



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

July 22, 2013

The Honorable John M. Shimkus
Chairman, Environment and the Economy Subcommittee
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Shimkus:

Thank you for your letter of June 28, 2013 requesting information related to the management and disposal of used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Secretary Moniz has asked me to respond to your letter. The Secretary and I take seriously the Federal government's obligation to accept, manage, and ultimately dispose of used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The Administration's *Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste* reiterates this commitment and outlines a framework for moving toward a sustainable program to fulfill our obligations, providing a basis for discussions among the Administration and Congress and identifying near-term actions to be implemented by the Department of Energy pending enactment of new legislation.

Since the closure of the Yucca Mountain Project in 2010, the Department of Energy has continued activities related to the management and disposal of used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste as part of its Fuel Cycle Research and Development program. Initial activities were outlined in DOE's *Nuclear Energy Research and Development Roadmap*, sent to the Congress in 2010, and included research into the performance of high burn-up used fuel in storage, among other activities. The roadmap noted the establishment of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future and acknowledged that all research and development activities and plans outlined would be revisited and revised as needed to reflect the Commission's findings and associated Administration decisions.

In December 2011, the President signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012, which provided \$60 million in funding for used fuel management and disposal activities. Specifically, the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the bill provided that DOE should build upon its current knowledge base to fully understand all repository media and storage options and their comparative advantages and expand its capabilities for assessing issues related to storage of spent fuel.

In January 2012, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC) issued its final report. In Chapter 13 of that report, the Commission recommended a range of near-term activities to be undertaken prior to the passage of new legislation,



including beginning to lay the groundwork for implementing consolidated storage, completing the development of procedures and regulations for providing technical assistance and funds under section 180(c) of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, continuing non-site specific repository activities, and building a data base of the experience gained in efforts to site nuclear waste facilities in the United States and abroad. Many of these near-term activities identified by the BRC were encompassed in activities already being undertaken by the Department. When it was issued in January 2013, the Administration's *Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste* recognized the ongoing research and development, analytical and planning activities already underway and endorsed them as laying the groundwork for implementation of the Strategy.

Enclosed are three tables that outline the programs, solicitations, or activities undertaken in support of the Strategy, describe the deliverables expected to result from each item and the time estimate for their completion, the resources expended to date and projected to be necessary for completion, including whether funds from Nuclear Waste Fund have been or will be used on each item, and the legal authority under which each item is being pursued. DOE's efforts to develop a consent-based siting process are described in this table.

Should you have any questions, please contact me or Christopher Davis of the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at 202-586-5450.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Lyons", written in a cursive style.

Peter B. Lyons
Assistant Secretary
For Nuclear Energy

Enclosure