Department of Energy and Private Spent Fuel Storage Facilities

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By law, the spent fuel and the plutonium in the fuel has always belonged to the US government. In the 60's and 70's, utilities expected to be able to send the spent fuel to a reprocessing facility after about 1.5 to 2 years storage in the cooling pools onsite. President Carter restricted this option because of concern about plutonium proliferation. As a result, in the 80's utilities were forced to expand the storage space onsite by "re-racking" their storage racks in the storage pools. Subsequently in the 90's, a number of plants started using large metal spent fuel storage casks onsite.

In 1982, Congress charged the Department of Energy (DOE) to start accepting spent fuel for long term storage starting in January 31, 1998. This law required the utilities to collect a fee for the government. Throughout the various government administrations since that time, DOE has continued to move back the projected date when they can accept spent fuel.. At the same time, DOE has been using the "waste fund" money for purposes not directly related to spent fuel storage. As a result, a number of utilities sued DOE to require them to take the spent fuel as a contractual obligation.

In the 90's, the utilities realized that DOE would be unable to meet their needs with re-racking and onsite storage . Some have initiated projects with Indian communities, as sovereign entities, to allow interim storage until the DOE waste repository is available. Current projects are progressing in Utah. The following sites provide background on the issue:

- Waste Policy Act of 1982
- Skull Valley Goshutes
- Private Fuel Storage
- Prehearing on Skull Valley Private Spent Fuel Storage
- Civilian Spent Nuclear Fuel Temporary Storage Options
- NRC page on Radioactive Waste Management
- Nuclear Waste in Canada - *type in **nuclear waste** or **waste** on the search page (Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission)*
- High Level Radioactive Waste Management (Google-search results)

Congress approved Yucca Mountain, Nevada for the final storage of the spent nuclear fuel.
