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Holtec International HI-STORE Consolidated Interim Storage Facility Project

Comment On: NRC-2018-0052-0300

Holtec International HI-STORE Consolidated Interim Storage Facility Project

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General Comment

NRC-2018-0052 Reason five: Lea and Eddy County communities are generally in support of radioactive storage facilities.

There was a very interesting article written up in Forbes as far back as 2012 about how the local community of businesses, government agencies and individual citizens of Carlsbad, NM supported the success of WIPP. They were so proud of the good-paying, clean, and sustainable, jobs WIPP was providing the community, they came out in full support to expand their support in nuclear to include nuclear fuel management with the URENCO uranium enrichment facility in Eunice, NM.

Now the leaders of neighboring Lea and Eddy counties have doubled down on their investment by allying, Eddy Lea Energy Alliance (ELEA) to continue to pursue more nuclear-related industries. One of the first actions by ELEA was to secure a 1,000-acre nuclear industrial site. The site has had several Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) over the years and it has always been accepted as a safe place to store used nuclear fuel.

The proposed HI-STORE CISF site is about 24 miles from WIPP, the nation's only permanent, deep geologic repository for nuclear waste. For the last 21 years, the communities of Carlsbad and Hobbs have gained a lot of specialized experience supporting WIPP as employees and first responders. This knowledge base is completely transferable to the similar safety culture needed at HI-STORE CISF.

However, not everyone in New Mexico is supportive of the proposed HI-STORE CISF site. Unfortunately, opposition to the project is a partisan choice. The current Governor and Administration are against the project while the previous Governor and Administration were in support of the project.

New Mexico's ETA Law of 2019 requires emissions-free energy by 2050 but does not include clean nuclear energy. The ETA will allow New Mexico's utilities to continue importing emissions-free nuclear energy from the Palo Verde plant in neighboring Arizona. If the Governor wants emission-free electricity, the state has to support advanced molten salt nuclear power plants. Those advanced reactors will need a new molten nuclear fuel supply that HI-STORE CISF will be able to source.