



United States Nuclear Infrastructure Council

1666 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 201

Washington, D.C. 20009

Tel: (202) 332-8155 / Fax: (202) 332-8845

www.nuclearinfrastructure.org

STATEMENT BY

**DAVID BLEE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION
ON AMERICA'S NUCLEAR FUTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION &
STORAGE**

AUGUST 19, 2010

Mr. Co-Chairmen and Members of the Subcommittee:

The United States Nuclear Infrastructure Council greatly appreciates the opportunity to offer our views today. We look forward to a continuing dialog with the Commission on the path forward for management of spent fuel and high-level waste in the United States as part of a sustainable fuel cycle approach.

For the record, let me add that -- while the views stated today represent the consensus of the Council -- they do not necessarily represent the specific views of every individual member.

As a group composed of the leading edge of companies involved in deploying new nuclear generation as well as fuel cycle facilities in the United States -- and globally -- we welcome the Commission's shared linkage with America's nuclear energy future as embraced in your charter.

We applaud the recognition of nuclear energy as "clean, safe, reliable power" that plays a "vital role" as the world moves to "tackle climate change and diversify our National energy portfolio..."

There is no question that a tangible "decisive", "actionable" path forward for a consensus National strategy for a sustainable nuclear fuel cycle is important to new nuclear development, energy and national security, as well as economic competitiveness and environmental progress.

Moreover, the Federal government clearly has a long standing statutory and contractual obligation to meet its responsibilities under the U.S. Nuclear Waste Policy Act – in the face of considerable taxpayer investment and mounting financial liabilities measuring in the tens of billions of dollars.

In general, we believe the way forward is best achieved by focusing on measurable tangible steps and an emphasis on creating more options for a sustainable fuel cycle.

Along with central storage, this strategy should include:

Creation of a Federal corporation with responsibility for implementing an integrated management program for the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle in order to overcome funding and implementation issues that have impeded progress to date.

It is a fact that countries that are making concrete progress in this arena -- France. Sweden. Finland, Switzerland and Japan -- are doing so via privately chartered enterprises;

With respect to Waste Confidence we support an updated finding of Waste Confidence either on the regulatory front or statutorily – or both.

As a host organization for the U.S. Recycling Advisory Panel – a working group of fuel cycle companies and utilities – we believe it is prudent to advance the fuel cycle by deploying next-generation enhanced and advanced proliferation resistant recycling systems into the current U.S. fuel cycle paradigm.

Underlying all this, of course, is a National repository. To this end, the goal of consummation of a National repository in this generation should be a prerequisite. A repository is obviously required under any fuel cycle scenario.

It is our opinion that the BRC mission should ultimately include a full-review of the current Yucca Mountain option commensurate with Congressional mandates.

Moreover, it is logical that the Yucca Mountain license application currently before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission be completed in tandem with the Blue Ribbon Commission review – if only for lessons learned.

With respect to Central Storage -- the key issue at hand today -- we support the pursuit of central storage options as part of a comprehensive strategy.

We will offer a few observations generally and then specifically with respect to progress on disposal and fuel cycle facilities.

First, progress on central storage can be important on several fronts:

It can provide tangible evidence that the federal government is moving to address its contractual responsibility for disposition of spent fuel and high-level waste

It can enhance confidence that there is a path forward on the back-end for host communities for new and existing nuclear plants as well as those making substantial investments in new nuclear.

It can create an attractive option for defense waste and shut-down plants.

And while it may be more compelling on an integrated basis, it is not mutually exclusive with enhanced fuel cycle strategies.

Secondly, central storage is not new. It has been successful and safely implemented globally in a host of countries, including Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden and Japan, to name a few.

As you are aware, a central interim storage facility was part and parcel of the original U.S. Nuclear Waste Policy Act recipe.

Third, safe transportation should not be an overriding factor in any storage scenario.

The safety of nuclear material transportation has been assessed numerous times – most recently by the National Academies, which concluded that there are “no fundamental technical barriers to the safe transport of spent fuel and high-level waste...”

Fourth, central storage could, in part, help address concerns in about ten states that have a moratorium on new nuclear power plants until there is progress on disposition of spent fuel.

Fifth, while it is no doubt easier to implement central storage either in tandem with an established repository, fuel cycle facility or economic driver, this should not be a show-stopper, particularly if it is part of a comprehensive strategy.

With respect to the relationship between storage and progress on disposal and fuel cycle strategies, any observations are pretty intuitive:

Central storage is certainly conducive to the closing or advancement of the fuel cycle

Internationally, it has been deployed as a stage-setter to direct disposal (such as in Sweden) or as precursor to closing the fuel cycle (e.g. in Japan) or as a building block for either option (as in Switzerland).

It has also, of course, been implemented hand-in-glove with a closed fuel cycle paradigm– most notably at La Hague where you have the world’s largest central storage facility as well as the world’s largest vitrified high-level waste storage facility.

Central storage is also complementary to a repository. DOE’s Yucca Mountain plan is premised on an above ground “aging facility.”

Needless to say, co-locating a repository with a central storage facility would require a change in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

In short, we believe that the central storage option should be pursued in the context of a sustainable fuel cycle approach including establishment of a Federal corporation, a re-articulated finding of Waste Confidence; evolution of the current fuel cycle strategy as well as a National repository.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to offer these views this afternoon. We look forward to a continuing rapport with the Commission on these issues of importance to the nuclear energy community.