

New Mexico Says NO to Nuclear Waste

For years, Holtec International has been telling communities near nuclear power plants that New Mexico wants to take their waste, claiming that it, “Has strong local support in New Mexico” for its proposed Consolidated Interim Storage (CIS) facility for storing high-level radioactive waste. This year’s New Mexico legislative session stated loud and clear, confirming on a state-level what Indigenous Nations and community groups have been saying all along: We are not a sacrifice zone!

On March 17, 2023 Senate Bill 53 (SB 53) was passed and signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham that same day. SB 53 does a few things, primarily it prohibits any state “permit for the construction or operation of a disposal facility for spent fuel or high-level waste unless the state has consented to the creation of the disposal facility and a permanent repository is in operation.” It took several years for this to happen.

Many entities have worked to get resolutions of formal opposition against Holtec’s proposal and related transport. Some resolutions include opposition to Waste Control Specialists/Interim Storage Partners’ CIS proposal in west Texas. Today, there are fourteen resolutions from New Mexico including Indigenous nations, municipalities, and counties. One of the most significant voices in that opposition has been from the All Pueblo Council of Governors, representing twenty Indigenous Pueblo Nations of

New Mexico which passed a resolution in 2019 and was present at every 2023 legislative hearing.

Over the years of fighting Holtec, an alliance of community groups, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups and individuals have worked together and side-by-side on various strategies statewide and nationally. Collectively, these groups have challenged Holtec at the NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board level, throughout the NEPA process, and some have legal challenges pending.

The fight is not over, but it’s moving forward. Things that made a difference this year were that many Environmental Justice coalitions and youth organizations have been active in the legislature and have taken on the nuclear issue. In addition, the Sierra Club put significant resources into the nuclear-free fight at the legislature. Although SB 53 was a huge state victory, the federal NRC license is expected by the end of May, and Holtec is expected to take legal action over SB 53. With these new alliances and experiences, New Mexico will keep fighting to Halt Holtec!

-Leona Morgan, former CAN Board Member

[Leona Morgan (Diné) works on issues of nuclear colonialism and is a graduate student at the University of New Mexico.]

Stop Dumping in Cape Cod Bay

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Strontium-90, chemically similar to calcium, emits beta radiation that can kill or damage cells for more than 200 years. If you had to choose, which is preferable—cell death or cell damage? (Hint: damage to rapidly dividing cells can cause cancerous mutations.) Are any readers fond of child-bearing-age women and their children? They are 20 times more vulnerable to mutations due to cell damage, than are adult men—because of their rapidly dividing cells.

Our oceans are part of the “Commons” for which people have sought legal protections since the days of the Magna Carta. Tell your state representatives and senators that Massachusetts must prevent the dumping of radioactive water, in any concentration. As a resident of the Massachusetts North Shore, I applaud the work that Cape Downwinders, the Cape Cod Bay fishing community, and Plymouth area concerned citizens have done to make noise on this issue. What Holtec is able to perpetrate at Pilgrim, they and other corporations seeking to profit from short-cutting the disposal of radioactive waste will carry out at Seabrook, when its time comes; and it will be tried everywhere—here and internationally.

Let’s work to stop the immoral and illegal dumping of radioactive waste—starting right here at home.

- Christopher Nord, CAN Board,

C-10 Research and Education Foundation

Solar Renewable Energy Bills—Call to Action

The new legislative session has started in MA. That means a whole new slate of bills to get over the finish line! Here are the best solar renewable energy bills sponsored this session. ASK your legislator to co-sponsor the bills and work towards increasing solar access across the Commonwealth for all.

Each bill has a Senate and a House version. Search for more info on each bill: <https://malegislature.gov/>

• HB3225 (Sabadosa) and SB2150 (Mark). An Act to encourage solar development on buildings and disturbed land

• SB2119 (Eldridge) and HB3205 (Owens). An Act to promote solar energy development consistent with the commonwealth’s 2050 next generation roadmap

• SB2094 (Creem) and HB3170 (Gregoire). An Act to promote low-income access to solar

• SB2120 (Eldridge) and HB3677 (Connolly) An Act increasing solar rooftop energy

- Claire Chang, CAN Board Member, Greenfield Solar

We’re Taking the Cask on the Road Again

If you’re interested in seeing our mock nuclear waste cask up close and having us talk at your event about why “Nuclear Power is Not the Answer to Climate Change” and “Nuclear Waste” please contact us: can@nukebusters.org.

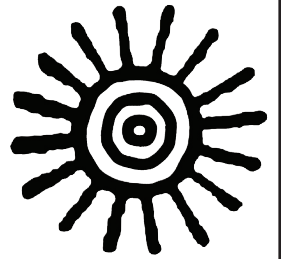
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The CAN-Did Press

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



CAN Sets New Organizing Strategy

Everyone’s talking about High-Level Nuclear Waste (HLNW) these days (the not-so-spent-fuel), and CAN is too, but we are also insisting on talking about Low Level Nuclear Waste (LLNW)—the stuff outside a reactor that gets irradiated in the course of doing business at a nuke. This includes clothing, tools, and building and system components, as well as water used in cooling or that infiltrates contaminated buildings. It leaves nuclear power stations in a steady stream during their operation. Where does it go? What happens to it? What risks does it pose? It’s not something most people know enough to even ask about. (Hint for some key words here: environmental racism, contamination.)

One of the main reasons CAN wants to know more about this link in the chain of nuclear waste is the moral power inherent in connecting reactor host communities with waste site communities, which are chiefly in rural communities and those with large BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) populations. The idea is that, once reactor communities know more about the track record of environmental injustice and contamination at LLNW waste sites, they will start asking questions and, we hope, demanding that “their” waste be handled more safely and justly. And the communities and activist groups near waste host sites and along transportation corridors will gain new allies. We think developing these linkages is a terrific educational and organizing tool.

Nuclear Waste Transport

On February 24, 2023, a freight train bound for Vernon, Vermont derailed. Fortunately, it was empty. The train was on its way to the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant to pick up a load of low-level radioactive waste bound for Waste Control Specialists in Andrews County, Texas.

On June 17, 2022, a twelve-axle tractor trailer carrying empty nuclear waste storage casks ran off the road and crashed in Andover, Vermont. It too was headed to the Vermont Yankee site in Vernon.

It is fortunate that neither incident involved actual nuclear waste. The Department of Energy staff people, who make presentations about radioactive waste transport, are always reassuring that the roads and rails are safe. These incidents in Vermont tell a different story.

The recent train accident in East Palestine, Ohio has brought the issues of deteriorating infrastructure and less than effective regulatory oversight into clear view for our country. All the industry and Department of Energy planning involving thousands of

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CAN organizers have begun research in a public-facing (obtuse and clunky) database managed by the US Department of Energy (DoE) that tells how many cubic feet of LLNW goes to sites licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and how many curies of radioactivity it had when shipped. These sites are in Barnwell, SC; Andrews County, TX; Clive, UT; and Richland, WA. As an example, the database says that, from 1986 – 2008, Vermont Yankee (VY) sent 71,400 cubic feet of LLNW with 223,700 curies to Barnwell, SC and from 2012 – 2022 sent 31,300 cubic feet of material with 59,100 curies to Waste Control Specialists in Texas, which is owned by the holding company that

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Holtec Wants to Dump in Our Ocean—Don’t Let Them!

Does anyone reading this like the beach? Does anyone like eating seafood? If the answer to either of those is “yes”, you should know that the fishermen of Cape Cod Bay are upset about the future of their fish—though more precisely, the ocean in which they swim.

Holtec, owners of closed Pilgrim atomic plant, want to dump more than one million gallons of their highly radioactive water into the bay—even though they have safer ways of dealing with it. Why dump it then? Two reasons at least: First, they divest themselves, most rapidly, of the liability of ownership of this extremely hazardous waste—thereby transferring any public health and/or environmental problems that arise from said dumping to the public. Second, since they have an outflow tunnel to the bay—from the cooling system for the defunct atomic reactor—dumping (they prefer the term “discharging”) this radioactive waste directly into the ocean is the cheapest way to dispose of it.

Of course, they intend to dilute their rad-waste by mixing in a lot of ocean water, and that will make it safe, right? Wrong! 17 years ago, the National Academies of Science finally admitted there is “no safe threshold” below which radiation is harmless. And, as we know from decades of concern over mercury toxicity in apex predators like swordfish, toxins build up as they migrate up the food chain. This is “bio-accumulation.” In one example, Strontium 90 passes from seaweed > small fish >> big fish >>> swordfish >>>> humans.

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Making Our Case with Massachusetts Legislators

The state and federal governments have abandoned the Massachusetts communities around the four reactor sites in or very close to the state. They need more attention and protection. That's the case that CAN members have been making with state and federal lawmakers this late winter and early spring.

Yankee Rowe in Western Mass is decommissioned, Pilgrim and Vermont Yankee are decommissioning, and Seabrook continues to operate. They are all interim storage sites for High-Level Nuclear Waste (HLNW), and there are millions of curies of radioactivity out in the open and vulnerable to attack, with inadequate security, and no planning for the impacts of climate disruption. Yankee Rowe sits just below two dams. Pilgrim and Seabrook are on the ocean. Vermont Yankee's HLNW is just feet from the Connecticut River.

CAN members Deb Katz (Executive Director), Ann Darling, and Diane Turco (Cape Downwinders) have made the rounds with state legislators Paul Mark, Natalie Blais, Susannah Whipps, Jo Comerford, and Lindsey Sabadosa from western Mass and found them well-informed and supportive. They have signed on to bills in their respective chambers that would stop any discharge of radioactive materials into Cape Cod Bay, create a 50-mile emer-

gency planning zone around all four reactor sites, and improve monitoring of dry cask storage. They have NOT signed on to a bill we oppose that would decrease the public's representation on the citizens' advisory group for Pilgrim.

If you are a constituent of one of these legislators, please thank them for their support! We will return to conversations with these supporters with other specific ways the state could protect these four sub-regions, including conducting a study of climate risks for these sites which are all too close to bodies of water.

CAN has also been talking with the federal delegation from Massachusetts, including Sen. Markey and Rep. Seth Moulton, to encourage legislation to compensate reactor communities for hosting the HLNW that is in their backyards without their prior consent. CAN has also asked these legislators to oppose any federal support for consolidated interim storage of HLNW before a permanent repository has been sited and developed.

All of the legislators have appreciated the information and perspective we provide. To protect their communities better doesn't require the legislators to be pro-nuke or anti-nuke. It just requires them to do their jobs.

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

Welcome to New Board Member Debra Stoleroff!



Debra is the director of personalized learning at Twinfield Union School in Plainfield, VT. She is a longtime activist who has organized campaigns regarding many social and environmental justice issues. She, with many other Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance members, worked countless hours to shut down Vermont Yankee. Debra

continues to push for a just, responsible, safe decommissioning and storage of VT Yankee's nuclear waste—to safely store Vermont's waste in Vermont so it does not travel anywhere where it could cause harm to other communities.

CAN's New Organizing Strategy

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also owns Vermont Yankee. To give a sense of scale, during those same 36 years, according to the database, all the LLNW waste from Vermont educational and medical institutions (e.g. x-ray machines) totaled 2,066 cubic feet with 1.81 curies.

Clearly, "low-level" is a relative term. LLNW is way less radioactive than "high-level" (e.g. 117,000,000 curies in "spent" fuel now at VY), but LLNW from reactors has a large volume that is still plenty "active" and capable of contaminating the environment—which it has done. For instance, the site in Barnwell, SC is leaking tritium (radioactive water) into groundwater that drains into a tributary of the nearby Savannah River, a drinking water source for communities downstream.

Gathering this information is just a first step in building bridges from reactor communities in CAN's home base in New England to waste processing sites. There's lots more research to be done. For instance, we have good reason to believe that the data in the DoE database is not complete. As an example, as far as we know, the reactor "vessel head" from Yankee Rowe went to Savannah River, Georgia for testing, and information about it does not seem to appear in the DoE database. (Savannah River is one of the most radioactively contaminated places on the planet.)

And in addition to digging into curie counts, we are also contacting activist groups we know of and reading local newspapers near waste sites to learn of others. A professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute is excited about placing student interns with CAN to help us with our information-gathering. This is just the beginning. More to come!

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

Nuclear Waste: Every Which Way but the Truth

The nuclear industry wants to do anything but take responsibility for the forever-dangerous waste that its entire existence depends on creating. The Department of Energy, corporate lobbies, and pro-nuclear politicians are promoting not only Centralized Interim Storage (CIS). Last year, the NRC issued a license to Interim Storage Partners (ISP) to build a CIS facility in Texas, at a site where Waste Control Specialists runs the rad waste dump where Vermont Yankee and most of the industry send their "low-level" waste. And in June, NRC is expected to issue a license to Holtec, to build an even larger CIS facility in New Mexico, just across the border from ISP. Between them, the Holtec and ISP dumps would be able to store more than twice as much nuclear fuel than currently exists in the US.

Unfortunately for the industry, the people of both New Mexico and Texas are rejecting these proposed "parking lots" for nuclear waste. Grassroots organizing in both states has resulted in state legislatures passing laws that effectively bar CIS facilities from being located within the states' borders, the governors of Texas and New Mexico have both spoken out against the dumps, and the Attorney General of Texas has joined lawsuits challenging the NRC license for ISP.

But that has not stopped the industry and the federal government from pushing CIS. In April, the Department of Energy (DoE) issued its proposed policy for a "consent-based" siting process for CIS dumps. At the same time, DoE repeated its commitment to pursuing CIS, even though federal law currently requires DoE to focus on developing a permanent geologic repository for nuclear waste, and prohibits DoE from starting CIS until such a repository is built. Instead, the agency has started a program to pay communities to consider hosting CIS facilities. DoE has tried offering money to communities to store nuclear waste before, and each time it has failed—with Indigenous nations and state governments rejecting the idea.

The industry is desperate for a way to start getting nuclear waste off of the reactor sites where it is located. They know the public cannot accept nuclear power, knowing there is still no "safe solution" for it. So they are continuing to push for federal legislation to remove the barriers to CIS. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) is planning to introduce the Nuclear Waste Administration Act, to legalize federal CIS facilities and make them a higher priority than developing a permanent repository. There is also a budget proposal to provide over \$50 million to DoE to support its efforts to advance CIS.

The DoE and the industry are also openly promoting a resumption of reprocessing, the dirtiest and most harmful way of "managing" nuclear waste. Every country that has done reprocessing has resulted in massive radioactive contamination and created forms of nuclear wastes that are even more difficult to manage. The US's nuclear weapons sites (including Hanford and Savannah River) and the West Valley site in New York are among the most radioactively polluted places in the world. The decades-long efforts to "clean up" those sites are still decades and billions of dollars from being completed.

Taking responsibility would require, first of all, to stop making radioactive waste—and a plan to phase out nuclear power

plants and move to renewable energy. It also means protecting the waste that already exists with Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS), until environmentally sound, scientifically proven, socially just, and democratically chosen means of permanently storing the waste is developed.

That is what CAN and our allies in the National Radioactive Waste Coalition are fighting for: a revolution in how we protect communities and future generations, rooted in a set of Guiding Principles for Humane and Equitable Nuclear Waste Policy:

- Stop Making Nuclear Waste—don't keep digging ourselves into a deeper hole.
- Prioritize Human Health and Environmental Protection—make the preservation of human and environmental health the bottom line.

- Acknowledge and Combat Environmental Racism and Injustice—communities and Indigenous peoples have been harmed, and their sacrifice has been the cost of nuclear energy's false promises. That has to stop in order to make a better way forward.

- Stop Subsidizing the Sources of Nuclear Waste—resources must go toward addressing the nuclear waste problem, not making it worse.

- Protect and Support Communities Already Adversely Affected—the peoples and communities who have been harmed must not be abandoned. They deserve the chance and the support to heal and thrive.

- Communities Must Have the First and Last Word—the measure of whether nuclear waste storage is fair and protective is if the people affected continue to accept it.

Nuclear energy has left a trail of lies and broken promises nearly a hundred years long. We need and deserve better.

- Tim Judson, Can Board Member, NIRS

Nuclear Waste Transport

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shipments of high-level nuclear waste moving across the country for decades is ill-advised.

We need to invest in hardening waste storage at nuclear sites around the nation and adequately supporting the host communities with resources and security for the foreseeable future.

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



Derailed train in Shelburne Falls, MA. 2016. Reprinted with permission of Greenfield Recorder.

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