

Feds list Idaho as possible site for nuclear waste storage

By KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The U.S. Department of Energy lists the Idaho National Laboratory as a possible site for storing about 1,300 dump truck loads of low level radioactive waste.

The federal agency's preferred alternative according to a final environmental impact statement made available in March is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant geologic repository near Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The INL is listed as a possibility in three other alternatives that also include the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington state, the Nevada National Security Site and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina.

Possible methods of disposal at the 890-square-mile federal site in eastern Idaho include an intermediate-depth borehole disposal facility, a near-surface trench, or in a vault, the document says.

"If the INL Site is selected, the final location for a (low level radioactive waste) land disposal facility will be based on further analysis," the document states.

A final decision must involve Congress. The timeline on that isn't clear. The document said the report to Congress must include all the alternatives under consideration.

In an emailed statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday, the DOE said the final environmental impact statement for disposal of the waste is not a decision. "The Department will in the future issue a Record of Decision, which will be the decision," the statement said.

The agency in the document said the waste needs to be stored due to heightened concerns in the wake of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, because terrorists could get possession of the radioactive waste that includes sealed sources "and use them for malevolent purposes."

The Idaho lab is considered the nation's primary lab for nuclear research, but it also stores some nuclear waste.

Former Idaho Govs. Cecil Andrus, a Democrat, and Phil Batt, a Republican, attained in 1995 an agreement with federal authorities limiting nuclear waste shipments. The Department of Energy in its statement to the AP said the low level radioactive waste "is not related to the 1995 agreement."

Andrus disagreed, saying such waste was a violation.

"The first thing DOE should do is comply with the '95 agreement in which they are in violation of and clean up the waste that's already there," Andrus said Wednesday. "Don't talk about bringing more garbage in."

The Idaho attorney general's office said it was reviewing the document and declined to comment.

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