Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility Environmental Impact Statement

Scoping Meeting Fact Sheets

You are Invited to Participate in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the construction, operation, and deactivation of a mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication facility. The first opportunity for participation is during the scoping process. The scoping meetings have been formatted to allow you to propose other reasonable alternatives and to rank or prioritize areas of potential impacts. Other opportunities to participate include providing written comments on the draft EIS and participating in public meetings following publication of the draft EIS.

What Needs to be Decided?

NRC is an independent government agency that is responsible for ensuring the safe use of nuclear materials in the United States. This includes protection of public health and safety and the environment. Regulation of fuel fabrication facilities is one of NRC's many responsibilities in this area. NRC must decide whether or not to grant an authorization to construct the facility at the Savannah River Site. Information obtained from this EIS and staff's technical analyses of the Construction Authorization Request and the Environmental Report (submitted by the applicant) will assist NRC in making its determination. A license to operate the facility will be considered separately.

Background

What has been decided already.

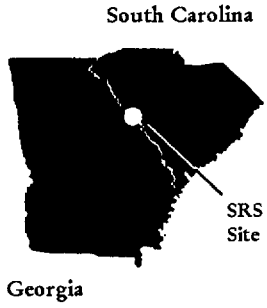
The Department of Energy (DOE) issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Surplus Plutonium Disposition Final Environmental Impact Statement (SPD EIS) on January 11, 2000. The SPD EIS examined the environmental consequences of several alternatives related to the disposition of up to 50 metric tons of surplus weapons-usable plutonium. The ultimate goal of disposition activities is to convert the plutonium to a form unsuitable for future use in nuclear weapons. These activities are part of an agreement between the United States and Russia on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In its ROD, DOE outlined a program to provide for the safe and secure disposition of the surplus plutonium. According to the plan, approximately one-third (17 metric tons) of the material would be immobilized in the form of a ceramic. The remaining two-thirds (33 metric tons) would be converted to MOX fuel for use in domestic commercial nuclear power plants. Both the immobilized material and the spent MOX reactor fuel would ultimately be disposed of in a geologic repository.

This plan requires the construction and operation of three DOE facilities

- A facility to disassemble the fission component (pit) of the nuclear weapons and convert the plutonium metal to plutonium dioxide *
- A facility to produce MOX fuel for nuclear power plants
- A facility to immobilize the plutonium oxide as a ceramic *

*Not part of NRC action/scope.



The DOE SPD EIS ROD concluded that the facilities would be sited in Area F of the DOE's Savannah River Site

DOE has selected the Savannah River Site as the location of all three of its plutonium processing facilities. DCS, a consortium formed by Duke Engineering & Services, COGEMA, Inc., and Stone and Webster, will provide the MOX fuel fabrication and commercial reactor irradiation services. Plans are to use the MOX fuel at the Catawba (South Carolina) and McGuire (North Carolina) commercial nuclear power plants. The NRC will also review any application for the use of the MOX fuel at commercial nuclear power plants.

Why Prepare an EIS?

According to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), federal actions that have the potential for significantly affecting the quality of the human environment require the preparation of an EIS. We consider the licensing to construct a MOX facility to be a significant action. In addition, the DOE EIS evaluated the generic environmental impacts associated with DOE's plutonium disposition plan. However, it does not address project specific environmental impacts. Therefore, we are preparing an EIS to study the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with construction, operation and deactivation of a MOX facility.

What is the Scope of this EIS?

This EIS will evaluate environmental impacts associated with the construction, operation and deactivation of the MOX fuel fabrication facility at SRS. As part of its cumulative impact analysis, the EIS will consider indirect effects of using MOX fuel, such as transportation to commercial reactors, MOX fuel use in those reactors, and final disposal of the spent fuel in a geologic repository. Because it is not certain where the MOX fuel will be used, the EIS will address MOX-specific impacts at reactor sites generically. Site-specific MOX-related reactor impacts would be addressed by the NRC in separate NEPA reviews as part of an amendment request to use the MOX fuel by specific reactor licensees. The NEPA reviews would consider effluents during normal operations, accidents, and handling, storage, and disposal of spent fuel. In addition, it is anticipated that the EIS will incorporate by reference discussions from the EIS for the Yucca Mountain geologic repository on the impacts associated with disposal of the spent MOX fuel. This EIS will not address locating the facility anywhere other than the Savannah River Site because this decision has already been made in DOE's ROD for the SPD EIS.

What are the Alternatives?

No Action: Do not issue construction authorization for the MOX facility at SRS

Proposed Action: Issue construction authorization for the MOX facility at SRS.

Other alternatives may be identified through the scoping process

Potential Areas of Concern

This list may be modified as a result of public scoping.

- **Air Quality**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Earth Resources**
- **Ecological Resources**
- **Hazardous Materials**
- **Health and Safety**
- **Land Use**
- **Noise**
- **Background radiation**
- **Water Resources**
- **Socioeconomic Impacts**
- **Waste Management/ Pollution prevention**
- **Environmental Justice**
- **Natural and Depletable Resources**
- **Unavoidable adverse impacts**
- **Cumulative Impacts**
- **Indirect Effects – e.g. transportation**
- **Natural Disasters**

What are the Objectives of the Public Scoping Process?

- To ensure that significant issues related to the proposed action are identified and are properly studied
- To Identify alternatives that will be examined in the EIS
- To involve the public early in the EIS process

Scoping Meeting Dates and Locations

April 17, 2001
North Augusta Community Center
496 Brookside Drive
North Augusta, SC
7:00 to 10:00 pm

April 18, 2001
Coastal Georgia Center
305 Martin Luther King Blvd
Savannah, GA
7:00 to 10:00 pm

Open House
5:30 – 7:00

There will be an Open House before the meeting to provide attendees an opportunity to view informational material and talk informally with project staff. People can register for the meeting during the Open House as well as during the formal meeting registration.

Scoping Meeting Format

The goal of the Scoping Meeting is to encourage open discussion and to gather information from the public.

Overview Session: NRC staff will present general information on the proposed action and NRC's environmental review process. The scoping meeting format and ways members of the public may submit comments will be explained. The presentation will be followed by a brief question and answer period.

Breakout Sessions: Following the general session, people will be invited to participate in small discussion groups (8-10 people). People will be assigned to a group based on a number they will receive at the meeting. A member of the NRC staff, or NRC contractor, will be part of each discussion group. Their role will be to answer questions and record the group's concerns. Each group will choose a member of the public to lead the discussions.

Individual Groups will be asked to determine whether there are additional alternatives and areas of concern that should be explored in the EIS. New alternatives and areas of concern will be recorded at the front of the room for all groups to see.

Finally, the groups will be asked to **rank the areas of concern** (high, medium, low). The rankings from the various groups will be recorded and discussed with the entire group.

How do I Register?

We would appreciate it if you would register by April 10, 2001. This will help us effectively plan the meeting.

Please contact Tim Harris or Betty Garrett at 1-800-368-5642.

You may also register during the Open House and at the beginning of the meeting.

Scoping Meeting Agenda

5:30 – 10:00 PM

Registration and Open House	5:30 – 7:00
Project Overview and Meeting Format*	7:00 – 7:20
Brief Question and Answer Period*	7:20 – 7:45
Break Out Group Session*	7:45 – 8:30
Presentation of Findings & Discussion*	8:30 – 10:00

*Times are approximate

How Can I Submit Comments?

Oral comments can be submitted at this meeting by dictating to a transcriber in 5 minute blocks.

Written comments can be submitted:

- At this meeting by filling out a comment form or by submitting a letter
- By fax: 1-301-415-5398 Attn: Tim Harris
- By e-mail: teh@nrc.gov
- By Mail: Mike Lesar, Acting Chief
  US NRC
  Rules & Directives Branch
  Division of Administrative Services
  Office of Administration
  Mail Stop T6D59
  Washington, DC 20555

Deadline

Written comment submitted by mail should be postmarked by May 21, 2001 to ensure consideration. Comments mailed after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

What's Next in the NEPA Process?

Scoping Summary Report: The results of the scoping process will be documented in a Scoping Process Summary Report. This report will summarize the significant issues gathered at the scoping meeting and from comments submitted in writing on the scope of the EIS. A copy of this report will be sent to each participant in the scoping process.

Draft EIS: The draft EIS is scheduled to be published in February 2002. There will be a 45 day comment period and one or more public meeting(s) to receive comments on the draft. Meetings will be held approximately three weeks after the draft is published.

Final EIS: The final EIS will consider comments received on the draft. NRC expects to publish the final EIS in September 2002.

Decision: NRC will decide to issue or deny the applicant's request for a license to construct the MOX facility.

Related Documents

"Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility Environmental Report," prepared by Duke COGEMA Stone & Webster, December 2000.

"Standard Review Plan for the Review of a License Application for a Fuel Cycle Facility, NUREG 1718, August 2000.

"Surplus Plutonium Disposition Final Environmental Impact Statement," DOE/EIS-0283, November 1999

available at http://nepa.eh.doe.gov/eis/eis0283/eis0283.htm

"Surplus Plutonium Disposition Final Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision," 65 FR 1608 (Federal Register), January 11, 2000.

available at http://www.epa.gov.fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2000/January/Day-11/i594.htm

"Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility Construction Authorization Report," prepared by Duke COGEMA Stone & Webster, February 2001

Unless otherwise indicated the above documents are available at the NRC MOX FFF Information Homepage:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/MOX

How Do I Get Information?

NRC Public Document Room

One White Flint North (1st floor)
11555 Rockville Pike
Room O-1F21
Rockville, MD 20852
1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737

NRC MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility Homepage: http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/MOX

NRC Public Electronic Reading Room: http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/ADAMS