



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

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Dr. David Victor
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Dear Dr. Victor:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you, Tim Brown and Dan Stetson. My staff and I benefitted greatly from hearing the viewpoints you and your Community Engagement Panel colleagues shared with us. We hope to continue discussions like this one as we go forward. The purpose of this letter is to memorialize our conversation and provide some information on the status and near-term path forward for the Department of Energy's management of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

In January 2013, the Administration issued its *Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste*, which built upon the recommendations set forth in the January 2012 Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future *Report to the Secretary of Energy*. An important component of the Strategy is the development of both pilot-scale and larger interim storage capability for commercial spent nuclear fuel, with an initial focus on spent fuel from shut down reactors.

In March 2015, the Secretary of Energy announced plans to move forward with efforts to identify one or more sites for the consolidated interim storage of commercial spent nuclear fuel. The Secretary also announced that the President had authorized the Department to move forward with planning for a separate repository for high-level radioactive waste resulting from atomic energy defense activities. These announcements are consistent with the Administration's plan to undertake a consent-based approach to siting storage and disposal facilities as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission and incorporated in the Administration's Strategy.

The Strategy estimated that developing a pilot storage capability would take about 8 years, while developing a larger interim storage facility would take about 12 years. We still believe these timeframes are realistic.

We are continuing to conduct important planning activities for transportation of spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste in the future. As part of this effort, we are working with interested



states and Tribes to address outstanding issues related to transportation of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. For example, we are actively engaged with states and Tribes to finalize a Departmental policy for providing technical assistance and funding for training public safety officials of appropriate units of local governments and Tribes through whose jurisdictions the spent nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste would be transported. We are also developing a standardized methodology for determining transportation routes and developing procedures that would be applied to future shipments.

In addition to these efforts, we are continuing activities to analyze and evaluate transportation infrastructure and operational logistics at shutdown sites. This effort is providing preliminary information that will help develop an integrated waste management system. Our visit to the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in June was part of the effort to analyze and document on-the-ground conditions at shutdown reactor sites. The Southern California Edison team that hosted our visit was extremely well prepared and provided an extensive amount of very useful information.

Finally, to ensure the safe routine transportation of spent nuclear fuel, we are in the process of initiating work to design, analyze, and fabricate railcar equipment (cask and buffer cars). Railcar equipment will be designed according to the performance specification for trains used to carry high-level radioactive material from the Association of American Railroads. Further work for the safe management of spent nuclear fuel includes developing a generic design for a pilot interim storage facility with an associated Topical Safety Analysis Report (TSAR). This TSAR will be provided to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for its evaluation of whether the preliminary design is sufficient to meet federal licensing criteria. It is our understanding that public meetings will be held in conjunction with this evaluation.

In parallel with the transportation planning effort, we are developing an outreach initiative to communicate our intention to undertake a consent-based siting process for both storage and disposal facilities. A consent-based process conducted through consultation and cooperation will be essential for successfully operating a comprehensive used nuclear fuel disposal system. In executing the program, we must work closely with potential host states, Tribes, and communities through an open and transparent process. The Department has done a good bit of work in gathering information from the siting of nuclear facilities in the United States and elsewhere to better understand critical success factors and facilitate the development of a future siting process. We will draw upon successful experiences in other nations such as Canada, Finland, France and Sweden. Per our discussion, I refer you particularly to the Canadian process that has emerged from the efforts of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), known as Adaptive Phased Management.

The Department is in the process of developing communication tools to serve as information resources for states, Tribes, communities and other interested parties. The Department appreciates your offer to engage further to discuss ways in which key information can be most clearly conveyed and understood by broader audiences.

Charting a viable path forward to address issues related to storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste will require active engagement of groups and individuals around the country. The Department will continue to forge connections with key leaders and groups as we move forward and utilize what we learn from these engagements to inform our decisions and direction.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.F. Kotek", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John F. Kotek
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Nuclear Energy