

NNPP to continue to unload, transfer, prepare, and package naval spent fuel for disposal. The DOE said that the new facility will improve long-term capacity, increase efficiency and effectiveness, reduce long-term costs and risks, and best support the ability of the NNPP to comply with a 1995 settlement agreement (amended in 2008) reached by the state of Idaho, the DOE, and the U.S. Navy concerning the management of naval spent nuclear fuel.

The construction of a new facility was deemed a better alternative than maintaining or refurbishing the current Expended Core Facility (ECF), which is unable to support the use of new M-290 spent fuel shipping containers. According to the DOE, refurbishing the ECF would incur increasing costs and would require workarounds to ensure the uninterrupted defueling and refueling of nuclear-powered ships and submarines.

Under current budget and funding levels, the DOE anticipates that the construction of the new facility will take five years, followed by a two-year period during which new equipment will be installed and tested and personnel will be trained. During that time, the NNPP would continue to operate the ECF. The DOE said that it may be necessary to conduct some limited upgrades and refurbishments to the ECF while the new facility is being built.

The decision is based on the DOE's *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Recapitalization of Infrastructure Supporting Naval Spent Nuclear Fuel Handling at the Idaho National Laboratory* (DOE/EIS-0453-F), which was issued on September 23, 2016.

● A draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the cleanup of Area IV and the Northern Buffer Zone of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory in Ventura County, Calif., was released by the Department of Energy on January 6. The draft EIS examines a range of approaches to clean up chemical and radiological contamination at a portion of SSFL that includes the former Energy Technology Engineering Center, which served as a research facility for the United States during the Cold War.

The DOE's development of the draft EIS followed an order by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California preventing the DOE from transferring possession or otherwise relinquishing control over any portion of Area IV until the DOE has completed an EIS and issued a record of decision. The court order was the result of a lawsuit by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Committee to Bridge the Gap, and the city of Los Angeles, which successfully challenged the DOE's 2003 environmental assessment for the cleanup and closure of the Energy Technology Engineering Center and its finding of no significant impact for the remediation of Area IV.

The draft EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts of possible alternatives for conducting cleanup activities in Area IV and the Northern Buffer Zone. There are separate alternatives for soil remediation, building demolition, and groundwater remediation. According to the DOE, the alternatives are the culmination of years of study and analysis by environmental and technical experts.

The draft EIS can be downloaded at [www.SSFLAreaIVEIS.com](http://www.SSFLAreaIVEIS.com). Public comments are being accepted until March 14 and may be submitted via the website or by phone at 805/842-3864. A record of decision detailing the path to cleaning up the site will be issued after a final EIS is prepared.

● On September 27, 2016, the Department of Energy announced that it has awarded a grant to the University of Arkansas to Decommission the Southwest Experimental Fast Oxide Reactor (SEFOR). The University acquired SEFOR, a deactivated fast breeder reactor located in northwest Arkansas, in 1975. The \$10.5-million grant is for the decommissioning and dismantling of the reactor, including the transportation and disposition of wastes, site restoration, and regulatory approvals for final closeout and completion. The grant is for a period of one and a half years. SEFOR, a 20-MWt sodium-cooled test reactor, operated from 1969 to 1972. ■

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