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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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Submitter Information

Name: Martin Kral

Address:

406 Viale Bond

Roswell, 88201

Email: mkral@cableone.net

General Comment

NRC-2018-0052 Reason eight: New Mexico already knows how to manage, process, transport and store uranium.

New Mexico has the second-largest uranium reserve in the United States. However, there is no mining activity at the current time because of its legacy of poor mining practices during the cold war era. All the milled uranium processed at URENCO in New Mexico is transported from Canada, Wyoming or Texas. The United States is fourth in the world in known deposits, behind Australia, Canada, and Kazakhstan. The United States also has the third-largest thorium reserves in the world which is also a nuclear fuel element.

The two uranium mining techniques that have been used in Texas are open-pit mining and in situ mining. In situ mining involves injecting fluids into the ground to dissolve minerals, then pumping the fluids to the surface where they are processed to recover the minerals. In situ mining is the preferred method because it is a very safe and clean mining procedure.

URENCO currently manufactures low enriched uranium (LEU) of ~5% U235 needed for fission in an LWR. URENCO can also produce a HALEU up to ~20% U235 that is needed for some of the small modular reactors, like NuScale and others. All this uranium is transported in by truck and rail and the end product, nuclear fuel, is transported out to fuel assembly plants in other states. The unused uranium, called depleted uranium is partially stored locally at URENCO and also transported to other sites. There is approximately

183,000 tons of radioactive depleted uranium (DU) stored in the US which can still be used for nuclear fuel in fast neutron liquid reactors.

There are approximately 83,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) laced with transuranic and fission products that need to be temporarily stored for later use with advanced nuclear reactors. GE Prism liquid reactor will use SNF as its fuel base; TerraPower Energy plans to use DU as its fuel base; and Elysium Industries plans to use SNF, DU, Thorium, WGPu, along with fission products as its fuel base.

The final destination of all nuclear fuel by-products (alleged waste) is to be consumed by advanced reactor technology and not passive storage underground for thousands of years.