



# Heart of America Northwest

The Public's Voice for Hanford Cleanup

A Citizen's Guide to the Draft GNEP PEIS, 2008

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## Plan to Double Nuclear Power in the U.S. Would Greatly Increase Waste Dumped at Hanford

*The Federal Energy Department (USDOE) Environmental Impact Statement admits plan to "reprocess" nuclear waste will increase environmental impacts and will lead to hundreds of cancer deaths -- Comment today to stop this plan and advise the new Obama Administration to pursue an energy future that cleans up nuclear waste instead of making more.*

### USDOE and Bush Administration Decided to Double Nuclear Power in the U.S. by Reprocessing Nuclear Waste, Creating Far More Waste to Be Buried in Landfills – and, Hanford is the Likely Dump Site:

The Global Nuclear Energy Partnership ("GNEP") is a Bush Administration and federal Energy Department ("USDOE") program to "reprocess" spent nuclear fuel into fuel for nuclear power plants – a process which in turn creates more radioactive waste.

In order to meet a Bush Administration and USDOE goal of doubling the amount of nuclear power in the US – a goal for which there has been no public debate – USDOE and the Bush Administration adopted a "preferred" policy of "reprocessing" High-Level nuclear waste fuel rods removed from commercial reactors.

**- a goal for which there has been no public debate -**

Reprocessing is a chemical process dissolving fuel rods in acids to chemically separate and remove Plutonium and Uranium (and sometimes other elements) for reuse in fuel rods for new, yet to be developed reactors. Reprocessing is the same process that created the 53 million gallons of deadly liquid High-Level nuclear waste sitting in tanks at Hanford, with no treatment plant to glassify the wastes. GNEP would create vast new

amounts of liquid High-Level nuclear waste and very radioactive wastes which USDOE proposes to bury in landfills. Those landfills are likely to be at Hanford.

**To make "reprocessing" sound politically attractive...nuclear supporters call this "recycling"...**

USDOE has already said **Hanford is its chosen national mixed radioactive and chemical waste landfill** – indeed, there is no other that it plans to operate for offsite waste in the entire nation. The GNEP PEIS also proposes to open the commercial "Low-Level Waste" landfill at Hanford to dispose of waste from reactors and GNEP reprocessing sites around the nation. ("LLW" – this is a misnomer, in that the waste can be as hot as High-Level waste).

To make "reprocessing" sound politically attractive, USDOE and nuclear supporters (including John McCain during his campaign) call this "Recycling" and "closing the fuel cycle." However, unlike recycling your glass, paper and aluminum – reprocessing nuclear fuel creates MORE waste to be disposed, and that waste is in a far more dangerous form than a highly radioactive solid fuel rod.



### USDOE Admits that as Many as 816 Deaths Would Result from Waste Transportation

The implementation of GNEP would require the transportation of High and Low-Level radioactive wastes, mixed radioactive, chemical hazardous wastes, and spent nuclear fuel between various nuclear sites (processing facilities, storage and landfill sites) across the country. These routes, whether traveled solely by trucks or by a combination of truck & rail, would involve the transportation of this hazardous material on public highways through towns and cities. For instance, routes to Hanford include highways that pass through Portland & Hood River, OR, Spokane, WA, and communities around Seattle and Vancouver, WA.

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### Inside this GNEP PEIS Citizen's Guide, 2008

Page 1: Plan to Increase Waste at Hanford & Transportation Deaths Anticipated - Page 3: Hiding Affects from NW & Change the Future for Energy  
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*“Reprocessing nuclear waste is not clean energy when it results in more radioactive hazardous chemical wastes to be buried, and should not be viewed as part of any solution to global warming.”*

*- Gerry Pollet, Executive Director  
Heart of America Northwest*

## **USDOE has Already Selected Hanford for Disposal of GNEP Wastes**

Just like Cold War Era weapons production, GNEP would create extremely hazardous nuclear wastes. The GNEP PEIS makes it very clear that USDOE prefers pursuing GNEP (it's "closed fuel cycle" alternatives) and reprocessing Spent Nuclear Fuel. This process creates even more radioactive waste - specifically, liquid High Level

**This process creates even more radioactive waste - specifically, liquid High-Level Nuclear Waste and Remote Handled TRU.**

Nuclear Waste, Remote Handled TRU, and GTCC. All of the alternatives evaluated in USDOE's PEIS would produce Low-Level Waste and require additional Low-Level Waste disposal facilities. Even if USDOE does not use Hanford for reprocessing, it favors the site as the National Radioactive Waste Dump for GNEP's hazardous wastes.

USDOE admits it has already selected Hanford as the site it will use to dispose - in shallow landfills - of its mixed radioactive and chemical hazardous wastes (mixed wastes) and one of two sites it will bury "Low-Level" radioactive wastes (along with the Nevada Test Site). Because the reactors are not going to be government USDOE facilities, and the reprocessing plants may also be privately owned. The GNEP PEIS also proposes opening up the unlined, leaking commercial Low-Level Waste site at Hanford to take these wastes from anywhere in the nation. Hanford's "U.S. Ecology" site is licensed by the State of Washington to accept waste from the Northwest and Rocky Mountain Compacts.

USDOE proposes trying to change the law to allow dumping or burying Low-Level Waste at the commercial Low-Level Waste burial at Hanford from all over the nation, as opposed to solely the Northwest states.

As U.S. Ecology is located within the boundaries of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, any addition of waste to the site needs to be considered in cumulative impact analyses conducted. These cumulative impacts also need to be taken into consideration in the Tank Closure Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement to be released in early 2009.

USDOE's pick for a national geological repository - Yucca Mountain - is still not a licensed facility. Many wonder if it ever will be. USDOE estimates Yucca Mountain would already be full of existing waste by 2010. It cannot hold more than 70,000 metric tons of heavy metal of spent nuclear fuel. High-Level radioactive waste and Low-Level radioactive waste exists in quantities that would exceed capabilities of existing disposal facilities.

**...propose opening up the unlined, leaking commercial Low-Level Waste site at Hanford to take wastes from anywhere in the nation.**

The GNEP plan will create more spent nuclear fuel and will require yet another geological repository. The GNEP PEIS states that all alternatives would "require the establishment, construction, and operation of new repository capacity (in addition to the planned capacity for the Yucca Mountain geologic repository) for disposal of SNF and/or HLW."

## **Reprocessing for Nuclear Energy Could Increase Nuclear Weapons Proliferation**

Although GNEP is different from previous nuclear industry projects that existed specifically for the development of nuclear weapons (the Manhattan Project, the Cold War), nuclear energy maintains a strong connection to the potential expansion of weapons of mass destruction. The reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel for nuclear energy involves the separation of weapons-grade isotopes like uranium and plutonium, making this program especially compatible with the advent of re-developing nuclear weapons by our nation, nations abroad, and by terrorist groups.

The PEIS states, "It is a long standing U.S. national security policy objective to reduce proliferation risks throughout the nuclear fuel cycle via systematic efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons materials and sensitive technologies". However, the PEIS admits that, proliferation risk begins with the ability to acquire the necessary nuclear materials for making nuclear weapons. Although USDOE suggests that reprocessing would avoid the potential for nuclear proliferation, even this option will involve spent-nuclear fuel weapons-grades plutonium and uranium which can be used for both the renaissance of state-sanctioned nuclear weapons proliferation and illegal/terrorist nuclear weapons. A report by the Keystone Center (an organization that

**...neither resolving the radioactive waste problem or the weapons proliferation problem.**  
- Keystone Center

works to solve environmental, energy and public health problems), counters that GNEP is not a strategy for resolving either the radioactive waste problem or the weapons proliferation problem.

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## USDOE Hiding that the Northwest Will be Affected

Although this PEIS only shows the impacts of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (“GNEP”) to generic sites and persons, *Hanford* is one of the locations being considered for a GNEP site. The way the document is formatted, a potentially affected community and region (Hanford or otherwise) will not know it could become the GNEP facility site until after the Record of Decision is made and a Site Specific Environmental Impact Statement is con-

**Now is your time to voice your concern, before Hanford becomes a GNEP site.**

ducted, notifying them of the proposed action. At that point, it’s almost too late. Therefore, *now is the time to voice your concern.*

USDOE has said that it would need to reprocess waste at the same site(s) where it would store and bury waste, and has sep-

arately proposed Hanford as the sole USDOE mixed radioactive hazardous waste burial site for new or offsite wastes.

USDOE does admit that reprocessing would create new highly radioactive wastes (Greater Than Class C, or GTCC) and other radioactive wastes “for which no disposal facilities are available,” and, “in quantities that would exceed capacities of existing disposal facilities,” for moderately radioactive wastes. Previously, USDOE admitted that these are really High-Level Nuclear Wastes. **Now USDOE is seeking to rename the waste to “GTCC” for public relations purposes and ease in burying of wastes in landfills** where High-Level Nuclear Waste, including the waste from reprocessing is currently barred from disposal under federal law.

USDOE is piece-mealing these analyses – and will issue two separate EISes proposing Hanford for mixed radioactive hazardous and Low-Level Waste disposal from USDOE operations and for disposal of the

very radioactive GTCC wastes. Whether or not Hanford is chosen for the reprocessing facility, the waste streams from the sites selected for reprocessing and nuclear power plants will end up being disposed at Hanford. Hanford is the ONLY proposed site for USDOE to bury Mixed Waste (both radioactive and chemical hazardous waste). USDOE has issued formal decisions designating Hanford and Nevada Test Site as the only two sites in the nation where USDOE will dispose of LLW. Hanford is the sole potential disposal site remaining for disposal of the most radioactive LLW (including highly radioactive GTCC) from any commercial reprocessing and new nuclear plants if USDOE seeks to use commercial disposal landfills.

**USDOE admits reprocessing fuel will cause “unavoidable adverse” health and environmental impacts.**

## Change the Future of Energy: Do Your Part

***Due to citizen outcry the GNEP PEIS comment period was extended 30 more days - until March 16, 2009.***

***The new Obama Administration needs to adopt an energy future that cleans up nuclear waste instead of creating more.***

### 1. Comment on the GNEP PEIS

- Electronically: <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocumentDetail&o=0900006480744445> and click to add comments.

- Written: submit by March 16th, 2009 to:

Mr. Francis Schwartz, GNEP PEIS document manager  
Office of Nuclear Energy (NE-5), U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington D.C. 20585-0119

### 2. Continue to demand hearings in the Northwest’s largest population centers: Portland, Seattle, and Spokane.

-USDOE cannot pretend it has already adopted the plan to double nuclear power. There needs to be a national discussion and debate about USDOE saying it has already decided.

### 3. See citizen comments on GNEP online at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDq0fTM\\_tyw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDq0fTM_tyw)



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## 816 Deaths Would Result from Waste Transportation



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The transportation of this extremely radioactive material endangers the workers who handle it and the communities it passes through - because the wastes are so radioactive that their radiation passes right through the shipping casks.

USDOE admits in the GNEP PEIS that trucking these high radioactive wastes for reprocessing will lead to as many as 816 fatal cancers in the public exposed to the radiation from the trucks along the routes - even if there are no accidents or terrorist attacks.

The great increase in moving wastes required for the GNEP Program also presents increased risks for accidents and terrorist attacks, which would have extremely lethal and destructive impacts on human health and the environment.

**...wastes are so radioactive that their radiation passes right through the shipping casks.**

*An independent assessment by nuclear physicists done for Heart of America Northwest of the impact of a terrorist attack or accident on a truck carrying Remote Handled Transuranic wastes, similar to wastes proposed for GNEP, showed hundreds of square miles requiring evacuation and over a thousand fatalities in Portland, OR and Spokane, WA from a reasonably foreseeable accident or terrorist attack.*

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## Reprocessing for Nuclear Energy Could Increase Nuclear Weapons Proliferation

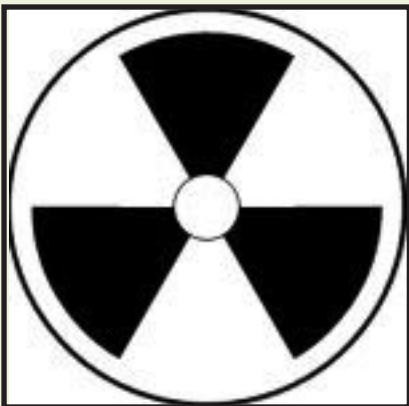
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USDOE says reprocessing of spent fuel would be designed to meet nonproliferation objectives and would avoid separation of pure plutonium. However, reprocessing of waste for nuclear energy could increase the spread of nuclear weapons proliferation, at home and around the world. This is because reprocessing separates the type of



plutonium necessary for both nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. For this reason, in an external report included in the PEIS, Dr. Frank von Hippel, a renowned physicist, contends that, Spent Nuclear Fuel **reprocessing is not a proper strategy for managing Spent Nuclear Fuel.**

**Your Comments Are Needed to Stop USDOE From Making More Nuclear Waste - Instead of Cleaning Up What We Already Have**



## Asks

1. Oppose reprocessing. It increases waste to be disposed of and increases cancer deaths from trucking.
2. Oppose doubling nuclear power.
3. Oppose USDOE's concealed plan to add more waste to Hanford.

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