

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Kenneth M. Pursateri or Andrew L. Thibadeau at the address above or telephone (202) 208-6400.

Dated: October 1, 1998.

**John T. Conway,**  
Chairman.

### Appendix—Transmittal Letter to the Secretary of Energy

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700,  
Washington, D.C. 20004, (202) 208-6400

SECRET—RESTRICTED DATA

September 30, 1998

The Honorable Bill Richardson,  
Secretary of Energy, 1000 Independence  
Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585-  
1000

Dear Secretary Richardson: On September 30, 1998, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board), in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 2286a(a)(5), unanimously approved Recommendation 98-2, which is enclosed for your consideration. Recommendation 98-2, deals with Safety Management at the Pantex Plant.

42 U.S.C. § 2286d(a) requires the Board, after receipt by you, to promptly make this recommendation available to the public in the Department of Energy's (DOE) regional public reading rooms. However, the recommendation contains information which is classified or otherwise restricted. Please arrange to have this letter forwarding the recommendation (which is unclassified when separated from the attachment) promptly placed on file in your regional public reading rooms.

The following is an unclassified summary of the Board's recommendation: The Board believes that opportunities exist to strengthen and simplify the process by which DOE designs and develops activities at the Pantex Plant and independently evaluates the safety of those operations. The Board believes that DOE should take action to improve these processes.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway,  
Chairman.

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.

When separated from enclosures, this document is unclassified. Document transmitted herewith contains Secret/Restricted Data.

[FR Doc. 98-26867 Filed 10-6-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3670-01-M

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### National Assessment Governing Board; Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

**AGENCY:** National Assessment Governing Board.

**AGENCY:** Submission for OMB review; comment request.

**SUMMARY:** The Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board invites comments on the submission for OMB review as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

**DATES:** Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before November 5, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be addressed to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Attention: Danny Werfel, Desk Officer, Department of Education, Office of Management and Budget, 725 17th Street, NW., Room 10235, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503. Requests for copies of the proposed information collection requests should be addressed to Ray Fields, National Assessment Governing Board, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., Suite 825, Washington, DC 20002-4233.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ray Fields at 202-357-0395 by telephone, Ray\_Fields@ED.GOV by electronic mail, or Ray Fields, National Assessment Governing Board, 800 North Capitol Street, NW., Suite 825, Washington, DC 20002-4233 by regular mail.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provide interested Federal agencies and the public an early opportunity to comment on information collection requests. OMB may amend or waive the requirement for public consultation to the extent that public participation in the approval process would defeat the purpose of the information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board, publishes this notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of this request to OMB. The proposed information collection contains the following: (1) Type of review requested, e.g., new, revision, extension, existing or reinstatement; (2) Title; (3) Summary of the collection; (4) Description of the need for, and proposed use of, the information; (5) Respondents and frequency of collection; and (6) Reporting and/or Recordkeeping burden. OMB invites public comment at the address specified above. Copies of the requests are available from Ray Fields at the address specified above.

*Type of Review:* New.

*Title:* Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Mathematics—Pilot Tests.  
*Frequency:* Annual.

*Affected Public:* State, local, or Tribal Government SEAs or LEAs; Not-for-profit Institutions.

*Reporting and Record-Keeping Hour Burden:*

Responses: 50,244.

Burden hours: 99,444.

*Abstract:* Public Law 105-78 assigned to the National Assessment Governing Board exclusive authority over all policies, guidelines, and direction for the development of voluntary national tests in reading in grade 4 and in mathematics in grade 8 pursuant to contract RJ97153001, with the American Institutes for Research. While permitting test development, Public Law 105-78 prohibits during FY 1998 the pilot testing, field testing, administration, or dissemination of any voluntary national tests, except the National Assessment of Educational Progress or the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

If pilot testing is not prohibited in FY 1999, pilot tests of test questions developed for the voluntary national tests will be conducted in March 1999. The purpose of the pilot test is to ensure that the test items are of high quality and free from bias. In addition, a limited number of background questions will be included, in order to conduct certain statistical tests related to the test questions.

Dated: October 2, 1998.

**Roy Truby,**

Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board.

[FR Doc. 98-26916 Filed 10-6-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-M

## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

### Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Minnesota Agri-Power Plant and Associated Facilities

**AGENCY:** Department of Energy.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and Minnesota Statutes, Ch 116D, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board [MEQB, a Minnesota State agency] announce their intent to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding a proposal by the Minnesota Valley Alfalfa Producers (MnVAP) to construct and operate a 75-103 megawatt biomass

fueled gasifier and electric generating facility, known as the Minnesota Agri-Power Plant (MAPP), and associated transmission lines and alfalfa processing facilities. The plant would be fueled with alfalfa stems grown and processed primarily in Minnesota and South Dakota. Two sites (preferred and alternative) for the power plant have been proposed by MnVAP near Granite Falls, Minnesota. Depending upon the site selected for the power plant, 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines would run between two and six miles to an existing substation owned by Northern States Power Company in Granite Falls. Alfalfa processing facilities for separating the alfalfa leaves from stems would be located throughout the growing region when the locations of growers are established.

DOE proposes to partially fund the MAPP project, through a cooperative agreement with MnVAP for a renewable energy technology commercialization project under various provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102-486). Under the applicable Minnesota Statutes and Department of Energy NEPA regulations (10 CFR Part 1021), the proposed action requires an EIS. In the spirit of the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1501.5(b)) and Minnesota Rules Part 4410.3900, DOE and MEQB will be "joint lead agencies," to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The document will be titled *Minnesota Agri-Power Plant Project Environmental Impact Statement*, DOE-EIS/0300/MAPP-P-1.

In this notice, DOE and MEQB announce their intentions to prepare an EIS and hold public scoping meetings for the proposed project. The scoping process will include notification of the public and Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies of the proposed action, and identification by the public and agencies of issues and reasonable alternatives to be considered in the EIS.

**DATES:** The public scoping period begins with the publication of this Notice of Intent and will continue until December 9, 1998. The purpose of this Notice is to encourage public involvement in the EIS process and to solicit public comments on the proposed scope and content of the EIS. DOE and MEQB will hold public scoping meetings at the following locations and times:

Location	Address	Times
St Paul, Minnesota .....	Minnesota History Center, 345 West Kellogg Boulevard.	7-9 PM, Monday, November 16, 1998.
Granite Falls, Minnesota .....	American Legion 60 6th Street .....	7-9 PM, Tuesday, November 17, 1998.
Ada, Minnesota .....	Ada Elementary School Gym, 209 6th Street West.	7-9 PM, Wednesday, November 18, 1998.
Redfield, South Dakota .....	Leo's Café, 602 N. Main .....	7-9 PM, Thursday, November 19, 1998.

Both oral and written comments will be accepted at the meetings. Individuals wishing to schedule a specific time to speak should call Ms. Deborah Turner at the number listed below or the 24-hour toll-free information line, 1-800-267-9330.

In addition to the public meetings, comments can be submitted by calling 1-800-267-9330, or by sending them to Ms. Deborah Turner at the address listed below. All comments on the scope of the EIS will be shared with the MEQB and should be submitted by December 9, 1998, to ensure consideration. Any scoping comments submitted after December 9, 1998, will be considered to the extent practicable.

**ADDRESSES:** Please direct comments or suggestions on the scope of the EIS, requests to speak at public scoping meetings, requests for special arrangements to enable participation at scoping meetings (e.g., interpreter for the hearing impaired), and questions concerning the project to: Ms. Deborah Turner, Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy, Golden Field Office 1617 Cole Blvd., Golden, CO 80401, Phone: 303-275-4746 or 1-800-267-9330, Fax: 303-275-4788, E-mail: deborah\_turner@nrel.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** To request information about this EIS, or to be placed on the EIS document distribution list, please call the 24-hour

toll-free information line at 1-800-267-9330. Please provide your name, complete address, and phone number, if you are requesting to be placed on the document distribution list so that documents can be mailed as expeditiously as possible.

For general information on the DOE's NEPA process, please contact: Ms. Carol Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance, EH-42, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585-0119, Phone: 202-586-4600 or leave a message at 1-800-472-2756.

For information regarding the MEQB process please contact: Mr. John Wachtler, Energy Facility Siting Project Director, Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, 300 Centennial Building, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155, Phone: 651-296-4095, Fax: 651-292-3698, E-mail: john.wachtler@mnplan.state.mn.us.

For information regarding MnVAP, please contact: Mr. David L. Wilbur, General Manager, Minnesota Valley Alfalfa Producers, 681 Prentice Street, Granite Falls, Minnesota 56241, Phone: 320-564-2400, Fax: 320-564-2451.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** MnVAP is a farmer-owned cooperative, incorporated in 1994 to increase the value of farm products grown in and near the State of Minnesota. In response to a joint Department of Energy and U.S.

Department of Agriculture, Solicitation for Financial Assistance for Biomass Power for Rural Development (DE-PS36-95GO10052), MnVAP submitted a proposal to establish Minnesota Agri-Power as a limited liability corporation, with MnVAP as the majority stock holder, for the purposes of siting, constructing, and operating a 75-103 megawatt power plant fueled with gasified alfalfa stems. DOE selected the MnVAP project as one of several promising efforts to meet the goals of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 to develop and ultimately commercialize biomass energy systems for the purposes of positively affecting global climate change and the revitalization of rural America. (The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declined to participate as a cooperating agency in preparing this EIS). Under the terms of the solicitation, MnVAP and DOE would share the financial burden of taking a biomass gasification technology from the demonstration phase to full commercial production.

The proposed project would also serve in part to meet the Minnesota "Biomass Power Mandate," Minnesota State Law, 216B.2424, which requires that:

A public utility \* \* \* that operates a nuclear-powered electric generating plant within this state must construct and operate, purchase, or contract to construct and

operate (1) by December 31, 1998, 50 megawatts of electric energy installed capacity generated by farm-grown closed-loop biomass scheduled to be operational by December 31, 2001; and (2) by December 31, 1998, an additional 75 megawatts of installed capacity so generated scheduled to be operational by December 31, 2002.

Northern States Power, the sole producer of nuclear power in Minnesota, has entered into a power purchase agreement with MnVAP to buy power if the proposed plant becomes operational under the governing provisions of the Minnesota Statutes.

MEQB is responsible under the MEPA (Minnesota Statutes, Ch 116D and Minnesota Rules, Part 4410) and the Minnesota Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes, Ch 116.51 to 116.69, and Minnesota Rules, Part 4400) for reviewing the proposed action in response to an Application for Site Designation and Certificate of Site Compatibility submitted by MnVAP on August 12, 1998, and accepted by MEQB on September 30, 1998. Copies of the Application are available to the public by contacting DOE or MEQB.

*Proposed Action:* The MAPP project would use an "integrated gasification combined-cycle" or IGCC system. The gasifier would be sized to process approximately 1,100 tons of alfalfa stems per day which is approximately 750 million British thermal units per hour. In the gasifier, the alfalfa stems would be rapidly heated to gasification temperatures at approximately 1,650 degrees Fahrenheit while in contact with air and steam at a pressure of 300 pounds per square inch gage. The gas would then be cooled to 1,020 degrees Fahrenheit and cleaned to meet air quality standards and requirements for the combustion turbine. Since the biomass gasification technology proposed for MAPP has yet to be successfully demonstrated at full commercial scale, DOE is proposing to fund \$44 million (up to 30%) of the cost of construction of the plant and associated facilities (approximately \$140 to \$200 million) as part of the Department's mission to support biomass technology commercialization.

The combustion turbine would be designed to operate efficiently on the low energy biomass fuel produced by the gasifier unit with a gross electric power output of 66 megawatts. The alfalfa gas would be supplemented with natural gas as needed. The usable heat remaining in hot combustion gases leaving the combustion turbine would be recovered in the form of superheated, high pressure steam. The steam would be used to produce an additional 37 megawatts of gross electrical output

in a steam turbine generator. The gross output of the power plant could be as high as 103 megawatts.

Construction of the proposed facility would involve extension of existing water, gas and electric utilities to either of two alternative sites. Depending on the site, the proposed facility would either utilize existing city sanitary capacity or an onsite septic system. Facility cooling may either use conventional mechanical draft cooling towers or air cooling systems. Make-up water for cooling would be obtained from the Minnesota River. Blowdown discharges would go into the Minnesota River after meeting required discharge permit levels. Construction of the facility would require approximately two years and involve 100-300 workers onsite, while operations would require approximately 25 full-time employees.

In addition, the proposed action will require the siting, construction, and operation of four or five alfalfa processing facilities. Construction of these alfalfa processing facilities is likely even if the MAPP is not built. These alfalfa processing facilities would be strategically located in MnVAP's alfalfa production area, which encompasses western Minnesota and eastern South Dakota, in order to minimize total transportation, storage, and handling costs. The exact location of the new processing facilities is not known at this time and will not be decided on the basis of this EIS. The siting and permitting of such facilities would be the subject of environmental review consistent with State requirements when their locations are determined. However, for the purpose of evaluating transportation impacts to and from the proposed MAPP, the operation of processing facilities at regional, non-site-specific locations will be evaluated in this EIS.

*Alternative Sites:* A preferred and an alternative site near Granite Falls, Minnesota for the power plant have been proposed by MnVAP. The preferred site is located in the Granite Falls Industrial Park (Section 35 & 36, Township 116 & Range 39); the alternative site is located approximately 3.5 miles south of Granite Falls (Section 20, Township 115 & Range 39).

*No Action Alternative:* Under CEQ and DOE NEPA regulations, and MEPA, the No Action alternative must be analyzed to provide a basis for comparison to the proposed action. Under the No Action alternative in this EIS, it will be assumed, for the comparative purposes set forth in Federal and State regulations, that the proposed MAPP would not be constructed. However, even under the

No Action alternative, MnVAP's development of alfalfa production and processing capability would continue because such action is not dependent upon a decision to proceed with funding the MAPP project.

*Preliminary Identification of EIS Issues:* DOE and MEQB have tentatively identified the following issues for analysis in the EIS. This list is neither intended to be all inclusive nor is it a predetermination of potential environmental impacts. The list is presented to facilitate comments on the scope of the EIS. Additions to or deletions from the list may occur as a result of the public scoping process.

- Comparison of alternative sites;
- Potential impacts of air emissions from the power plant and the alfalfa processing facilities;
- Potential impacts resulting from the use of Minnesota River or ground water;
- Potential traffic impacts resulting from alfalfa shipments to processing facilities and fuel transport to the power plant;
- Potential socioeconomic impacts, especially from the construction work force, which may exceed local housing capacity;
- Potential socioeconomic impacts from long-term operations;
- Potential impacts on cultural, historical and archaeological resources;
- Potential disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low income populations;
- Potential impacts from ash application onto agricultural fields or disposal in landfills;
- Potential impacts on local terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna, especially endangered species, from facility construction and operations;
- Potential impacts resulting from modification of existing infrastructure;
- Potential noise and visual impacts on neighbors of the proposed MAPP, transmission lines, and alfalfa processing plants;
- Potential agricultural impacts, such as erosion and fertilizer demand, resulting from introduction of alfalfa into existing crop rotations.

*Scoping Meetings:* DOE and MEQB personnel will be available at the scoping meetings to explain the proposal to the public and answer questions. DOE and MEQB will designate a facilitator for the scoping meetings. At the opening of each meeting, the facilitator will establish the order of speakers and will announce any additional procedures necessary for conducting the meetings. To ensure that all persons wishing to make a presentation are given the opportunity, each speaker may be limited to 5-

minutes, except for public officials and representatives of groups, who will be allotted ten minutes each. DOE encourages those providing oral comments to also submit them in writing. Comment cards will also be available for those who prefer to submit their comments in written form. Speakers may be asked clarifying questions, but the scoping meetings will not be conducted as evidentiary hearings.

Upon close of the scoping period, DOE and MEQB will review all comments and prepare a draft Scope Statement that will identify the proposed scope of the EIS and be issued to all interested parties. The issuance of the draft Scope Statement will be accompanied by a notice of an MEQB/DOE public meeting on the Statement at which the Agencies will finalize the Scope Statement. The final Scope Statement will be distributed to interested parties.

DOE and MEQB will make the final Scope Statement, transcripts of the scoping meetings, the draft EIS and final EIS when issued, and project-related materials available for public review in the following reading rooms:

U.S. Department of Energy, Freedom of Information Public Reading Room, Forrestal Building, Room 1E-190, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20585, Telephone: (202) 586-3142

U.S. Department of Energy, Golden Field Office, Public Reading Room, 15013 Denver West Parkway, Golden, CO 80401, Telephone: (303) 384-6565  
Region 6, Willmar Public Library, 410 Fifth Street, SW., Willmar, MN 56201-3298, Telephone: (320) 235-3162

Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning Library, 658 Cedar Street, 300 Centennial Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155, Telephone: (651) 296-3985

Legislative Reference Library, 645 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155, Telephone: (651) 296-3398

Granite Falls Public Library, 155 Seventh Avenue, Granite Falls, MN 56241, Telephone: (320) 564-3738

**NEPA/MEPA Process:** The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the CEQ's NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), DOE's NEPA implementing procedures (10 CFR Part 1021), and Minnesota's MEPA and implementing rules (Minnesota Statutes Ch 116D and Minnesota Rules, Part 4410).

After the completion of the public scoping process, a draft EIS will be prepared. Interested persons, the public,

and agencies will be notified when the draft is available through a Notice of Availability published in the **Federal Register**, the *EQB Monitor*, and local media. The draft EIS will be distributed to individuals and agencies that request a copy and will also be placed in the reading rooms listed above. A 45-day comment period on the draft EIS is planned, and public hearings to receive comments will be held approximately four weeks after distribution of the draft EIS. In addition, under the Minnesota Power Plant Siting Act procedures, a Minnesota administrative law judge will hold a formal hearing on the *Application for Site Designation and Certificate of Site Compatibility*, which will include a review of information in the draft EIS. The draft EIS public comment hearings and the formal siting hearing may be combined. The locations and times for comment hearings will be included in the Notice of Availability. The draft EIS is scheduled to be issued during spring 1999.

The final EIS, which will consider the public comments received on the draft EIS, is scheduled to be published during summer 1999. DOE and MEQB will coordinate their decision processes, but each agency will document its decision according to its specific governing statutes. No sooner than 30 days after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability of the final EIS is published in the **Federal Register**, DOE will issue its Record of Decision and publish it in the **Federal Register**. Minnesota State Statutes require that the MEQB issue a decision as to the adequacy of the EIS and if it is deemed adequate, issue a Site Designation and Certificate of Site Compatibility. MEQB will issue its decisions in the *EQB Monitor*. It is currently planned to issue simultaneous DOE/MEQB decision documents during summer/fall 1999.

Signed in St. Paul, Minnesota, this 30th day of September 1998.

**Rod Sando,**

*Chairman, MEQB, State of Minnesota.*

Signed in Washington, DC, this 1st day of October 1998.

**Peter N. Brush,**

*Acting Assistant Secretary, Environment, Safety and Health, U.S. Department of Energy.*  
[FR Doc. 98-26874 Filed 10-6-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6450-01-P

## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

### Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board, Department of Energy, Los Alamos National Laboratory

**AGENCY:** Department of Energy.

**ACTION:** Notice of open meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463, 86 Stat. 770) notice is hereby given of the following Advisory Committee meeting: Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB), Los Alamos National Laboratory.

**DATES:** Wednesday, October 28, 1998: 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.; 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (public comment session)

**ADDRESSES:** Cochiti Pueblo Tribal Offices, Community Room, Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Ann DuBois, Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board, Los Alamos National Laboratory, 528 35th Street, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544, (505) 665-5048.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Purpose of the Board:* The purpose of the Advisory Board is to make recommendations to DOE and its regulators in the areas of environmental restoration, waste management, and related activities.

#### Tentative Agenda

6:00 p.m.—Call to Order by DOE  
6:00 p.m.—Welcome by Chair, Roll Call, Approval of Agenda and Minutes  
6:30 p.m.—Public Comments  
7:00 p.m.—Break  
7:15 p.m.—Board Business  
9:00 p.m.—Adjourn

*Public Participation:* The meeting is open to the public. The public may file written statements with the Committee, either before or after the meeting. A sign-up sheet will also be available at the door of the meeting room to indicate a request to address the Board. Individuals who wish to make oral presentations, other than during the public comment period, should contact Ms. Ann DuBois at (505) 665-5048 five (5) business days prior to the meeting to request that the Board consider the item for inclusion at this or a future meeting. The Designated Federal Officer is empowered to conduct the meeting in a fashion that will facilitate the orderly conduct of business.

*Minutes:* The minutes of this meeting will be available for public review and copying at the Freedom of Information Public Reading Room, 1E-190, Forrestal