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, on a confirmation of state-wide that Indigenous Nations and communities 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 were passed into law by the 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 the All Pueblo Council of Governors, representing twenty Indigenous Pueblo Nations of New Mexico.

Stop Dumping in Cape Cod Bay

continued from page 1

Strontium-90, chemically similar to calcium, emits beta radiation that can kill or damage cells for more than 200 years. If you had a nuclear shower, which is possible—cells can take a long time to divide! (Hint: damage to rapidly dividing cells can cause cancers mutations.) Are any readers fond of child-bearing-age women and their children? They are 20 times more vulnerable to mutations than are adult men—because of their rapidly dividing cells. (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 than are adult men—because of their rapidly dividing cells. (Note: 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 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 fishing community, and Plymouth area concerned citizens have done to make their discharges and experiences known. New Mexico will keep fighting to halt Holtec! -Lena Morgan, former CAN Board Member

Nuclear Waste Transport

On February 24, 2023, a freight train bound for Vermont, 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 An- dover, 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 presen- tations 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 railroad infrastructure and less than effective regulatory oversight into clear view for our country. All the indus- try and Department of Energy planning involving thousands of

Solar Renewable Energy Bills—Call to Action

The new legislative session has started in MA. That means a 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/• SB2119 (Eldridge) and HB2065 (Owens). An Act to promote solar energy development on buildings and disturbed land • SB2120 (Eldridge) and HB3677 (Connolly). An Act to promote low-income access to solar • SB2120 (Eldridge) and HB3677 (Connolly). An Act to promote low-income access to 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.

Stop Dumping in Cape Cod Bay continued on page 4

Can Sets New Organizing Strategy

Everyone’s talking about High-Level Nuclear Waste (HLNW) these days (the so-not-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 bunk. 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 communi- ties, 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, demand- ing 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.

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

Holtoc, 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 never dealt with this before. Why dump it then? Two reasons at least: First, they divest themselves, most rapidly, of the liability of ownership of this extremely hazardous waste—their way to deal with it. Second, since they have an outflow tunnel to the bay—from the cooling system for the defunct atomic reactor—dumping (they prefer the term “discharges”) 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.

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 fact 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 never dealt with this before. Why dump it then? Two reasons at least: First, they divest themselves, most rapidly, of the liability of ownership of this extremely hazardous waste—their way to deal with it. Second, since they have an outflow tunnel to the bay—from the cooling system for the defunct atomic reactor—dumping (they prefer the term “discharges”) this radioactive waste directly into the ocean is the cheapest way to dispose of it.

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The state and federal governments have abandoned the Massachusetts Yankee Decommissioning Alliance, and Vermont Yankee is decommisioning, leaving communities to deal with radioactive materials. VT Yankee, which is still plenty “active” and capable of contaminating the environment, has been leaking tritium (radioactive water) into groundwater that is still plenty “active” and capable of contaminating the environment. Can activists are organizing to stop any discharge of radioactive materials into Cape Cod Bay, create a 50-mile emergency planning zone around all four reactor sites, and improve monitoring of dry cask storage. They are also pushing for legislation that would require supporting any federal siting of HLNW facilities to be reviewed by citizens’ advisory groups. Can activists are also working with state legislators to ensure that any new nuclear waste storage facilities are reviewed by citizens’ advisory groups. Can activists are also working with state legislators to ensure that any new nuclear waste storage facilities are reviewed by citizens’ advisory groups.

Welcome to New Board Members!

Debra Stoleroff 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 will be working closely with Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance members to work toward the decommisioning and storage of VT Yankee’s nuclear waste—to safely store Vermont Yankee’s HLW just feet from the Connecticut River.

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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 enterprise depends on. The Department of Energy, corporate lobbyists, and pro-nuclear politicians are promoting not only Centralized Interim Storage (CIS) but also an even larger CIS facility in New Mexico. 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, in the future, 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 Vermont and Texas have both spoken out against the dumps, and the Attorney General of Texas has joined lawsuits challenging the Nuclear Waste Commission.

But that has not stopped the industry and the federal government from pursuing CIS. In April, the Department of Energy (DOE) issued its proposed policy for a “consent-based” siting process for selecting where the same HLW, and probably more, 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 purest and safest way to store HLW is to harden American waste plants and move to renewable energy. It also means protecting the waste that already exists with Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS), until scientifically sound, environmentally 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. We are fighting to manage nuclear waste on a scale that 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.

Nuclear Waste Transport

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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

Principles for Humane and Equitable Nuclear Waste Policy:

- 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 grow 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 be supported. 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 depends on creating. The Department of Energy, corporate lobbyists, and federal government must not be abandoned. They deserve the chance and the support to heal and thrive.
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