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NRC Begins Scoping Effort for Environmental Review of Proposed WCS Interim Spent Fuel Storage Facility

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is seeking comments from the public on the issues to be covered in the environmental review of an application from Waste Control Specialists to construct and operate a facility to store spent nuclear fuel in Andrews County, Texas. The NRC will prepare an environmental impact statement to document its evaluation of those impacts and is now taking public comments on the scope.

WCS filed its application in April seeking a 40-year license for a facility that would receive spent fuel from nuclear reactors for storage, pending final disposal. The NRC will be conducting two separate reviews – an environmental review to identify potential impacts, and a safety review to determine whether the WCS application meets the NRC’s regulatory requirements. The environmental review will fulfill the National Environmental Policy Act’s requirement to do an analysis of environmental impacts for major federal actions.

The agency has not yet accepted and docketed the WCS application. WCS has been providing supplemental information in phases in response to a June 22 NRC request. The NRC will evaluate the supplemental responses before deciding whether to docket the application and proceed with the safety review. If the NRC docketed the application, it will announce in the *Federal Register* an opportunity to ask for a public hearing and an end date for comments on the scope of the environmental review.

WCS had asked for the environmental review to begin as soon as possible. The NRC has agreed because doing so will allow the agency to engage interested members of the public early in the process. It will also provide additional time to consult with federal, tribal, state and local government agencies, facilitating compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

“We cannot proceed with the technical safety review until WCS adequately addresses our request for supplemental information, but we do have the information we need to begin the environmental scoping process now,” said NRC’s Mark Lombard, director of the division of spent fuel management. “WCS will bear the cost of staff time devoted to the environmental review, even if we are unable to docket the application in its current form.”

Written comments on the scope may be submitted over the federal government’s rulemaking website, www.regulations.gov, using Docket ID NRC-2016-0231; by email to WCS_CISF_EIS@nrc.gov; or by mail to Cindy Bladey, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: OWFN-12 H08, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001. More information can be found in today’s [Federal Register notice](#).