

## HIGH-LEVEL WASTE

# DOE launches consent-based siting initiative

*Based on the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, the DOE is seeking input on the development of a consent-based approach to siting nuclear waste facilities.*

**A**s part of its strategy for the long-term storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, the Department of Energy has launched a consent-based siting initiative for future nuclear waste management facilities. The DOE also stated that it intends to move forward with the development of a separate repository for defense-related nuclear waste, as announced by Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz in March 2015 (*NN*, Apr. 2015, p. 17).

The DOE's consent-based siting initiative was announced in a December 21 blog post on the DOE's website, at <[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)>, by Franklin "Lynn" Orr, undersecretary for science and energy. According to Orr, the initiative "represents an important step toward addressing this nuclear waste management challenge, so that we can continue to benefit from nuclear technologies."



Aided by public input, the DOE intends to develop a detailed plan by the end of the year for a process that will ensure that communities, tribes, and states "are comfortable with the location of future storage and disposal facilities before they are constructed," Orr said. In developing its plan, the DOE will draw on extensive experience in storage, transportation, siting, policy, legislative, and regulatory issues both in the United States and elsewhere.

The DOE's goals for the management of both commercial and defense-related spent nuclear fuel and HLW was outlined in a January 2013 strategy document that called for a pilot interim storage facility, a larger interim storage facility, and long-term geologic repositories. The DOE strategy is based on the recommendations of President Obama's Blue Ribbon Commis-

sion on America's Nuclear Future, which was formed following the administration's 2010 abandonment of the HLW repository project at Yucca Mountain, in Nevada.

The DOE has requested public input regarding the development of its consent-based siting plan, publishing a notice of invitation for public comment (IPC) in the December 23 *Federal Register*. Concurring with the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation for a phased, adaptive, consent-based approach to siting nuclear waste facilities, the DOE said that it is requesting input about what considerations are important when designing a fair and effective process for consent-based siting.

According to the DOE, a top priority is to build on and improve existing relationships with states, tribes, communities, and stakeholders to help identify important considerations, challenges, and opportunities for discussion. Among the questions the DOE is seeking input on are the following:

- How can the DOE ensure that the process for selecting a site is fair?
- What models and experience should the DOE use in designing the process?
- Who should be involved in the process for selecting a site, and what is their role?
- What information and resources do you think would facilitate your participation?

Comments are being accepted through June 15 and can be submitted by e-mail to <[consentbasedsiting@hq.doe.gov](mailto:consentbasedsiting@hq.doe.gov)>, with the inclusion of "Response to IPC" in the subject line; by mail to U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Nuclear Energy, Response to IPC, 1000 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20585; by fax to 202/586-0544, with "Response to IPC" on the fax cover page; or online at <[www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)>.

In addition, the DOE is hosting a series of public meetings to engage communities and discuss the development of a consent-based approach to managing the nation's nuclear waste. The first such meeting was to be held on January 20, 2016, at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C.