

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL PROGRAM?

Dr. James L. Conca, Senior Scientist for UFA Ventures, Inc.

Conca will discuss the history and present state of America's nuclear waste disposal program and the underlying issues, including cost and policy, that are slowing the program to a crawl and preventing us from actually disposing of our nuclear waste, particularly in Washington State. There are three successful paths open to us, but none of them are being pursued at present.

Unknown to most, America has an operating deep geologic nuclear waste repository in southeast New Mexico, called the WIPP, that is in the best geologic formation in the world, massive salt of the Permian age Salado Formation, the very formation chosen by the National Academy of Sciences in 1957. This repository was designed for all nuclear waste of any type, but was only permitted for transuranic (TRU) nuclear weapons waste, much of it from Hanford. TRU waste is similar to most of the high-level tank waste except for two constituents, cesium-137 and strontium-90.

But it got very strange and political in the 1970s.

Unfortunately, the end point of our present policy is that most everything will stay right where it is. The implications for commercial power reactors, and defense waste at sites like Hanford, are profound.



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