

Newsletter of the National Radioactive Waste Coalition

# THE SPENT NEWS

March 2024

[radioactivewastecoalition.org](http://radioactivewastecoalition.org)

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## We welcome NRWC's new coordinator: Mays Smithwick

Mays grew up in Colorado, situated between the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains. They completed their undergraduate degree in the Global Studies department at Eugene Lang College the New School for Liberal Arts in 2019 with a double minor in Philosophy and Cultural Studies. In 2023, they received a Master of Arts degree from the Department of Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement at New York University where they researched the intersections of religion, colonialism, and nuclear technology. They supported ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) in coordinating the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. They are a Youth for TPNW delegate and a member of NYCAN (New York Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons). Mays is broadly interested in interrogating colonial structures as a means to imagine a new future where interdependence among all species is cultivated.



## MEET OUR MEMBERS — FEATURED ORGANIZATION

We are STRONGER together...so in every issue we feature a Coalition member organization to highlight its actions and areas of expertise so Coalition members can better CONNECT with each other. This issue's group is:

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## Cape Downwinders

<https://www.capedownwinders.info/>

From California to New Mexico to Vermont and beyond, we are all connected in our efforts to protect our communities from the ongoing dangers from nuclear power production, decommissioning, and nuclear waste.



Diane Turco in action!

Current Issue: Holtec Decommissioning International's plans to decommission the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth, MA, included dumping over a million gallons of radioactive industrial wastewater into our protected Ocean Sanctuary, Cape Cod Bay. After enormous outrage by the public and pushback by local and federal elected officials, Holtec was forced to apply for a new permit which was denied. Holtec intends to appeal, but meanwhile, since Holtec cannot dump into the bay, it is now "dumping" into the air with impunity by evaporating the wastewater.

Holtec placed heaters in the spent fuel pool and reactor cavity that release radionuclides into our communities without real treatment, filters, or real-time monitors. That radioactive vapor, which includes tritium, condenses into our communities and environment.

Attempts to stop Holtec from using evaporation have not yet resulted in a response. Dr. Petros Koutrakis, professor of environmental science at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health commented, "But the thing I can tell you with certainty is that they should not evaporate or dump in the bay. So that should stop right now and we should put all the pressure we can. So that's my message. It's very clear." [READ MORE](#)

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# GOOD NEWS!

## 5th Circuit Court Decision on Consolidated Interim Storage

Chris Williams

On August 25, 2023, the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) does not have the authority to license Consolidated Interim Storage (CIS) facilities for high-level radioactive waste from nuclear power plants for private parties to store nuclear fuel away from the reactor site.

The NRC had granted a license for such a facility to Interim Storage Partners to be constructed in Andrews County, Texas. That license is now stripped from the company which is a partnership between Waste Control Specialists and Orano.

The State of Texas and Andrews County, Texas had made it clear that they do not consent to having high-level radioactive waste stored at allegedly temporary facilities which many call “parking lot dumps”. Nonetheless, the NRC had granted a license for such a facility.

The US Congress has only envisioned such temporary dumps as support facilities for permanently-sited repositories. That is the law of the land. Without a permanent storage site selected, many fear the temporary sites could become de facto long-term dumps.

NRWC calls for a renewed effort to find a scientifically sound, environmentally just policy for handling the growing volume of toxic waste created by the nuclear power industry. We also call for timely action to protect host communities that will be storing the waste for decades to come. [READ MORE](#)



## MORE GOOD NEWS!

# New York STOPPED the Dumping of Nuclear Wastewater into the Hudson River!

**Save the Hudson** campaign in New York culminated in a state law prohibiting the release of radioactive wastewater from Indian Point nuclear plant into the Hudson River. Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg co-sponsored the bill which was signed into law at the end of August, 2023. Several NRWC members actively participated in the campaign, which is ongoing.

The success in New York stemmed from a combination of economic factors and public perception, which mobilized 440,000 petition-signers. The mere suggestion of dumping radioactive wastewater into the Hudson River, threatening both the river's ecosystem and the region's drinking water, posed a significant risk to local tourism, trade, and businesses. [READ MORE](#) [More resources](#)

## EVEN MORE GOOD NEWS!

# Victory in the Dirty Dozen

In a monumental triumph for the environment, the Snake River Alliance announces the cancellation of NuScale's Carbon-free power project, which had initially proposed a staggering 12 nuclear reactors at Idaho National Lab, then scaled down to six reactors. Thanks to our relentless advocacy, NuScale announced that they are halting this costly, dangerous, and unnecessary proposal. [READ MORE](#)

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# The Department of Defense (DOE) has Launched an Unscrupulous “Consent-Based” Campaign

The DOE has awarded \$26 Million to promote consent-based siting for spent nuclear fuel to “university, nonprofit, and private-sector partners” that will work with communities “interested in storing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel.” The DOE asserts, “Consent-based siting is an approach to siting facilities that focuses on the needs and concerns of people and communities and centers equity and environmental justice.”

DOE's "consent-based" initiative is effectively the funding of a propaganda campaign powered by nuclear industry-associated actors with a vested interest in facilitating the foisting of nuclear dumps on communities without the resources to counter the campaign. Regardless of the outcome, the US taxpayer will foot the multibillion dollar bill.

The following selected project teams will each receive \$2 million:

- American Nuclear Society (IL)** as the lead, with South Carolina Universities Research and Education Foundation, Northern Arizona University, University of New Mexico, South Carolina State

University, and City College of New York as partners.

•**Arizona State University**

•**Boise State University (ID)** as the lead, with the National Tribal Energy Association, Arizona State, Colorado State, Idaho State, Montana State, University of Idaho, University of Wyoming, and University of Michigan as partners.

•**Clemson University (SC)** as the lead, with South Carolina Universities Research and Education Foundation as a partner.

•**Energy Communities Alliance (DC)**

•**Good Energy Collective (CA)** as the lead, with the University of Notre Dame (IN) as a partner.

•**Holtec International (NJ)** as the lead, with University of Florida, McMahon Communications (MA), Agenda Global (DC), American Nuclear Society (IL), and Nuclear Energy Institute (DC) as partners.

•**Keystone Policy Center (CO)** as the lead, with Social and Environmental Research Institute, GDFWatch (UK), and the National Association of Regional Councils (DC) as partners.

•**Missouri University of Science & Technology** as the lead, with University of Missouri - Columbia, University of Illinois, Taylor Geospatial Institute (MO), and St. Louis University (MO) as partners.

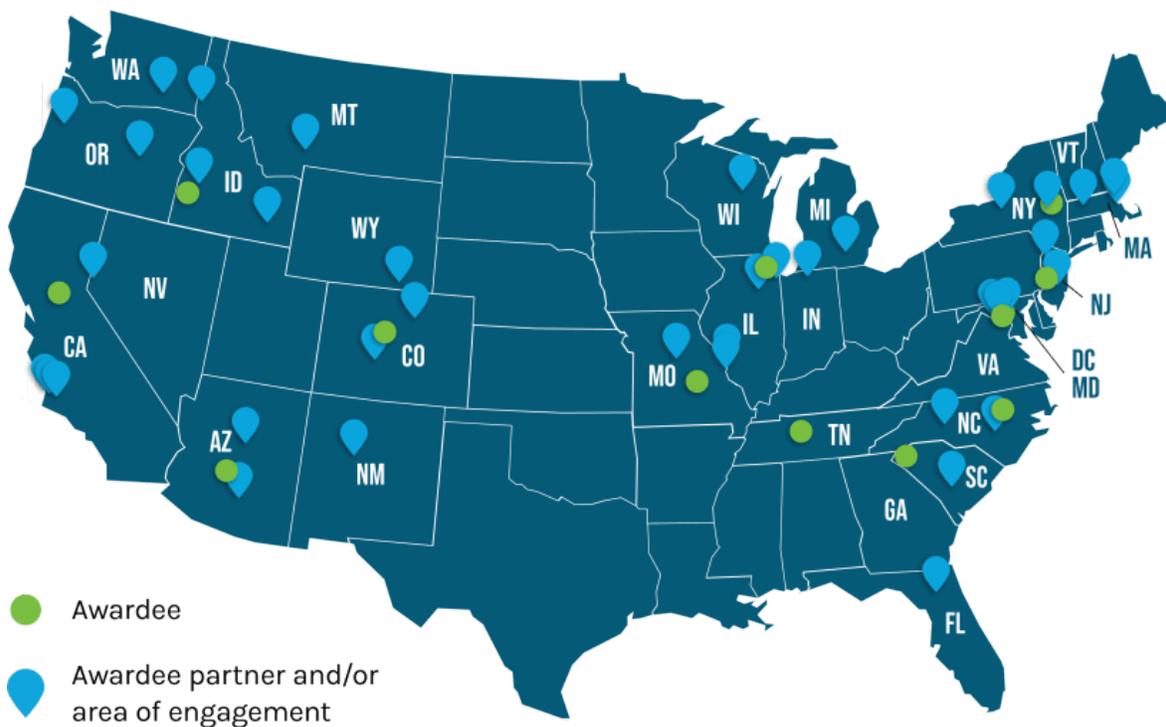
•**North Carolina State University** as the lead, with the yak tit̓u tit̓u yak t̓ih̓ini Northern Chumash Tribe of San Luis Obispo County and Region (CA), Mothers for Nuclear (CA), and the Tribal Consent Based Coalition - Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (CA) as partners.

•**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)** as the lead, with Schenectady Foundation (NY) as a partner.

•**Southwest Research Institute (TX)** as the lead, with Deep Isolation (CA), Westra Consulting (NE), Community Transition Planning (MI), Prairie Island Indian Community Tribal Nation (MN), Xcel Energy (MN), and Decommissioning Plant Coalition (DC) as partners.

•**Vanderbilt University (TN)** as the lead, with Rutgers University (NJ) and Oregon State University as partners.

[READ MORE](#)



# NUCLEAR PLANT UPDATES

## San Onofre Report, California

Gary Headrick, San Clemente Green

2024 brings opportunities to raise awareness:

- The documentary, [SOS - The San Onofre Syndrome](#), compresses twelve years of activism into solid messages - the call for an onsite hot cell, a robust storage facility, and "rolling stewardship".
- The [King Tide Project](#) is an annual event sponsored by the California Coastal Commission (CCC). It is a public awareness project, demonstrating the impacts of rising sea levels and the insufficient tsunami wall. We also use this venue to call on the CCC to revisit its conditional permit that requires Edison to relocate the nuclear fuel to higher ground if sea level rises more quickly than anticipated.
- State Legislation is in the works for the "CalSafe Nuclear Waste Storage Plan" Act. Its purpose is to require the Office of Planning and Research to develop a plan to build a hot cell and robust storage facility on site. Although this is focused on San Onofre, it is intended to set the course for the rest of the state, and hopefully will be helpful to other sites with stranded nuclear waste. **TAKE ACTION** by signing [our petition](#).
- Learn more about San Onofre from this Samuel Lawrence Foundation [webinar](#).

## Diablo Canyon, California

Diablo Canyon was scheduled to retire in 2024 and 2025. However, over the last year, there has been a push to extend operations beyond these shutdown dates based on Governor Newsom's claim that its energy is needed. Senate Bill 846 was passed by the California legislature which has enabled the extended operation. State and federal subsidies have been granted to support this effort. Pacific Gas & Electric Company has applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for a 20-year license renewal, although SB 846 asks for only five years.

San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace, in collaboration with partner organizations, is opposing the extended operation of Diablo Canyon in proceedings before the California Public Utilities Commission and the NRC. Here is the link to Mothers for Peace's recent [Briefing Paper](#) for details from their experts.

## Palisades, Michigan

[Bloomberg](#) broke the story that the DOE's Loan Programs Office is poised to award Holtec a loan guarantee for \$1.5 billion for the unprecedented, extremely high-risk restart of Michigan's closed Palisades atomic reactor. Radioactive waste specialist Kevin Kamps has been watchdogging Palisades since 1992. He says, "The problem with a DOE loan guarantee, at least for taxpayers, is that it is interest-free, and risk-free. Holtec need not pay it back, leaving taxpayers holding the bag. But the extreme risks to health, safety, security, and the environment of restarting this severely age-degraded zombie reactor could prove much more costly to those living downwind, downstream, up the food chain, and down the generations."

## Davis-Besse, Ohio

[The Davis-Besse Nuclear Reactor](#) on Lake Erie, [plagued with problems](#) from the outset, continues to operate with a cracked shield building poised to fall on the reactor and/or on essential equipment outside. [Excessive ground settling](#) in 2023 caused damage to underground pipes and concern from experts.

## Perry, Ohio

[The Perry Nuclear Reactor](#) is up for a 20-year license renewal. The Ohio Nuclear Free Network and Beyond Nuclear have submitted a [Petition to Intervene](#) based on tritium releases and [lack of need for electricity from Perry](#). A [devastating geological report](#) says no plant should have been built at that site. Lake Erie threatens to undercut the bluff on which Perry is built, while the shale under the plant is critically unstable. A “secret” pouring of [thousands of tons of concrete](#) occurred when the plant was built.

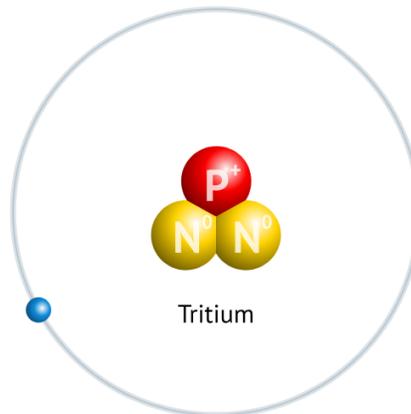
## Portsmouth, Ohio

[THE PORTSMOUTH NUCLEAR SITE in Southern Ohio](#) is often referred to as “Piketon”, the name of the town close to the site. Uranium was enriched there for over 50 years, using the gaseous diffusion method. Recycled nuclear waste was run through the 100 acres of process buildings, contaminating the entire site with transuranics, technetium and radioactive isotopes of multiple elements.

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# Tritium

Marilyn Elie



Tritium in our immediate environment is a by-product of the nuclear generation of electricity. Reactors must have regular releases of tritium and other radioactive isotopes in order to continue to operate. The NRC has not considered tritium a major contender when regulating these high level radioactive isotopes. New research indicates otherwise. [READ MORE](#)

Learn more from this Beyond Nuclear [webinar](#) on the threats from dumping huge amounts of tritium into our environment.

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# RESOURCES

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Watch this [1-minute video](#), “Time is Running Out”.

Mark Z. Jacobson speaks to the implementation time and cost of nuclear versus wind and solar.

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**National Radioactive Waste Coalition**  
**The Facts of the Matter**

View and download  
Fact Sheets [HERE](#).

Topics include:

- Consolidated Interim Storage
  - Yucca Mountain
  - Hardened On-site Storage
  - Nuclear is not a Climate Solution
  - The Nuclear Fuel Cycle
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