



Citizens Advisory Board
Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory

**Supplement to the Surplus Plutonium Disposition
Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

The Surplus Plutonium Disposition (SPD) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared to support the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) decisions related to the management and disposition of surplus plutonium. The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) has persistently requested copies of the SPD EIS and related documentation, including the Supplement to the draft EIS that was released for public comment on May 14, 1999. In addition, the CAB has submitted two consensus recommendations to date on the EIS.

DOE's reluctance to provide adequate numbers and timely distribution of the Supplement leads this Board to conclude that the DOE is disinterested in comments generated by citizen groups. Additionally, it is this Board's distinct impression that the Office of Fissile Materials Disposition is, at best, nonchalant about the concerns of a Site Specific Advisory Board chartered and funded under the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Management program. The INEEL is considered as an alternative for two of the three facilities evaluated in the EIS, including a facility to disassemble pits and another to fabricate plutonium dioxide. INEEL is not considered a preferred site for either facility at this point in time. We are nonetheless interested in this important decision.

We understand that our prior recommendations on the EIS may be reflected in the comment response document that will be included with the final EIS. We are disappointed, however, to find no evidence in the Supplement that our prior recommendations are being considered. We had recommended that the EIS provide vigorous analysis (equivalent to that provided for the other alternatives) of a "full immobilization alternative" involving immobilization of the entire inventory (50 tons) of weapons-usable plutonium. Our specific comment on the Draft EIS was "The INEEL CAB recommends that the total immobilization option be given full consideration and rigorous discussion in this EIS."

The Supplement offers further evidence that DOE prefers the "hybrid" alternatives (those involving fabrication of some inventory as mixed oxide fuel [MOX]), despite the fact that the Draft EIS did not include analysis of the full immobilization alternative. DOE's awarding of a \$130 million contract to "further develop the MOX options" (involving actions that would be completely unnecessary under the full immobilization alternative) provides further evidence that a decision has already been made. In addition, the contractor has suggested modifications of processes within the alternatives and DOE has made those modifications.

The INEEL CAB understood that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to (1) evaluate the impacts of a full range of reasonable alternatives and (2) provide the public an opportunity to review and comment on the results of that analysis **before** making a decision that might have significant environmental impacts. It appears that DOE chose its preferred course of action behind closed doors, prior to completing its analysis of a full range of alternatives and without the benefit of public participation. Hence, the INEEL CAB suggests that DOE's strategy for compliance with NEPA is flawed.

The Supplement states that the facilities and associated work forces will be much larger than had been indicated in the draft EIS. Such adjustments may be proper and appropriate. We question, however, how a doubling of floor space and a significant increase in the work force would have no effect on the rate of treatment or on the rate of total output. **The INEEL CAB recommends that the Final EIS provide additional explanation as to why DOE believes the increases are necessary. The CAB also recommends the addition of an explanation as to why the increases would not result in any increase in the rate of treatment nor the rate of total output of treatment.**

The INEEL CAB recommends that the final EIS include a thorough presentation of all costs associated with making the MOX fuel (that would be fabricated under the hybrid alternatives) viable for use by the private power industry. Such costs could include 1) retrofitting of reactors (if needed), 2) relicensing of reactors (when necessary), and 3) providing financial incentives to encourage the power industry to burn MOX fuel instead of other, less expensive fuels. Such information is needed to allow the public to compare among the alternatives considered and evaluated.