

MONITOR

NUCLEAR NEW BUILD

...Weekly Intelligence on the Global Nuclear Renaissance

Next Generation Power Plants ◆ Advanced Reactors ◆ Uranium Enrichment
New Fuel Fabrication ◆ Spent Fuel Disposition & Recycling ◆ Safeguards

Volume 30 No. 35

September 9, 2011

— INSIDE HIGHLIGHTS —

Nuclear energy programs took a hit in the Fiscal Year 2012 energy and water funding bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee this week 2

Moving forward with creating a policy for spent nuclear fuel in the absence of Yucca Mountain, the Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee this week includes provisions for developing interim spent fuel storage sites and researching spent fuel issues. 3

Following the Westinghouse submission of the latest revision of the AP1000 design certification to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in June, an NRC advisory panel weighed in on the updates this week 4

While the Shaw Group is under contract to build AP1000 reactors in the United States and China, the company announced this week that it plans to sell its 20 percent investment in Westinghouse back to Toshiba 5

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff said this week that using risk insights to license small, modular reactors will need to take place in the long term, considering currently ongoing licensing efforts for new plants 6

Calendar 7

NRC COMMISSIONERS CONFIRM TIE VOTE ON YUCCA MOUNTAIN LICENSE WITHDRAWAL

The four commissioners on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission deciding whether the Department of Energy can withdraw its application for the Yucca Mountain geological high-level waste repository confirmed Sept. 9 that they are locked in a tie on the matter. The commissioners unanimously voted to approve a memorandum that states that the Commission is evenly divided on the issue. The Commission has been considering the matter since June 2010, when an NRC legal board ruled that DOE could not withdraw its license application. The memo also directs the Construction Authorization Board, an NRC legal panel dedicated to Yucca Mountain proceedings, to “complete all necessary and appropriate case management activities, including disposal of all matters currently pending before it” by the end of the fiscal year, which comes Sept. 30.

It is unclear whether the tie vote would uphold the legal panel’s decision denying DOE’s withdrawal. General Commission practice in the case of a 2-2 vote would dictate that the decision stands, and Yucca Mountain licensing would go forward, according to an NRC inspector general report on NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko’s decision to halt Yucca Mountain licensing activities (*NNB Monitor* Vol. 30 No. 24). However, the report notes that there is a “lack of enforcement of any specificity in the Commission’s written procedures” which “allows matters to sit in abeyance without final Commission action.” The agency’s closeout of the Yucca Mountain review was slated for completion by the end of the fiscal year, and the memo makes clear the board is to complete work by then.

Jaczko and Commissioners Kristine Svinicki, William Ostendorff and William Magwood cast preliminary votes