

Scoping meeting held on West Valley nuclear site



Photo by Max Borsuk

Lia Oprea speaks to DOE and NYSERDA representatives.

Max Borsuk
Staff Reporter

As work continues and decisions need to be made on the future of the Western New York Nuclear Service Center in West Valley, representatives from the United States Department of Energy and the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency held a meeting on March 19 in West Valley to get input on the scoping process.

NYSERDA West Valley Program Director Paul Bembia, West Valley Demonstration Project Director Brian Bower, DOE Document Manager Martin Krentz and NYSERDA Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Manager Lee Gordon presented information on the West Valley site, the scoping and SEIS process and the alternative decommissioning actions proposed for phase two of the project.

The DOE and NYSERDA determined a supplemental environmental impact statement would help in the process, which requires public input on environmental issues and alternatives as they move on to phase two of the decommissioning and decontamination of the West Valley Nuclear Site.

During phase one, the process included facility disposition and soil remediation. Phase two would cover the facilities and areas remaining after phase one including the waste

tank farm, U.S. Regulatory Commission licensed disposal area, state-licensed disposal area, construction and demolition debris landfill, cesium prong, contaminated stream sediments and more.

The SEIS will focus on the purpose and need within phase two of decommissioning and decontamination, description of the affected environment from different aspects including geology and soils, water resources, human health and safety, land use, analysis and summaries of the proposed decommissioning alternative actions, description of recommended best practices and identifying the preferred alternative.

Four phase two decommissioning alternatives are to be considered within the

SEIS. The no-action alternative would consist of no further decommissioning after the completion of phase one with management of the site facilities. The sitewide removal alternative would remove site facilities along with contaminated soil, sediment and groundwater. The waste would be packaged up and shipped off site for disposal once a disposal location is available and would be stored on site until shipped. The site wide close-in-place alternative would close most of the phase two facilities in place with management of major facilities and contamination along with

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Photo by Max Borsul

Residents ask questions and view posters for the West Valley nuclear site, phases of work and the supplemental environmental impact statement.

isolation of facilities with certain radiation with barriers and structures. The hybrid alternative would be a combination of elements from other alternatives.

Comments for scoping will be taken until April 23 with any comments after to be considered to the extent practicable. Those interested in commenting can do so at SEISWestValleySite.com, emailing SEISWestValleySite@emcbc.doe.gov or mailing to Mr. Martin Krentz, DOE Document Manager West Valley Demonstration Project, U.S. Department of Energy, 10282 Rock Springs Road, AC-DOE West Valley, NY, 14171-9799.

After the comment period, preparations will start for the draft SEIS to be completed by 2021. The draft

SEIS will be made public, with more public hearings and a six-month comment period. After the six-month comment period, preparations will start on the final SEIS to be completed in 2022. A publication of the notice of availability and completion of the final SEIS will be available and after a 30-day waiting period, the record of decision and findings statement will be published.

After the presentations, residents in attendance voiced their opinions on the scoping, the SEIS and which alternative they feel would best fit the town.

“Obviously everybody would like to see things moved, but then where do you send it?” Jeanne Brown asked. “It’s kind of like we are stuck with it and have to

deal with it the best we can in remediation so it doesn’t spread and contaminate groundwater.”

“The only option is to dig it up, contain it, transport it out and exhume both the high activity volume waste and the lower activity high volume waste,” Lia Oprea said. “Contain the waste in long-term stabilization in storage tanks located in a secure, temporary above ground monitored and retrievable location ... with an active plan in place for transport to a more suitable site ... at a appropriate secure facility away from West Valley, far from populated communities, water sources, erosions, earthquakes and fault zones.”

For more information on the visit SEISWestValleySite.com.