AMWTP

Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project

AMWTP and the National Environmental Policy Act

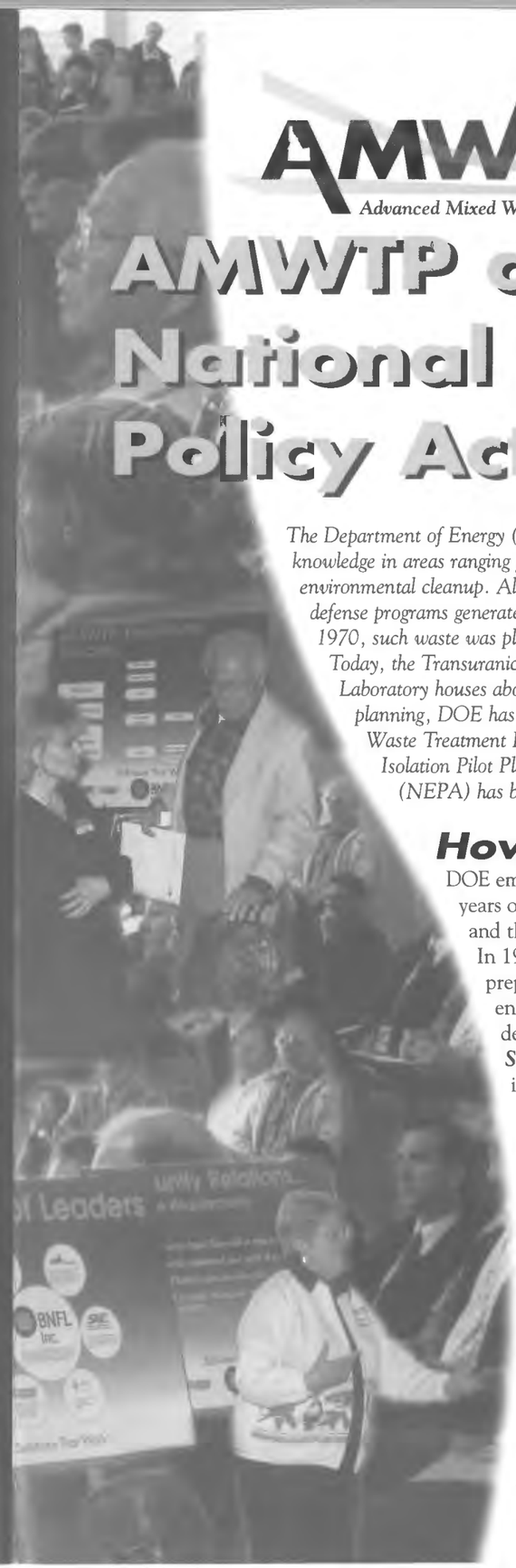
The Department of Energy (DOE) has made large contributions to our national defense and to scientific knowledge in areas ranging from nuclear science and alternative energy sources, to medicine and environmental cleanup. Although operated under methods that were reasonable for the times, DOE nuclear defense programs generated ***transuranic mixed wastes*** *that defy simple disposal solutions. Beginning in 1970, such waste was placed in retrievable storage awaiting treatment and a permanent disposal facility. Today, the Transuranic Storage Area at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory houses about 65,000 cubic meters of transuranic waste, most of it mixed. After years of planning, DOE has entered into a contract with private industry to build the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP) to treat that waste and package it for disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. Appropriate evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been, and continues to be, an important part of DOE's plans.*

How Did We Get Here?

DOE embarked upon its course for building a mixed waste treatment facility after years of careful planning. The facility was included in the **Site Treatment Plan** and the 1995 **Federal Facility Compliance Act Consent Order**.

In 1994, DOE commissioned three teams drawn from private industry to prepare a Feasibility Study that explored available technologies, environmental and regulatory impacts, stakeholder concerns, and cost to determine a reasonable approach for mixed waste treatment. Finally, the ***Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*** evaluated the potential impacts of four alternatives for managing mixed transuranic waste. In the Record of Decision for that EIS, DOE stated its intention to treat transuranic waste to comply with the Federal Facility Compliance Act and meet Waste Isolation Pilot Plant waste acceptance criteria, and to negotiate a project schedule with the State of Idaho.

DOE met the first deadline in the negotiated schedule (contract procurement by June 1, 1997) through its selection process to award the **privatized** AMWTP contract. DOE's NEPA regulations require that environmental issues be considered as an integral part of the procurement process. Offerors must include environmental data as part of their proposals; and DOE must evaluate, compare, and consider the environmental consequences of the proposed approaches as part of the selection process. In agreement with those regulations, the three AMWTP proposals that made it to the final stage were evaluated for environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures, as well as safety, technical, business, and cost issues.



Words You Should Know

Federal Facility Compliance Act Consent Order:

The Federal Facility Compliance Act amends the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (the law that defines requirements for the management of hazardous waste) and requires DOE to develop capacity and technologies for treating mixed waste. The Consent Order implements DOE's plan for managing mixed waste at INEEL.

Privatization:

A contract reform to boost performance and save taxpayer dollars by substituting private market mechanisms for government programs. Privatization seeks to improve management, reduce the costs of doing business, and shift financial risk to the private sector.

Site Treatment Plan:

A document required by the Federal Facility Compliance Act that specifies how the INEEL will treat its mixed waste.

Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement:

A unique, two-volume National Environmental Policy Act study that evaluates national (programmatic) management of DOE-owned spent nuclear fuel (Volume 1) and site-specific waste management at INEEL (Volume 2). The actual title of this April 1995 Environmental Impact Statement is: Department of Energy Programmatic Spent Nuclear Fuel Management and Idaho National Engineering Laboratory Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Programs Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Transuranic Mixed Waste:

Waste containing both radioactive (specifically, transuranic) and hazardous constituents.

Path Forward

A NEPA evaluation must be performed when a Federal agency initiates a major action. In deciding what level of NEPA analysis is required for the AMWTP, DOE reviewed existing NEPA documentation (e.g., the *Site-Wide EIS*) and up-to-date project information (technology, facility design, facility location, etc.). We wanted to determine whether or not the full-range of potential impacts specific to the AMWTP had been addressed and whether or not the public had been given enough opportunity to participate. Because of the project's magnitude and the existing project-related NEPA documentation, DOE has chosen to prepare a tiered EIS. NEPA suggests using a tiered EIS approach when a project already covered under a broad analysis (in this case, the *Site-Wide EIS*) requires a closer look. As stated in the regulations, if an existing NEPA document already covers part of a project, a new analysis should "incorporate that information by reference."

The *Site-Wide EIS* presented a huge amount of information in its 2,000-plus pages, and information relevant to the AMWTP appears in several different sections. The tiered EIS will draw on the discussions in that larger document, but focus on the parts specific to the AMWTP—and consolidate information into a more accessible form. It will present analyses of new data generated by site selection and by the emerging facility design; it will discuss the technology chosen, as well as specific potential impacts to the natural and human environment. The tiered EIS for the AMWTP will follow the same general format and process as any other EIS—including providing opportunities for meaningful public participation.

The AMWTP is included in the analyses performed for the Site-Wide EIS. Two especially useful parts are Section 3.1.3.2, which discusses transuranic waste by alternative, and Sections C-4.4.1 through C-4.4.3, which discuss treatment of transuranic and mixed waste at INEEL.

Public Participation

NEPA requires DOE to promote public awareness about planned actions and provide opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process. DOE plans to present project-specific information—such as this fact sheet—to keep the public informed and involved in the AMWTP. The *Site-Wide EIS* gave stakeholders an opportunity to comment on mixed waste management at the INEEL. During preparation of the tiered EIS, you will have another chance to participate in the NEPA process for this project.

More Opportunities

In addition to NEPA, other licensing or regulatory processes provide opportunities for you to be involved in the AMWTP:

- State of Idaho Hazardous Facility Siting License
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Part B Permit
- Clean Air Act Permit to Construct

For More Information on the AMWTP Please Call

Brad Bugger (208)526-0833 or **Cal Ozaki (208)524-8484**

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For More Information On The NEPA Process,

visit your local library for a copy of the regulations, found in the 40 Code of Federal Regulations sections 1500-1508; DOE's NEPA regulations can be found at 10 CFR 1021 (Section 1021.216 Procurement, Financial Assistance, and Joint Ventures talks about contracting).

You can also visit DOE's National Environmental Policy Act Internet web site at:

http//tis-nt.eh.doe.gov/nepa

To Be Involved:

For more information on how you can get on the mailing list to be informed of new developments, opportunities to participate, or to request information, you can call the numbers at the bottom of this fact sheet.

Anticipated EIS Schedule:

- *Notice of Intent: Fall 1997*
- *Scoping Period and Public Meetings: Late 1997*
- *Draft EIS Public Comment Period and Meetings: Summer 1998*
- *Final EIS: Late 1998 or Early 1999*
- *Record of Decision: Late 1998 or Early 1999*