

**ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY * CAROLINA PEACE RESOURCE CENTER *
NUCLEAR CONTROL INSTITUTE * PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY * SAFE
ENERGY COMMUNICATION COUNCIL * SERIOUS TEXANS AGAINST NUCLEAR DUMPING *
UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS * U.S. PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP**

April 21, 1999

The Honorable Bill Richardson
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Richardson:

We are writing to express our strong objections to one important aspect of the Department of Energy's plans to release a supplement to the Draft Surplus Plutonium Disposition Environmental Impact Statement ("draft EIS"). [64 *Federal Register* 16720, April 6, 1999]

We agree that DOE is required under NEPA to prepare a supplement to the draft EIS in order to provide more information on "the potential environmental impacts of using mixed oxide (MOX) fuel in six specific commercial nuclear power reactors at three sites..." in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. We find it unacceptable, however, that DOE plans only one public hearing on these issues, to be held in Washington, DC.

When the draft EIS was released last summer, some of us objected to the lack of plans to hold hearings in the communities around reactors that would irradiate weapons-plutonium MOX. At that time, we were informed by representatives of the Office of Fissile Materials Disposition (MD) that local hearings in reactor communities could not be scheduled because the MOX procurement process was still underway, and reactor sites had not yet been selected. After DOE's contract award on March 22, 1999, this is clearly no longer the case. The consortium that won the contract has announced that it plans to irradiate MOX fuel in Virginia Power's North Anna reactors (located near Charlottesville, VA), and in Duke Power's McGuire and Catawba reactors (located near Charlotte, NC, and Rock Hill, SC).

The communities around these reactor sites have a great deal at stake in these decisions, and deserve an opportunity to voice their opinions on the MOX proposal. It is also important that DOE solicit input from stakeholders most directly impacted by the MOX plan, and make it easy for them to be heard by holding hearings in their communities. We therefore urge DOE to schedule promptly additional hearings near each of the reactor sites.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Paul Leventhal
Nuclear Control Institute

Linda Pentz
Safe Energy Communication Council

Ethan Brown
Carolina Peace Resource Center

Susan Gordon
Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

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