

The CAN-Did Press

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



Yankee Rowe CAB Meets

CAN board members Deb Katz, Ann Darling, and Schuyler Gould got a glimpse of Vermont Yankee's future at the annual meeting of the Yankee Rowe Spent Fuel Storage and Removal Community Advisory Board (CAB) on October 26th. The first large-scale commercial nuclear facility in the United States, Yankee Rowe was in operation from 1961 to 1992 and decommissioned from 1992 to 2007. Transfer of the reactor's High Level Nuclear Waste (HLNW) to the Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) took place in 2002-2003. The ISFSI sits on a pad at the reactor.

The meeting proceeded efficiently, though with little discussion of the issues. The presenters seemed extremely competent and dedicated to the mission of caring for the waste in as safe a manner as possible. Much information was presented. Operations (computer and facilities upgrades), security (staffing), safety, quality assurance (radiation protection), and emergency planning at the ISFSI were all reported to be within regulatory guidelines.

One of the first in the country- "Aging Management Baseline Inspections" was conducted this summer in order to extend the original ISFSI 20-year licensing period for another 40 years. A single cask was determined to be the most at risk for chloride induced stress corrosion cracking—(lowest decay heat load equals greatest susceptibility due to increased condensation)—and submitted to a raft of inspections and materials testing. These included

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Vermont Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens' Advisory Panel

Since the last issue of the CAN-DID Press, there have been meetings of the full NDCAP Panel on September 19 and December 12. The Panel's Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee has met at the beginning of October and on December 5. Recordings of these meetings and more information are available here: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/electric/ndcap>

VT NDCAP Full Panel Meeting September 2022

As usual, the Panel heard reports from NorthStar and the state agencies monitoring decommissioning activities. The reactor vessel has been segmented for shipping to Texas, and its internals are

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Diane Turco speaking in Plymouth, MA

No Radioactive Garbage in Cape Cod Bay!

Cape Cod Bay is our precious connection to the natural world. Visitors travel from around the globe to marvel at the beauty of the waters. Yet, this bay is threatened by Holtec Corporation's plan to dump over one million gallons of Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant radioactive wastewater into it—despite opposition from citizens of the South Shore, Cape Cod, and Martha's Vineyard, and our local, state, and federal elected representatives even though current Commonwealth laws clearly prohibit this plan.

Why do we fear that illegal dumping is imminent? We recently learned radioactive wastewater was dumped into Barnegat Bay at Holtec's Oyster Creek site in New Jersey without public notice. Holtec is also planning to dump the NY Indian Point reactor wastewater into the Hudson River... drinking water for over 100,000 people! At the July Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel (NDCAP) meeting in Plymouth, Mass., Holtec-Pilgrim manager David Noyes declared, "We will not say that we will not discharge waste into Plymouth Bay." Holtec plans to dump with impunity!

At the same meeting, Holtec refused to agree that it would not dump without Environmental Protection Agency permission, despite the fact that Holtec was told in no uncertain terms that Pilgrim's current EPA permit clearly prohibits discharge of spent fuel pool or decommissioning work water. While the EPA strongly rejected Holtec's claims of entitlement to dump, the agency cannot take preemptive actions. The fine for illegal dumping is much less than the cost of NRC approved alternatives, providing little financial incentive for greedy Holtec to choose a legal option.

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Environmental Justice in Vermont

Vermont passed a significant environmental justice law in 2022. Our new Congresswoman, Becca Balint, played a key role in assuring passage of the law. Our new Senator, Peter Welch, has held himself out as an ardent supporter of environmental justice initiatives during his time in Congress. As the new Congress convenes for 2023 it is important that Vermonters hold our representatives to their commitments to environmental justice and to make them understand that radioactive nuclear waste from VT Yankee must be held to the highest environmental justice standards.

Vermont and Texas have a longstanding agreement to dump low-level waste from the Vermont Yankee reactor at the Waste Control Specialists dumpsite in Andrews County, Texas. That has been happening at breakneck speed as VY is being decommissioned. There is a big push to temporarily “park” the high-level waste at the same site, in contravention of the current law. The State of Texas and Andrews County have been steadfast and outspoken in opposition to hosting high-level waste. Our members of

Congress need to state loudly and often that Vermonters support and respect the decision of Texas not to consent to making their community a high-level waste dump.

During the entire VY decommissioning process, the work has been accompanied by well-reported problems with groundwater entering the turbine building and becoming radioactively contaminated. Both Entergy and NorthStar have collected the water. We are now learning that much of the water has been shipped offsite. We are working to get more details, but it is apparent that rather than keeping the contaminated water in Vermont, that Vermonters have decided to contaminate a community far from our borders. Environmental Justice is not something that is an option. Vermont and our political leaders need to stop the hypocrisy and respect the well-being of communities that should not be treated as “out of sight—out of mind.”

- Chris Williams, VTCAN Organizer,
CAN Board Member, and NIRS Board Chair

VT NDCAP

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in the process of being put in canisters to be stored at Vermont Yankee. Counterintuitively to the layperson’s ears, the NorthStar decommissioning manager said the vessel itself is not considered High-Level Nuclear Waste (HLNW) and can be shipped to what is called a low-level waste facility. There is no storage facility for HLNW, so more radioactive reactor vessel internals will stay at VY alongside the fuel rods that have been removed from the reactor and its cooling pool. It’s really important to understand that “low-level waste” is still plenty radioactive and can do a lot of harm.

As of the end of August, the projected cost to complete decommissioning was \$2.7 million more than the amount in the Decommissioning Trust Fund. The financial monitors from the Public Service Department noted that NorthStar was required to put down \$55 million in a “financial assurance” escrow when it purchased VY and says that NorthStar remains on track to complete the project on schedule with the currently available funding. “On schedule” will probably be 2027, three years sooner than initially projected!

VT NDCAP Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee, October 2022

The October meeting of the Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee was very interesting. The group hosted Oliver Edelson, a legislative assistant to Cong Mike Levin from California’s 49th District. Rep. Levin and Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL) started the Spent Nuclear [HLNW] Fuel Solutions Caucus in Congress in summer 2021 as a forum where “federal legislators can talk with each other and experts and ask questions they don’t usually get to ask.” As Edelson said, the current HLNW situation is unsustainable, and resolution of the many “fault lines” and conflicts about HLNW’s management and disposition is “a political issue, not a technical issue.” The hope is that the Caucus, which currently has 24 members from both sides of the aisle, can move federal policy forward constructively.

There is not enough space here to go through every issue Mr. Edelson, the Committee, and the three CAN members present touched on. Here we’ll just say that there is some movement in Congress—after decades of virtually none—to deal with interim and permanent storage of HLNW. There seems to be support for compensating the communities that host interim storage facilities at reactors like Vermont Yankee. There is also support for creating a consolidated interim storage facility prior to development of this permanent burial site. CAN supports leaving the waste at the reactors and making it less vulnerable to attack, then moving it once to a permanent facility. It’s a fluid situation.

The Caucus has a website (Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus).

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

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 • C-10 Foundation
Climate Action Now • Paul Burton • Cape Downwinders
Connie Childs • Dean’s Beans • Lionel Delevingne
Court Dorsey • Kristina Graham • Jerry Greenfield & Elizabeth Skarie Foundation • Schuyler Gould • Guacamole Foundation
Gerry Hersh • Dan Keller • Lintilhac Foundation • Julian Mejia
Chris Nord • Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)
Rothschild Foundation • Nelia Sargent & Scott Neilsen
Michael Schreiber • Amy Shollenberger • Safe & Green Campaign
Shantigar Foundation • Bob Stannard • Van Itallie Foundation
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance • Rae C Wright

Seabrook's Safety Questioned

C-10 Research and Education Foundation (C-10) works closely with CAN and has been an active watchdog for the Seabrook atomic reactor for over 30 years. Their efforts have been instrumental in revealing that the North Shore communities near Seabrook (NH) have been continuously misled and their health put at risk from corporate short-cutting and regulatory laxity.

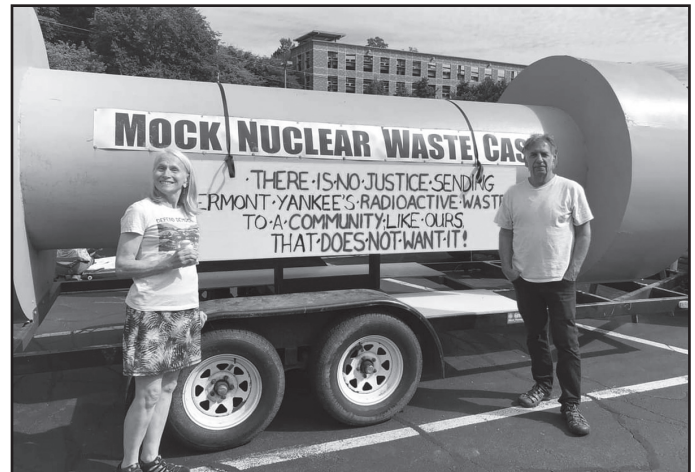
For more than 10 years, NextEra, the owner of Seabrook Station, and the NRC have acknowledged problems with degradation of below-grade concrete structures exposed to water. This alkali-silica reaction (ASR) progresses slowly, leads to cracking and displacement, and causes greater and greater reductions in load-bearing capacity and bend strength (how much a material can bend before it breaks), among other problems.

ASR is unique to Seabrook among all US reactors. There has been research on ASR, and the NRC has conducted extra inspections. Up to this point, they have deemed the structures "operable but degraded and nonconforming." However, an August 2022 NRC Inspection Report raised concerns; seven structures were at or near exceeding their structural design basis and needed to have physical modifications like buttresses.

As bad as it is that the buildings have degraded so far, there's even worse news; ASR-related changes are not being monitored adequately, and there are no repercussions for NextEra when that happens.

NextEra applied for a license extension of 20 years (to 2050) that was granted by the NRC in 2019 with special conditions related to monitoring the progression of ASR. During this process, C-10's expert witness, Prof. Victor Saouma (U. of Colorado-Boulder) contended in front of the NRC's judicial arm (Atomic Safety Licensing Board) that NextEra's proposed monitoring protocol did not assure him of Seabrook's safety because their test-sampling program was not representative of actual conditions at Seabrook. As a result, the ASLB set stricter thresholds for the amount of degradation that a structure can handle before it must be deemed unsafe and unfit for continued use.

One condition of the license extension required placing at



*Ann Darling and Bob Bady with mock nuke waste cask.
Photo by Chris Nord*

least 54 extensometers to measure the progression of ASR. After three years, there are only 47 extensometers in place, and they are not being monitored and evaluated adequately. The August 2022 NRC Inspection Report says: "...the licensee collected monitoring data for this structure in June 2021 and January 2022 which resulted in expansion measurements that exceeded the established threshold limits for structural performance and challenged the operability of the structure. The licensee did not identify and evaluate this condition until April 2022."

This report makes it obvious that expansion data can pinpoint structural weakening that takes place over a short period of time sufficient to put the operability of the atomic reactor at risk. The collection of data and its proper and timely evaluation are all that stands between a compromised yet operable reactor and one that is beyond its margin of safety. Yet the NRC concludes that this violation was "of very low safety significance," and it is being treated as a "non-cited safety violation."

- Christopher Nord, C-10, CAN Board member
- Ann Darling, CAN Board member

Stop Dumping in Cape Cod Bay

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Once again, private profit trumps social risk.

In November, the Economic Development Bill reached MA Gov. Baker's desk. It included Sen. Susan Moran's amendment establishing a commission to study economic and environmental impacts of Holtec's plan before any discharge. Even though unanimously supported by both chambers, Gov. Baker incredulously killed it with a line-item veto. Why?

The MA AGO/Holtec Settlement Agreement bound Holtec to comply with our laws and regulations. The Massachusetts Ocean Sanctuary Act clearly prohibits dumping into Plymouth, Kingston, Duxbury, and Cape Cod Bays. Yet Holtec continues to threaten this illegal action.

Where do we go from here? We applaud AG/Gov-elect Maura Healey for providing assurance that she was "damn sure, in whatever capacity I serve, that we're not going to have radioactive



waste dumped down here." She has authority to stop Holtec by enforcing current laws. At the federal level, Sen. Markey is holding Holtec's feet to the fire to comply with the EPA rules.

We have a civic and moral obligation to protect our environment for future generations. Every town along the bay, from Scituate to Provincetown has voted to halt Holtec's plan to dump their radiological garbage into our bay. We stand together and agree: Our beautiful Cape Cod Bay is not a commodity that predatory corporations like Holtec can abuse for profit. Holtec is not above the law and must immediately remove illegal dumping from their decommissioning plan. Or the State must now step up to preemptively prevent any dumping.

HALT HOLTEC! NO RADIOACTIVE GARBAGE IN OUR BAY! NOT ONE DROP!

- Diane Turco, Executive Director Cape Downwinders,
CAN Board Member www.capedownwinders.info

The National Radioactive Waste Coalition

CAN helped found the National Radioactive Waste Coalition (NRWC) two years ago to stop consolidated interim storage (CIS) and the dumping of nuclear waste in Indigenous and environmental justice communities. There is a growing danger that the industry will pressure Congress to pass legislation that would open the floodgates, shipping high-level radioactive waste across the country. The only way to counter the political influence of nuclear corporations is with grassroots organizing, uniting reactor communities and those targeted for waste dumps, to wake up the millions of people who live along the transportation routes.

We are helping lead the coalition's Outreach Committee, developing informational materials, and helping plan and coordinate the campaign's overall strategy. This year, the coalition mobilized thousands of people to oppose the siting of nuclear waste dumps in New Mexico and Texas, federal funding for a "pilot" CIS program, and efforts to bribe communities into accepting nuclear waste. Part of CAN's work has also been to start meeting regularly with our Congress members in Massachusetts and Vermont, and we are starting to move them toward opposing CIS.



*Will Nukem at the Franklin County Fair Parade
Photo by Chris Nord*

Bringin' it to the People

What a day! There were at least 10,000 people cheering us on at the Franklin County Fair opening day parade on September 8th in Greenfield (MA). People from all over the county, and beyond, lined both sides of the road for miles. Our "Mock Nuclear Waste Cask" followed Will Nukem all slicked down in a business suit who carried a "bullhorn" and sarcastically invited the public to earn money by "hosting a nuclear waste casket" in their homes or dorm-rooms since the government has failed to find a suitable place to store it.

We took advantage of the moment by handing out well over 1,000 factsheets, which explained the waste problem we are trying to deal with. The nuclear industry has been spending billions of dollars trying to make people embrace nuclear power as a "bridge" solution to the climate crises and not be concerned with the danger and threat of reactor accidents and the incredibly toxic quality of the waste that it produces.

- Harvey Schaktman, CAN Board Member

The organizing we are doing in New England is helping to expand the coalition and grow the grassroots power of the campaign. In the next year, CAN will go back on the road with our mock nuclear waste cask tours, and work with our allies in the coalition to start doing them in other regions. We were part of the Stop Mobile Chernobyl campaign twenty years ago, which stopped the first CIS proposals and, eventually, plans for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository. Through the NRWC, we are building the next major grassroots movement to stop environmental racism and nuclear waste once and for all.

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

Yankee Rowe CAB

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a robot crawler inserted into the ventilation space between the welded canister holding the spent fuel rods and the concrete cask. Except for a few wasp nests and some superficial efflorescence and paint abrasion there were "no indications exceeding acceptance criteria," and the facility's Certificate of Compliance was renewed.

An extensive review of current and upcoming federal legislation was presented. Attention is finally being given to the country's failure to meet its obligations to dispose of its mounting stock of HLNW, nearly 100,000 tons and counting. Unfortunately, instead of abiding by the current law, (requiring the licensing of a permanent facility before an interim storage facility), the focus is now on "consent-based siting" ("And the lowest bidder wins!") of Centralized Interim Storage (emphasis on "interim"). This is an end run by the government and the industry to make this waste "disappear," so it can generate even more waste, instead of actually doing the hard work of finding a technically sound, environmentally just, and permanent solution to the problem.

During time allowed for citizen comments, Deb Katz expressed alarm about the deteriorating condition of the dams on the Deerfield River above the Rowe site. Reassurance was given that the issue had been studied and that the casks and the integrity of the waste "should/could" survive a complete failure of the dams. Schuyler Gould broached the topic of the Vermont Yankee NDCAP's withdrawal two years ago of its not thoroughly vetted support of Centralized Interim Storage (CIS) and its subsequent creation of the Federal Nuclear Waste Policy Committee to more thoroughly study these issues. He suggested Yankee Rowe's CAB might want to reconsider its own endorsement of CIS.

Informal discussion after the meeting amongst all the participants was respectful, quite genial, and frank. At least one representative of the plant expressed his own "personal" concerns about those dams and what might happen should they fail. Whatever our respective differences of opinion regarding the benefits of nuclear power (we didn't get into it), everyone there was clearly dedicated to the highest standards of safety in caring for this waste until a final solution can be implemented.

- Schuyler Gould, CAN Board Member
