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Maine Yankee credits FOC for its role in LTP

By Sue Cereste

The Maine Yankee Community Advisory Panel on Decommissioning heard an overview of the plant's License Termination Plan at their Jan.20 meeting. The LTP was submitted last week to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for review.

Maine Yankee legal representative Mary Ann Lynch gave credit to the anti-nuclear group Friends of the Coast for initially pushing the utility to exceed federal and state site release standards, paving the way for the utility's current 10/4 millirem proposal.

The plan proposes "enhancements" that will put site release standards in excess of state and federal requirements for residual radiological dose. NRC requirements are 25 millirems annually plus ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable), but Maine Yankee's enhanced plan would reduce the residual radiological dose to 10 millirems (all pathways) and to 4 millirems for groundwater.

Ray Shadis, representing Friends of the Coast, said FOC was glad to be looking at the proposed 10/4 millirem standard, but "we haven't signed off on this yet. There are legal issues to be looked at. It is not a done deal.

Both Shadis and Lynch tentatively extended symbolic olive branches toward each other, marking a notable, if slight, mellowing of a long-time adversarial relationship between the utility and the FOC. "We don't really trust each other, but we're working through that," Shadis said. "I think we respect each other. I commend Maine Yankee for being willing to take this stuff to the table."

The four proposed enhancements are: reuse of clean concrete by rubbleization; encapsulation of contaminated concrete within foundations to prevent groundwater contamination; deed restrictions mandating commercial/industrial site reuse for some agreed upon period of time; and independent verification of standards by the state.

The rubbleization and encapsulation of concrete proposed by Maine Yankee will safely dispose of 2.6 million cubic feet of concrete, Lynch said, with foundations to be left in place representing 1.6 million cubic feet of the total. The LTP enhancements eliminate the need for fill, saves scarce landfill space, reduces transportation requirements and should enhance public confidence in the decommissioning process.

The plant chose immediate "deconstruction" of the site, despite higher costs, for a number of reasons, Lynch said. Benefits of that approach include use of workers familiar with the historic site; earlier site cleanup; economically beneficial reuse of the site; and

the critical availability of the Barnwell, S.C. site to dispose of low-level radiological waste.

We have learned the Governor of South Carolina will introduce legislation to close Maine Yankee access to Barnwell at some future point," Lynch told the panel.

[Friends of The Coast object to the "rubbilization" proposal and eventual gained a settlement banning the practice. This restriction was embodied in state regulation and no demolition rubble is buried at Maine Yankee.]