

# The CAN-Did Press

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CITIZENS AWARENESS NETWORK  
ACT TODAY TO CHANGE TOMORROW...

## Climate Solutions Aren't Radioactive—The March to End Fossil Fuels

I represented CAN at the March to End Fossil Fuels in New York City on September 17. What a day! The organizers expected 10,000 people, and 75,000 showed up. People from frontline communities, youth, and faith communities rightly took the lead as we snaked through Manhattan. Marchers had formed dozens of “Hubs” based on geography, issue, or identity—Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, Upper West Side Action, Beyond Plastics, Fracked Gas Fighters, and our own Nuclear-Free, Carbon-Free Hub, to name only a few.

Waving a “Nuclear power? No thank you!” flag, I felt proud of our work and our contribution to fighting climate change. Many marchers voiced their support for our message for a nuclear-free, carbon-free future. The crescendoing “crowd energy” flowed around and through me. I rededicated myself to the work of telling the truth about nuclear power and making the sacrifices of so many communities visible to the world.

I had Zoomed in on the national organizing meetings for the March, and I could see that the crew was experienced and working with and welcoming many groups. The Nuclear-Free Carbon-Free Hub took shape with the help of the able team from the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS), with Tim Judson facilitating. In quick order, hub members decided on



*New York Climate March 2023 with former board member Leona Morgan on the left.*

messaging, and NIRS folks ordered t-shirts and stickers and also created our hand-out. Leigh Ford from the Snake River Alliance, all the way out in Idaho, set up a Hub website and amplified our message during the March.

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## New Nukes Running Aground on Same Old Rocks

It has been a bad few months for the nuclear industry. It started in August, with a federal court in Texas stopping a proposed consolidated “interim” storage (CIS) facility in Texas. Since then, there has been a flurry of developments that cast doubt on the potential for new reactors to be built in the US—and possibly around the world.

For much of this year, the industry has been trumpeting the startup of the Vogtle 3 reactor in Georgia, and the completion of the Vogtle 4 reactor. Coming in seven years late and \$21 billion over budget is hardly cause for a victory lap, but the story is even less rosy than that. Vogtle 3 had a string of technical problems that took it offline for weeks at a time, and it is even worse for Vogtle 4. After NRC approved the reactor to start up at the end of July, one of its main cooling pumps failed, postponing the restart for several months to replace the massive pump. The only other reactors of the same design (Westinghouse’s AP1000) were built in China, and they have been plagued with pump failures. The delay and repairs will further increase the cost of the reactors,

after the Georgia Public Service Commission staff found that the cost already exceeds any “benefits” the state’s ratepayers would receive from the reactors, even if they run for 60 years.

Then, in November, a company called NuScale canceled the flagship “small modular reactor” (SMR) project. SMRs are the nuclear industry’s latest, greatest idea for how to remain relevant in the energy industry. By making reactors smaller and manufacturing them assembly-line-style, in factories, the industry says it can reduce costs through mass production. There are at least a dozen companies promoting their designs for SMRs and other smaller-scale “advanced” reactors. None of the designs have been fully approved and construction hasn’t begun on any of them, but NuScale has been farthest along in the process. Its plan to build its first SMR power plant in Idaho was announced in 2015, but it still hasn’t broken ground.

Still, its cost estimates have skyrocketed for years, and NuScale hasn’t been able to get utilities to sign contracts to buy

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# Yankee Rowe, VT Yankee NDCAP/FNWPC Updates

## Yankee Rowe

Despite the nuclear industry's efforts to make its ever-growing legacy of High Level Radioactive Waste (HLRW) invisible, that waste continues to accumulate in an ever-growing number of communities abandoned by the industry and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Yankee Atomic in Rowe, Massachusetts, was the first commercial reactor and ceased operations in 1991. Today, the Yankee Rowe Spent Fuel Storage and Removal Community Advisory Board (CAB) is charged with keeping safe Yankee Rowe's 30-year legacy—16 casks of HLRW—until a permanent repository can isolate it from the environment. CAN members have attended the past two yearly meetings. Clearly a very conscientious group, the Yankee Rowe CAB attends to the vast array of ongoing industry rule-making and federal litigation while suing the federal government, as they must, to pay the \$8 million necessary to mind the store, as it were. Many on the CAB worked at the plant for years but are now aging out and having to pass on responsibilities and a sense of perspective to a new generation—shades of Vermont Yankee's future.

## Vermont Yankee Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel (NDCAP) and its Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee

Steve Skibniowsky, the VY NDCAP Chair, died on September 28. A lifelong resident of Vernon, Steve was hired at VY as a security guard several years after startup and retired as the plant's environmental specialist for radiological effluents in 2017. His invaluable first-hand knowledge of the plant's history and operations, especially the various releases of radiological and chemical contaminants, is now gone.

Several of us on CAN's board were in communication with him recently and found him congenial, very open to our various concerns, and willing to explore them as NDCAP Chair.

He will be missed, I know, by many.

With Steve's passing, Vice-Chair Lissa Weinmann assumed Acting Chair duties for this year's remaining two meetings.

On September 18, the Panel heard the usual NorthStar and Vermont state departmental reviews of decommissioning activities. It is ahead of schedule with "no significant contamination issues," though there is a PFAS contaminant level of 57 parts per trillion (ppt), exceeding the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's "acceptable" level of 20 ppt, though not inconsistent with that of other retired industrial sites in the state. NorthStar remains on track to complete the decommissioning with available funding.

***High Level Radioactive Waste, fast approaching 100,000 tons, remains the nuclear industry's, and this nation's, intractable problem, staring us all in the face.***

CAN board member Ann Darling pressed on how VY fares with the climate change-inspired National Academy of Sciences project to update regulations related to "probable maximum precipitation" events. Though access to the plant site and its 54 casks of High Level Radioactive Waste (HLRW) might be impeded by flooding of the Connecticut River, NorthStar's Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation's (ISFSI) senior manager said actual flooding of the casks is considered "not plausible." He added that after the flooding by tropical storm Irene in 2011, there remained a 30-foot margin of safety.

The Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee (FNWPC), chaired as well by Lissa Weinmann, has taken a deep dive into the reprocessing of HLRW to reuse as reactor fuel. On 6/12/23 Dr. Sven Baden of Orano, NorthStar's nuclear decommissioning partner, entertained no plausible dangers whatsoever in reprocessing. On 6/19/23 Dr. Edwin Lyman from the Union of Concerned Scientists could only see clear and present dangers in reprocessing. (<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/document/dr-edwin-lyman-presentation-spent-nuclear-fuel-reprocessing>)

At the Committee's 9/25/23 meeting, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) representatives outlined the Department's "recommendations" for transporting the nation's store of HLRW from retired nuclear plant sites but were quick to point out that such plans "do not reflect current DOE policy." There are, in fact, no current plans to construct a permanent HLRW repository. What's more, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) licensing of a so-called Centralized Interim Storage Facility (CISF), in this case a partnership between Waste Control Specialists (WCS) and the above-mentioned Orano, was judged illegal this past summer by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. WCS is part of the same holding company with NorthStar and owns the west Texas facility where NorthStar is disposing all of the Low Level Radioactive Waste generated in decommissioning.

This nation's HLRW, fast approaching 100,000 tons, remains the nuclear industry's, and this nation's, intractable problem, staring us all in the face. And yet the industry continues to pull out all the stops to expand and create even more waste. CAN members are pressing the VY NDCAP to make a more serious and concerted effort, as mandated by the Vermont Legislature, to involve the public in the decommissioning process. In addition, they are calling for WCS to report to the NDCAP on how VY's waste is processed and what environmental safeguards are in place. If our efforts are heeded, CAN will invite people living in the vicinity of the facility to attend. Stay tuned!

- Schuyler Gould, CAN Board member

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# Pilgrim and Holtec's Contaminated Waste Water

How to manage radioactive wastewater at Pilgrim to keep it out of our environment is the focus at Holtec's decommissioning. A recent whistleblower letter citing forced evaporation of Holtec-Pilgrim's contaminated water set off alarms in our community. With the MA Department of Environmental Protection potentially denying Holtec a permit to dump a million gallons of radioactive water into Cape Cod Bay, it appears Holtec has chosen the other less expensive option—"forced evaporation"—under the guise of "worker comfort."

Back in Nov 2021, Holtec reported to Rep Bill Keating its plan to dump over a million gallons of radioactive and chemically contaminated wastewater into Cape Cod Bay. Ensuing uproar by communities—including fishermen, marine scientists, real estate professionals, environmentalists, concerned citizens, and elected officials at all levels—exerted pressure to halt that plan. In Feb 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency informed Holtec dumping was prohibited under their current permit. Holtec insisted they could dump.

On May 6, 2022, Sen. Edward Markey hosted a Special Senate Field Hearing in Plymouth where Holtec CEO Kris Singh promised no dumping without stakeholder approval. Their plan has clearly been overwhelmingly opposed. Yet Holtec continued to insist discharge was their option. Holtec brushed aside all EPA warnings until Dec 2022 when the EPA included potential jail time if the current permit was violated.

In late March 2023, Holtec applied for a new water discharge permit with the EPA and the Commonwealth version called NPDES. On July 25, the MassDEP tentatively denied Holtec's application and initiated the 30-day public comment period, which inspired hundreds of comments in support of denial. The final determination is yet to be announced.

But a new concern has arisen: the prospect of "forced evaporation" as another cheap method of water disposal. On Aug 4, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued the Pilgrim inspection report for April/May. The inspectors discovered an engineering change that used immersion heaters to raise the temperature of the wastewater, resulting in higher rates of evaporation. Holtec maintained the action was to: 1) dry irradiated hardware boxes and 2) raise ambient temperature for "worker comfort." The report notes that radiation monitors and alarms on the vents were shut off and observed problems with radiation level measurements via failed calibrations and data.



Then came a disturbing whistleblower letter. On August 21, Cape Downwinders and MA Department of Public Health received an anonymous letter. Allegations in the letter are related to "forced evaporation" of Pilgrim's contaminated wastewater, worker and public health safety due to exposure of tritium in the air vapors, release of airborne radionuclides into the environment with no monitors in the ventilation system or stack, and radiological and safety concerns to the workforce. This whistleblower put a lot on the line to protect co-workers and the public.

In response to our inquiries about the need for an independent investigation, the NRC replied that their Aug 4th inspection report was a response to the whistleblower letter. But this made no sense since the whistleblower letter didn't come out until Aug 21. This lack of attention to the serious allegations only confirms our mistrust of the NRC.

MassDEP and the Department of Public Health also reviewed the letter and found the "heaters are not subject to air permits and do not require Holtec to apply for a permit." MassDEP stated they would intervene only if Holtec were evaporating the water as discharge and not for the two purposes stated. However, they added, if Holtec is evaporating the water with "new equipment," that may subject Holtec to the MA air-quality permitting process.

Thus, it appears MassDEP is accepting Holtec's plan for the heaters and not seriously considering the allegations in the letter that would hold Holtec accountable to MA law. The MA-Holtec Settlement Agreement requires Holtec to abide by state laws with no pre-emption by the federal government for this matter. But as we have seen, Holtec has a history of ignoring state authority.

Because our state laws protect the environment and public health, Holtec must be held accountable. We ask Gov. Maura Healey to initiate an independent investigation of the whistleblower allegations and enforcement of state air-quality laws. We also call on Holtec to immediately remove "discharging radioactive industrial wastewater into our water and air" from their business plan.

- Diane Turco, Executive Director Cape Downwinders, CAN Board member [www.capedownwinders.info](http://www.capedownwinders.info)

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### Thank You from CAN Board & Organizers

#### We couldn't do it without you!

- A.J. Muste Memorial Institute's Social Justice Fund
- Bob Bady • Boston Downwinders • Ilan Bryant • C-10 Foundation
- Climate Action Now • Paul Burton • Cape Downwinders
- Lisa Clark • Connie Childs • Dean's Beans • Diane Curran
- Lionel Delevingne • Court Dorsey • Jerry Greenfield & Elizabeth Skarie Foundation • Schuyler Gould
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- Shantigar Foundation • Bob Stannard • Seth Tuler
- van Itallie Foundation • Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance • Rae C Wright

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# US Fifth Circuit Court Rules Against NRC

The US Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit recently ruled that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission does not have the authority to license Consolidated Interim Storage (CIS) facilities for high-level radioactive waste from nuclear power plants. Recently the NRC had granted a license for such a facility to Interim Storage Partners to be constructed in Andrews County, Texas. That license is now stripped from the company which is a partnership between NorthStar/Waste Control Specialists, the owner of Vermont Yankee, and Orano, the French company which has contracted to help with decommissioning efforts at some nuclear power plants in the US.

The State of Texas and Andrews County, Texas have made it clear that they do not consent to having high-level radioactive waste stored at allegedly temporary facilities which many call “parking lot dumps.” Nonetheless, the Nuclear Regulatory Com-

mission granted a license for such a facility.

The US Congress has only envisioned these temporary dumps as support facilities for permanently sited deep geologic repositories. That is the law of the land. Without a permanent storage site selected many fear the temporary sites could become de facto long-term dumps.

Citizens Awareness Network applauds the decision and calls for a renewed effort to find a scientifically sound, environmentally just policy for handling the growing volume of toxic waste created by the nuclear power industry. CAN also calls for timely action to protect host communities that will be storing the waste for decades to come.

- Chris Williams, NIRS Chair, VCAN Organizer, and CAN Board member

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## March to End Fossil Fuels

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Working in the anti-nuclear and climate action movements, I've experienced a sort of “forgotten stepchild” syndrome. Climate action groups often do not mention nuclear power one way or the other when they talk about energy issues, and some even maintain that we need it in order to reduce carbon in the atmosphere. Groups working to ban nuclear weapons may talk about the role of nuclear power in developing nuclear weapons but not talk about its chain of sacrifice. Yet nuclear power is every bit as much an existential threat as climate change and nuclear weapons. This apocalyptic trifecta is simply the intertwined parts of the same menace. In that light, perhaps the most important takeaway for me from my day marching across Manhattan was the feeling of UNITY. From all our different literal and figurative directions, we were together for common cause. Long after the March, I carry that feeling with me.

- Ann Darling, member of Climate Action Now and CAN Board member

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## New Nukes Running Aground on Same Old Rocks

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enough of the power. The company also has significant safety issues to resolve before NRC could approve the design and grant the company a license to begin building the power plant. In October, a Wall Street firm published a report that predicted NuScale would run out of money next year, and shareholders would lose a lot of their investments. NuScale denied the claims, but then canceled the project a few weeks later, proving the point.

There are about four other reactor construction projects planned in the US, but two of those have run into problems, too. In September, the Air Force canceled a deal to build a “micro-reactor” at a base in Alaska. And in November, just before NuScale canceled its project, a company called X-Energy had a major investment deal fall apart, casting doubt on whether it can raise the billion dollars or so it needs to complete the licensing process and start construction.

Ironically, while SMRs are supposed to prove that nuclear power can help solve the climate crisis, all of the projects proposed so far would only generate about as much power as one of the new, large reactors at Plant Vogtle. But that was before the NuScale cancellation, and none of the reactors stand a good chance of coming online before 2030.

The whole story confirms that nuclear power is a dead end for climate. All the time and money utility companies and the federal government are wasting to push nukes could have already put many times more solar, wind, storage, and efficiency online, phasing out fossil fuels and old reactors. We're on the right path in Massachusetts and Vermont, doing just that.

- Tim Judson, Executive Director of Nuclear Information & Resource Service (NIRS.org), CAN President of the Board



# CAN Speaking Events

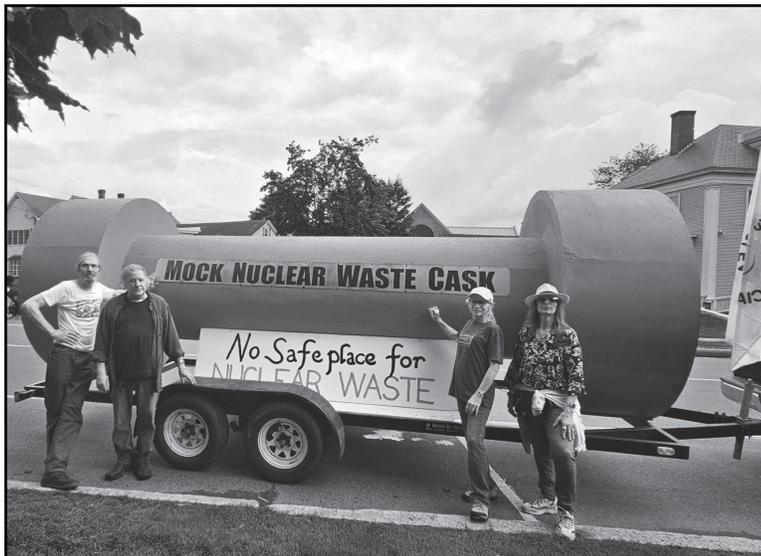
After a long COVID-induced hiatus, CAN speakers are back on the road and making in-person presentations. Thanks to Vermont State University at Castleton for hosting us back in October. It was a truly great feeling for the CAN crew to lay out the mountain of problems that old and new nuclear power plants present to our society and environment. The students were very engaged and grateful for the information we presented. In addition to asking many pertinent questions they were not shy about expressing their own concerns and outrage about the misinformation the industry is pumping out everyday.

We are experiencing an unprecedented wave of misinformation from the nuclear industry regarding all aspects of the technology. Waste, weapons proliferation, economics, environmental impacts. “No problems” is what industry shills are spewing from coast to coast. It is essential that the current wave of propaganda be answered!

Our current program is presented in four parts. The impact of nuclear power production on host communities and environmental justice, the nuclear fuel cycle, the link to the weapons complex, and nuclear power as a false solution to the climate crisis.

CAN is currently scheduling presentations in the New England region. We would be happy to try and reach classes, groups, and events in the coming year. Please go to our website at [nukebusters.org](http://nukebusters.org) and click on “Contact” to start the scheduling process.

- Chris Williams, NIRS Chair, VCAN Organizer, and CAN Board member



*Fourth of July Parade in Brattleboro, VT*

## CAN's Annual Meeting

On Sunday afternoon, September 24, 2023 we came together from four different states, convening in Vermont for our Board & Annual meetings. This was the first time we had a CAN meeting in person since the pandemic — what a remarkable moment after such a long time! There is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. One of the board members hosted us in their beautiful home and we shared some delicious treats from New York and New England.

Board President Tim Judson welcomed everyone and Executive Director Deb Katz gave us updates on the latest CAN campaign: “Making Visible what is Invisible and the Broken Promises of the Nuclear Industry.” With this campaign we focus on Environmental Justice, acts of malice, and climate disruption. We also had the annual board election and welcomed our new board member, Joan, who we introduce in this newsletter.

- Veronique Bryant, CAN Administrative Assistant

## Welcome to New Board Member Joan Ringrose Sellers

Joan Ringrose Sellers is a former board member (2008-2013)—we are so pleased that she decided to join CAN again. She lives in Northampton and is a Speech Language Pathologist by trade, graduating from UMass in 2023. Joan enjoys cross country skiing, gardening, kayaking on the local bodies of water and pickle ball. Joan supports CAN's mission to move our communities towards carbon free and nuclear free energy production.



*CAN Board Member Ann Darling, working on the new shed for CAN's Mock Nuclear Waste Cask.*

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# Safe Storage for CAN's Mock Nuclear Waste Cask

In the 1990s, the Federal Government attempted to build a “permanent” repository for all the high-level radioactive waste that was accumulating at reactor sites all around the country. The site chosen for the dump was Yucca Mountain in Nevada. Yucca was built on the land of the Western Shoshone nation. The Western Shoshone, as well as Nevada, didn't want it built. In 2010, the Feds, after spending \$15 billion dollars and encountering fierce resistance, abandoned the Yucca Mountain project. No permanent repository for the extremely dangerous high-level radioactive waste exists to this day!

Around 1999, the State of Nevada sponsored the building of five “Mock Nuclear Waste” casks to demonstrate the inherent danger of such a project. We have taken the cask all over the country to educate people—politicians as well as the general public—to the danger of transporting and storing high-level waste.

Maintaining the cask has been a challenge! Due to exposure to weather, we have had to rebuild it many times. It has been difficult to find a protective storage space so we finally decided to build one. Thanks to the support of our Board and many friends, who volunteered their time and building skills, we finally succeeded! Hopefully it will serve us and maintain the cask as long as it is needed!

- Harvey Schaktman, Treasurer, CAN Board member



*The completed storage shed for CAN's Mock Nuclear Waste Cask*



*Chris Nord and Schuyler Gould, CAN Board members*



*Bob Bady working on the roof of the shed*



*Harvey on the tractor, with Chris on the roof of the shed*

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