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## Maine Yankee Safety Forum Next Tuesday

By BILL CUTLIP

Friends of the Coast - Opposing Nuclear Pollution will host a public forum on the security of Maine Yankee Nuclear Power Plant at the Wiscasset Middle School on Tuesday, November 13, at 7 p.m.

The forum will be presided over by a panel which will include David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists, who has written extensively about safety issues related to the storage of spent nuclear fuel; Paul Blanche, a well-known nuclear industry whistleblower and a consultant who specializes in nuclear workplace safety; and Gordon Thompson, senior scientist at the Institute for Resource and Security Studies. Also invited are Jeffrey Merrifield of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and a yet-to-be-named security expert.

Part of the meeting will be devoted to the presentation of the Friends of the Coast's "Pine Tree Flag" award, which the group periodically presents to deserving individuals and organizations.

A representative from the office of Congressman Edward Markey (D-Mass.) will be on hand to receive the award, in recognition of Markey's "outstanding advocacy for the protection of Maine people and the environment from nuclear hazards," and for his "outstanding record" in congress on nuclear safety issues.

**"We want to make sure that members of the public get a chance to ask questions, make statements, and otherwise have a lively, civil exchange on the issue," Friends Of the Coast spokesman Ray Shadis said.**

**"So we are limiting the amount of time that our experts have. No one is foolish enough to deny that the region has one Hell of a problem with Maine Yankee's toxic legacy. There is no where for it to go for at least the next 20 years, so how should it best be protected? And more important, what do we need to know to be protected from it."**

**Invitations to Tuesday night's forum have been sent out to local selectmen and other area officials, Shadis said.**

**"Most of them have been given Maine Yankee's version on security and waste storage," he said, "without the benefit of an independent expert to help them sort facts from fantasy." Representatives of Maine's Congressional delegation, the NRC and state officials are also expected to attend.**

The public meeting will be preceded by a members' meeting in the library at 6 p.m., followed by the public forum at 7. The forum will feature short presentations of 10 to 15 minutes by panel members; the rest of the meeting will be open to questions from the public.

The meeting will also feature refreshments and various "informative displays." As a side note, the meeting will be professionally videotaped so that it can be used as a model for other activist groups to follow.

The last time the Friends of the Coast held a public forum was in 1996. That meeting, Shadis said, "succeeded in focusing media attention on defects at Maine Yankee." The focus of the meeting was a public review of a critical safety report on Maine Yankee, which had been produced by the NRC. The meeting was held in November, and Maine Yankee was closed in December — because, said Shadis, "there were so many defects that Maine Yankee's owners could not afford to remedy them all."

Shadis said the format of this year's forum will be a direct contrast to a meeting of the state's Advisory Commission on Radioactive Waste and Decommissioning scheduled for earlier the same day in Augusta.

"They have scheduled two hours of speeches by bureaucrats," said Shadis, "a half hour of speeches by Maine Yankee employees, and then a mere half hour for questions from the audience. This is just another case of the state deferring once again to Maine Yankee. But we feel that the public has as much to say, if not more, than a bunch of nuclear industry bureaucrats."