

Maine Yankee Community Advisory Panel on Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage and Removal

October 12, 2011

The Honorable Lee Hamilton, Co-Chair
The Honorable Brent Scowcroft, Co-Chair
Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
U.S. Department of Energy
Forrestal Building 7A-257
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20585

Dear Chairmen Hamilton and Scowcroft:

The Maine Yankee Community Advisory Panel (CAP), now in its 15th year, spent most of our September 1 annual meeting discussing the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future July 29 Draft Report. The CAP's purpose is to enhance open communication, public involvement and education on spent nuclear fuel storage at Maine Yankee. Attending the CAP meeting to hear our discussion of your Draft Report were representatives from the offices of Maine's congressional delegation, three Wiscasset Selectmen, the First Selectman from Westport Island, and the Director of the Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Project. We are pleased to provide comments from the CAP and commend you for a thorough, encouraging Draft Report.

The Maine Yankee CAP:

- Thanks the Commission for recommending that spent nuclear fuel at shutdown reactor sites should be "first in line" for transfer to consolidated interim storage.
- Unanimously endorses the Commission's recommendation for "A new, consent-based approach to siting future nuclear waste management facilities."
- Unanimously supports the Commission's recommendations for Near-Term Actions, especially in the areas of storage and transportation.

As the BRC's Transportation and Storage Subcommittee heard when they met August 10, 2010 in Wiscasset, the people of Maine and elsewhere in New England are deeply concerned and frustrated that the federal government has not fulfilled its commitment to remove spent nuclear fuel and Greater than Class C Waste from the three decommissioned Yankee sites and other nuclear facilities as required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. We thank you for including as a key recommendation in the Draft Report that "Spent fuel currently being stored at shutdown reactor sites should be "first in line" for transfer to consolidated interim storage." The Maine Yankee CAP and many others who testified at the August 10 subcommittee meeting made this central point, and it is gratifying to know we were heard by the Commission.

Section 5.2.1 of your Draft Report "Consolidated Storage Would Allow for the Removal of "Stranded" Spent Fuel from Shutdown Reactor Sites" does an excellent job explaining the reasons this makes good policy sense from an economic and fairness perspective.

Wiscasset and area communities had an expectation that the spent nuclear fuel would be removed by the federal government beginning in 1998 as required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. Maine Yankee's ratepayers have paid for the removal of this material, paid to have it transferred to dry cask storage, and continue to pay millions of dollars each year for its storage at the Maine Yankee Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI). As the Commissioners who visited Maine Yankee know first hand, until the spent nuclear fuel and Greater than Class C Waste is removed, the site property and its infrastructure will be unavailable for beneficial reuse.

We unanimously endorse the Commission's first of seven key strategy elements: "A new, consent-based approach to siting future nuclear waste management facilities." Involving communities, states, tribes and other affected entities from the beginning will be crucial to the success of siting both one or more interim consolidated storage facilities and a final repository. We know from our nearly 15 years experience as a Community Advisory Panel during Maine Yankee's decommissioning, construction of the ISFSI, and now operation of that facility for an unknown length of time how important it is for the community to have a voice as decisions are made that will affect community stakeholders.

We are pleased that the draft report identifies the Waste Isolation Pilot Project in New Mexico as a model of successful stakeholder involvement. We agree and hope that future consolidated interim storage and permanent repository siting efforts will incorporate lessons learned from WIPP. As was so well stated in the Draft Report Executive Summary, "...the core difficulty remains what it has always been: finding a way to site these inherently controversial facilities and to conduct the waste management program in a manner that allows stakeholders, but most especially host communities, states, and tribes, to conclude that their interests have been adequately protected and their well-being enhanced – not merely sacrificed or overridden by the interests of the country as a whole."

Our final comment is in support of the Commission's draft recommendations for Near-Term Actions, especially in the areas of storage and transportation. We agree the Department of Energy under its existing authority should begin immediately to implement consolidated interim storage and to prepare for the transportation of spent nuclear fuel to consolidated interim storage and ultimately the final repository. These tasks must be done in parallel for it will do little good to establish an interim storage facility without the transportation system in place to safely transport this material. We know from long experience that when discussing the spent nuclear fuel issue, "Near-Term" could mean many years. We must get started right away.

Page 3
October 12, 2011

As a concrete example of possible near-term action, we bring to the Commission's attention language in the FY 2012 House Energy & Water Development Committee Report that directs the DOE, "... to submit, with its fiscal year 2013 budget request, a plan containing options to develop interim storage capacity that would, as a priority matter, provide a means of consolidating the spent nuclear fuel and other high level waste present at permanently shut-down reactors." We encourage the Commission to endorse this committee report language submitted for adoption by Congressman Joe Courtney who represents the Second Connecticut Congressional District and the Town of Haddam where the Connecticut Yankee ISFSI is located.

We hope your final report incorporates these comments from the Maine Yankee CAP and that policy makers use the Blue Ribbon Commission Report as the template for breaking the spent nuclear fuel log jam. We are mindful that the Commission's formal work will be complete when the final report is submitted to the Secretary of Energy in January 2012. But in many ways the hard work of changing national policy on the spent nuclear fuel issue will be just beginning. We intend to remain involved in the implementation phase, and we offer our help and many years experience as a community based resource in whatever capacity may be most useful.

Thank you again for holding the BRC Transportation and Storage Subcommittee meeting in Wiscasset and for providing us an opportunity to be heard in a meaningful way.

Sincerely,



Marge Kil Kelly, Chair
Maine Yankee Community Advisory Panel

C: US Senator Olympia Snowe
US Senator Susan Collins
Congresswoman Chellie Pingree
Congressman Mike Michaud
Governor Paul LePage