the storage, transportation, and disposal of the nation's nuclear waste, with a focus on systems deployable where there is a willingness to host." The administration did not request funds for the licensing of the Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada (NN, Mar. 2020, p. 73).

In a session of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee held on February 27, Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette said that the DOE would not begin work on an interim storage site without congressional approval, as doing so would violate the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

In response to questions, Baranwal said that the DOE does not have particular host sites in mind for an interim storage facility, but that the department will work to identify potential sites.

UNITED KINGDOM

Siting factors for geological disposal facility set out

Following a comprehensive and open national consultation, the United Kingdom's Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) organization on February 18 published its approach to evaluating possible sites in England and Wales for a deep geological disposal facility. A wholly owned subsidiary of the U.K. government's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, RWM will be responsible for the siting, construction, operation, and eventual closure of a disposal facility for the United Kingdom's high- and intermediate-level radioactive waste.

According to RWM, a geological disposal facility will be built only where there is both a willing host and a suitable site. "Siting factors," guided by government policy and legislation, will be used to inform conversations RWM will have with communities and to evaluate the suitability of potential host sites.

Six siting factors will be used in assess-

ing possible sites:

■ **Safety and security:** Safety and security must be assured and endorsed by independent regulators. RWM will not build a geological disposal facility unless it and its regulators are satisfied that it is safe.

■ **Community:** Communities are at the heart of the process to site a disposal facility, and RWM will consider social and economic opportunities, community well-being, and how such a facility can align with the host community's vision.

■ **Environment:** A geological disposal facility is a major environmental protection endeavor, and its construction will need to meet independent regulatory requirements.

■ **Engineering feasibility:** RWM will need to ensure that there is scope for sustainable design and the ability to construct and operate a disposal facility at a potential site.

■ **Transport:** The safe and secure transport of people, waste, and other materials must be assured.

■ **Value for money:** RWM has a duty to ensure that value for money is delivered.

The U.K. government published its updated policy framework on geological disposal, setting out a process for working in partnership with communities, in December 2018. The Welsh government published its equivalent policy on working with communities in January 2019. **NN**

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