statutory obligations. The Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, publishes that notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of these requests to OMB. Each proposed information collection, grouped by office, contains the following: (1) Type of review requested, e.g. new, revision, extension, existing or reinstatement; (2) Title; (3) Summary of the collection; (4) Description of the need for, and proposed use of, the information; (5) Respondents and frequency of collection; and (6) Reporting and/or Recordkeeping burden. OMB invites public comment.

Dated: September 9, 1999.

William E. Burrow,

Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Office of Vocational and Adult Education

Type of Review: New.

Title: Application for New Grants under the English Literacy and Civics Education Demonstration Grants Program.

Frequency: Annually.

Affected Public: Businesses or other for-profits; Not-for-profit institutions; State, local or Tribal Gov't, SEAs and LEAs.

Reporting and Recordkeeping Hour Burden:

Responses: 800. Burden Hours: 32,000.

Abstract: The application package includes the information needed to apply for grants under the English Literacy and Civics Education Demonstration Grants Program.

This information collection is being submitted under the Streamlined Clearance Process for Discretionary Grants Information Collections (1890–0001). Therefore, this 30-day public comment notice will be the only public comment notice published for this information collection.

Written comments and requests for copies of the proposed information collection request should be addressed to Danny Werfel, Office of Management and Budget, New Executive Office Building, 725 17th Street, NW, Room 10235, Washington, DC 20503, or should be electronically mailed to the internet address *werfel d@al.eop.gov* or should be faxed to 202–708–9346.

For questions regarding burden and/or the collection activity requirements, contact Sheila Carey at 202–708–6287or electronically at her internet address Sheila__Carey@ed.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339.

[FR Doc. 99–23986 Filed 9–14–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Board of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice provides the proposed agenda of a forthcoming meeting of the National Board of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. This notice also describes the functions of the Board. Notice of this meeting is required under section 10 (a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

DATE AND TIME: October 7, 1999 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ADDRESSES: Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street, N.W., Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sandra Newkirk, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Room 3100, ROB #3, Washington, D.C. 20202–5175. Telephone: (202) 708–5750. Individuals who use a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday).

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Board of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education is established under Title VII, Part B, section 742 of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 1138a). The National Board of the Fund is authorized to recommend to the Director of the Fund and the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education priorities for funding and procedures for grant awards.

The meeting of the National Board is open to the public. The National Board will meet on Thursday, October 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. to provide an overview of the Fund's program status and special initiatives.

The meeting site is accessible to individuals with disabilities. An individual with a disability who will need an auxiliary aid or service to participate in the meeting (e.g., interpreting service, assistive listening device or materials in an alternate format) should notify the contact person listed in this notice at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting date. Although the Department will attempt to meet a request received after that date, the requested auxiliary aid or service may not be available because of insufficient time to arrange it.

Records are kept of all Board proceedings, and are available for public inspection at the office of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Room 3100, Regional Office Building #3, 7th & D Streets, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202 from the hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Dated: September 9, 1999.

Claudio Prieto,

Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education.

[FR Doc. 99–24070 Filed 9–14–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Accomplishing Expanded Civilian Nuclear Energy Research and Development and Isotope Production Missions in the United States, Including the Role of the Fast Flux Test Facility (DOE/EIS–0310)

AGENCY: Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Notice of intent (NOI).

SUMMARY: DOE's civilian nuclear research and isotope production infrastructure has diminished significantly since the early 1990s. As a result, DOE is no longer able to accommodate new and expanding missions for nuclear research and development and isotope production. The Department does not have sufficient steady-state neutron resources to meet all of its projected irradiation needs for: (1) The production of isotopes for medical and industrial uses, (2) the production of plutonium-238 for use in advanced radioisotope power systems for future National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space missions, and 3) the Nation's nuclear research and development needs.

Therefore, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Secretary of Energy recently announced DOE's intent to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on accomplishing these new missions through the proposed enhancement of the existing infrastructure, including the possible role of the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF), located at DOE's

Hanford Site near Richland, Washington.

This PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of alternative ways to meet the projected irradiation needs for the next 35 years by enhancing the existing infrastructure as follows: (1) Resuming FFTF operation, (2) constructing and operating a research reactor at a generic DOE site, and (3) constructing and operating one or more neutron accelerators at a generic DOE site. In addition, the PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of meeting the projected mission needs to the extent possible using existing reactor and neutron accelerator facilities.

The FFTF, DOE's largest operable reactor, is currently maintained in a standby mode with no fuel in the reactor vessel. The PEIS will include sufficient project-specific analyses of the FFTF to enable DOE to support a restart decision. In addition, since DOE may decide not to restart FFTF to meet the projected irradiation needs evaluated in this PEIS, the environmental impacts of deactivating the FFTF reactor will also be analyzed.

Consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, a No Action alternative, i.e., maintaining the status quo, will be evaluated in this PEIS. Under No Action, DOE would continue to rely on the existing infrastructure for production of isotopes and nuclear research and development within the current operating envelope. No domestic capability to produce plutonium-238 for future space missions would be established.

DOE is now canceling the Plutonium-238 Production EIS, announced in the **Federal Register** on October 5, 1998 (63 FR 53398) and integrating the plutonium-238 production analyses into this PEIS. All oral and written comments received by DOE on the proposed scope of the Plutonium-238 Production EIS will be considered in preparing this PEIS.

DOE invites individuals, organizations, and agencies to submit oral and/or written comments regarding the scope of this PEIS, including the environmental issues and alternatives that the PEIS should analyze.

DATES: The public scoping period begins with the publication of this Notice in the **Federal Register** and will continue until October 31, 1999. Comments submitted by mail, facsimile (FAX), electronic mail (e-mail), or telephone will be considered in preparation of this PEIS. Comments received after this date will be considered to the extent practicable. DOE will conduct public scoping meetings to assist in defining the scope of this PEIS including the significant environmental issues to be addressed. DOE will hold scoping meetings in Seattle and Richland, Washington; Portland and Hood River, Oregon; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Idaho Falls, Idaho; and in the Washington D.C. area. The dates, times, and locations of these meetings are as follows:

- Oak Ridge, Tennessee, October 13, 1999, registration at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the American Museum of Science & Energy, 300 South Tulane Avenue
- Idaho Falls, Idaho, October 15, 1999, registration beginning at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the Shilo Inn, 780 Lindsay Boulevard
- Seattle, Washington, October 18, 1999, registration beginning at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the Seattle Center, 305 Harrison Street
- Portland, Oregon, October 19, 1999, registration beginning at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the Marriott Hotel-Downtown Portland, 1401 SW Front Avenue
- Hood River, Oregon, October 20, 1999, registration beginning at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the Hood River Inn, 1108 E. Marina Way
- Richland, Washington, October 21, 1999, registration beginning at 6 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m., at the Best Western Tower Inn & Conference Center, 1515 George Washington Way
- Arlington, Virginia, October 26, 1999, registration beginning at 2 p.m., presentation at 2:30 p.m., at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, 2799 Jefferson Davis Highway

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of the PEIS, requests to speak at the public scoping meetings, requests for special arrangements to enable participation at the meetings (e.g., interpreter for the hearing-impaired), and questions concerning the project review, should be addressed to the DOE NEPA Document Manager: Ms. Colette E. Brown, Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology (NE–50), U.S. Department of Energy, 19901 Germantown Road, Germantown, MD 20874.

Electronic mail (e-mail): *Nuclear.Infrastructure-PEIS@hq.doe.gov;* toll-free facsimile (FAX): 1–877–562–4592; or leave a message, toll-free, at telephone number 1–877–562–4593.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To request information about this PEIS, or to be placed on the PEIS document distribution list, contact Colette E. Brown at the above mailing/e-mail addresses or toll-free telephone/FAX numbers. For general information on the DOE NEPA process, please contact: Ms. Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance (EH–42), U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, DC 20585–0119.

Telephone: 202–586–4600 or leave a message at 1–800-472–2756.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Agency Action

DOE recognizes that increased nuclear research, technology development, and educational programs are essential to support national nuclear energy programs and international collaboration. DOE believes that the availability of nuclear research reactor and accelerator facilities is necessary to implement a successful nuclear energy program. Under the authority of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, DOE is responsible for serving the national need for a reliable supply of isotope products and services for medicine, industry, research, and space exploration. An adequate nuclear research and isotope production facility infrastructure is needed to continue these national services into the future at projected increased demand levels.

DOE's nuclear technology infrastructure is dwindling while the demand for steady-state neutron sources continues to increase to explore the use of nuclear science for analyzing and testing materials, nuclear fuels, electronic circuits, and other components; creating isotopes required by medical clinicians, researchers, government, and industry for a wide range of applications; and to produce plutonium-238 required to power deep space probes. Current supplies of isotopes are limited and the demand is projected to increase dramatically, particularly as research points toward additional medical applications for many radioisotopes . Resuming operations at the FFTF, building a new research reactor, or building new accelerator facilities, in conjunction with the existing DOE neutron sources, would provide adequate neutron source capacity to serve the nation's foreseeable nuclear research and development and isotope production needs. Therefore, DOE is proceeding with a NEPA evaluation (i.e., a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, [PEIS]) of potential enhancement to the nation's nuclear research and technology infrastructure to assure that the United States can support future nuclear research and isotope production activities.

This PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts resulting from accomplishing these new nuclear research and development and isotope production missions with (1) The existing operational DOE infrastructure; (2) the existing operational DOE infrastructure supplemented by the operation of the FFTF; (3) the existing operational DOE infrastructure supplemented by the construction and operation of a research reactor and supporting facilities at a generic DOE site; and (4) the existing operational DOE infrastructure supplemented by the construction and operation of one or more neutron-producing accelerators and supporting facilities at a generic DOE site. Impacts from the No Action alternative, as discussed below, will also be analyzed.

Background

DOE's nuclear research and isotope production infrastructure has diminished significantly since the early 1990s. The Department does not have sufficient steady-state neutron sources to meet all of its projected irradiation needs for: (1) The production of isotopes for medical and industrial uses, (2) the production of plutonium-238 for use in advanced radioisotope power systems for future NASA space missions, and (3) the Nation's nuclear research and development needs. On August 18, 1999, the Secretary of Energy announced DOE's intent to prepare a PEIS on accomplishing these new and expanded missions through the proposed enhancements of the existing infrastructure, including the possible role of the FFTF.

FFTF, the largest research reactor in the world, is a sodium-cooled research reactor located in the 400 Area of the Hanford Site, near the City of Richland, in southeastern Washington State. FFTF is currently defueled and usable fuel is stored on site in sodium fuel storage pools or in the secure vault at the Plutonium Finishing Plant at the Hanford Site. The reactor is in standby mode with the main cooling system operating at approximately 200°C (400°F), to keep the sodium coolant liquid and circulating. Essential systems, staffing, and support services are being maintained in a manner that will support either timely deactivation of the reactor or its restart. With minor modification, (*e.g.*, the installation of a system to insert and remove irradiation targets while at power), the FFTF is capable of accomplishing new and expanded mission requirements discussed above.

Alternatively, all or most of the new and expanded mission requirements can be achieved by the addition of a new research reactor or new neutron-producing accelerators to the existing infrastructure. The environmental impacts of the proposed new facilities (including support facilities) will be analyzed at a generic DOE site.

The Department does not have sufficient steady-state neutron generation capacity to meet all of the projected needs without impacting current missions at existing operating facilities. However, some of the mission objectives can be achieved with surplus capacity available at these existing operating facilities. The plutonium-238 mission objectives could be achieved at existing DOE research reactors or commercial light water reactor (CLWR) facilities. Surplus capacity exists at the Advanced Test Reactor (ATR) at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and at the High Flux Isotope Reactor (HFIR) at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Implementation of plutonium-238 production at ATR and HFIR would consume nearly all of the available surplus capacity. Surplus capacity in these facilities and existing neutron-producing accelerators could be used to support medical and industrial isotope production and nuclear research and development missions to the extent possible without impacting existing missions. CLWRs cannot support most isotope production and research and development mission objectives without significantly impacting their primary mission, the production of electrical power. CLWRs were therefore dropped from further consideration for these missions.

This PEIS will analyze the environmental impacts of operating existing and new steady-state irradiation facilities, including both reactors and neutron accelerators, and existing and new support processing facilities to meet the mission objectives. In evaluating these alternatives the Department assumes:

(1) None of these proposed missions is defense-related; and

(2) The mission activities currently pursued at existing facilities (*i.e.*, isotope production, nuclear research, etc.) are not changed in any of the alternatives.

Following is a brief discussion of the proposed new and expanded mission areas:

(1) Medical and Industrial Isotope Production

Medical isotopes are produced in the United States by the Department of Energy in nuclear accelerators and reactors, and by extracting them from existing radioactive materials. These isotopes can be used for diagnosis or therapy. Diagnostic isotopes are used for imaging internal organs. Unlike conventional radiology, imaging with radioisotopes reveals organ function and structure, providing more accurate diagnostics data and early detection of abnormalities. In ongoing clinical testing, therapeutic isotopes have proven effective in the treatment of cancer and other illnesses by cell-directed localized radiation therapy (*i.e.*, deploying antibodies or carriers of radioisotopes to seek and destroy invasive cancer cells). This directed therapy can minimize adverse side effects (*e.g.*, healthy tissue damage, nausea, hair loss) making it an effective and attractive alternative to traditional chemotherapy or radiation treatments. An Expert Panel convened by the Department last year reviewed several industry projections relating to the future demand growth of medical isotopes. The Expert Panel believes that the growth rate of medical isotope usage could be significant over the next 20 years.

Industrial applications of radioisotopes fall into three broad categories, including nucleonic instrumentation, irradiation and radiation processing, and technologies that use radioactive tracers. Examples of nucleonic instrumentation include gauges for measuring physical parameters, such as: detection systems for pollutants, explosives, drugs, ores, petroleum, and natural gases; nondestructive testing by gamma radiography; and smoke detectors. Irradiation and radiation processing technologies include radiation sterilization of food and medical products, and the curing of plastics. Radioactive tracer applications include studies on chemical synthesis reactions; monitoring of mass transfer in industrial plants; analysis of transport and uptake of nutrients, fertilizers, herbicides, and waste materials in plants, soil, and groundwater; and laboratory-based studies on the properties of materials.

In supporting these mission activities, the Department does not expect to engage the commercial market itself. Rather, consistent with current isotope activities, the Department will work with the private sector to support private sector production and sale of isotopes. The Department prefers to provide irradiation services for the private sector using an appropriate fee structure and allow the private sector to take responsibility for producing and processing targets.

(2) Plutonium-238 Production

Under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, DOE and its predecessor agencies have been developing radioisotope power systems and radioisotope heater units and supplying them to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for more than 30 years. The radioisotope used in these systems is plutonium-238. These systems have repeatedly demonstrated their value as enabling technologies in various NASA missions. DOE has projected that over the next 20 to 35 years, NASA will continue to conduct missions that require or would be enabled or enhanced by radioisotope power systems fueled with plutonium-238.

Under the National Space Policy issued by the Office of Science and Technology Policy in September 1996, and in accordance with its nuclear charter under the Atomic Energy Act, as amended, DOE has responsibility to assure that it maintains the capability to provide the nuclear infrastructure, including the plutonium-238, needed to support these missions. The Intersector Guidelines section of the National Space Policy state that ''The Department of Energy will maintain the necessary capability to support space missions which may require the use of space nuclear power systems.'' DOE has estimated that up to 5 kilograms per year of plutonium-238 is required to support NASA requirements for future space missions.

Historically, the reactors and chemical processing facilities at DOE's Savannah River Site (SRS) were used to produce plutonium-238 by the irradiation of targets containing neptunium-237. The irradiated targets were moved from the reactor site to a chemical processing facility where the targets were processed and the plutonium-238 was recovered as an oxide powder. The remaining neptunium-237 was recovered for recycling into additional targets. The plutonium-238 oxide powder was then shipped to facilities for producing pellets that were in turn shipped to another DOE site to make the radioisotope power systems. As a result of the downsizing of the DOE nuclear weapons complex at the end of the Cold War, the reactors used to produce plutonium-238 at SRS were shut down. The radiochemical processing facilities at SRS are also planned to be shut down in the near future after existing supplies of radioactive materials no longer needed to support DOE's missions have been processed into a form suitable for long-term storage or disposal.

In 1992, DOE signed a contract to purchase plutonium-238 from Russia allowing the U.S. to purchase up to 40 kilograms of plutonium-238. Under this contract, DOE has purchased 9 kilograms of plutonium-238, and in 1997, extended the contract for another five years. This option, therefore, continues to be viable until at least 2002. However, the long-term viability of this option is unclear once the end of the current contract is reached. The political and economic climate in Russia creates uncertainties about the reliability of this source of plutonium-238 to satisfy future NASA space mission requirements. Moreover, limited information exists regarding the extent of the Russian supply, Russian plans on how they would satisfy future demand, and nuclear safety and nonproliferation implications of Russian production methods. Therefore, DOE proposes to reestablish a reliable domestic capability for producing and processing plutonium-238 to satisfy these foreseeable space mission requirements. Since the facilities previously used at SRS are no longer available for the production of plutonium-238, DOE needs to evaluate other existing DOE and commercial light water reactors and chemical processing facilities for target irradiation and separation of plutonium-238. The environmental impacts of purchasing plutonium-238 from Russia are evaluated and documented in the *Environmental Assessment of the Import of Russian Plutonium-238* (DOE/EA–0841, June 1993), prepared by DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology.

On October 5, 1998, DOE published a Notice of Intent in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 53398) to prepare an EIS on the proposed production of plutonium-238 for use in advanced radioisotope power systems for future space missions. Since then, DOE has been preparing the draft EIS, giving consideration to the numerous comments submitted by the public during the scoping period last fall. During the public scoping of this EIS, DOE announced that FFTF would not be considered a reasonable alternative for that mission unless the facility was proposed to be restarted for other reasons. With the Secretary's recent announcement to prepare a PEIS which includes the possible restart of FFTF, the scope of the Plutonium-238 Production EIS has been consolidated into the scope of this PEIS. This PEIS will include the environmental impacts of re-establishing a domestic plutonium-238 production capability for future space missions. The Plutonium-238 Production EIS has been terminated as a separate NEPA review. However, all comments and input received from the public during the scoping period will be considered in the preparation of the draft PEIS to be prepared pursuant to this Notice.

(3) Support of Nuclear Research and Development

Materials Testing: Researchers from many different countries have used DOE's high flux research reactor facilities for nuclear materials testing and fuels research. These facilities, with the capability to maintain a high density of neutrons in a given test volume for materials testing, shorten the time needed for such testing, tailor the flux to simulate different reactors and reactor conditions, and instrument the core for close monitoring of tests. There is particular interest in materials testing related to commercial nuclear power plant license renewal, cooperative international fusion energy, space power technology, and transmutation of wastes as a means to destroy long-lived isotopes from commercial spent nuclear fuel. Activities considered within the scope of this PEIS will include those arising from international cooperation.

Nonproliferation Programs: Since October 1976, when President Gerald Ford issued a Nuclear Policy Statement prohibiting the export of reprocessing and other nuclear technologies that could contribute to proliferation of fissile materials, all U.S. Administrations have adopted policies aimed at minimizing the prospects that civilian plutonium separation would be adopted in other countries. At the same time, the U.S. has refrained from the commercial development of reprocessing and plutonium separation technologies. The U.S. policy is to advance global non-proliferation technology, while at the same time supporting the development of advanced, ultra-high burnup nuclear fuels. DOE's high flux research reactor facilities are ideally suited for the study, research, testing, development, and demonstration of technologies necessary to safely convert plutonium-based materials for disposition and use as proliferation-resistant fuels.

Alternatives To Be Evaluated

This PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of using irradiation and processing facilities to meet projected irradiation service mission needs for 35 years, *i.e.*, (1) production of isotopes for medical and industrial uses, (2) production of up to five kilograms per year of plutonium-238 for use in advanced radioisotope

power systems for future NASA space missions, and (3) to support the Nation's nuclear research and development needs. This PEIS will not re-examine current missions conducted at existing, operating facilities, but rather assumes that these current activities will continue while new or expanded missions are pursued.

When applicable, the impacts of transporting radioactive feedstock material to the processing facility for storage, transporting radioactive material between the irradiation facility and the processing facility, and transporting the product to the user will be analyzed in this PEIS.

No Action

Under this alternative, DOE would maintain the *status quo.* The Department would not restart the FFTF and would maintain it in a standby mode. Production of isotopes for medical and industrial uses and existing irradiation services missions currently conducted at operating facilities would continue within the existing mission envelope. No domestic capability to produce plutonium-238 would be established. DOE would rely on its remaining inventory of plutonium-238 inventory to meet the power requirements of near-term space missions and would seek to negotiate for additional purchases from Russia to enable future space missions. The PEIS would evaluate two scenarios with respect to the neptunium-237 currently stored at the Savannah River Site: (a) The neptunium-237 aqueous nitrate solution stored at the Savannah River Site would be converted to a solid form suitable for disposal as evaluated in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement Interim Management of Nuclear Materials, Savannah River Site* (DOE/EIS–0220, October 1995); or (b) the neptunium-237, converted to an oxide form, would be transferred from the Savannah River Site to a new storage site to maintain a future option to produce plutonium-238. The three alternative facilities for the storage of the neptunium-237 are the Radiochemical Engineering Development Center in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; the Fluorinel Dissolution Process Facility near Idaho Falls, Idaho; and the Fuels and Materials Examination Facility in Hanford, Washington. The impacts of transporting neptunium-237 to the candidate storage facilities from the Savannah River Site will be evaluated.

Alternative 1—Restart FFTF

Under this alternative, the PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of resuming operation of FFTF to accomplish the identified missions. The FFTF is designed to operate at a maximum power level of 400 megawatts, but can achieve all the projected new and expanded mission requirements anticipated under this PEIS while operating at the 100 megawatt power level. This PEIS will analyze the FFTF for operations at the 100 megawatt power level. The FFTF has an onsite supply of mixed oxide (MOX) fuel (*i.e.,* plutonium-uranium) to support approximately 6 years of operation at the 100 megawatt level. When the onsite fuel is depleted the FFTF may continue to use MOX fuel or switch to a reactor core of highly-enriched uranium (HEU) fuel. The Department believes that an additional 15-year supply of MOX fuel is available from Germany under very favorable terms (*i.e.,* no charge for the fuel). This PEIS will evaluate 35 years of FFTF operation for two reactor core configurations: (1) MOX core for approximately 21 years followed by 14 years of operation with a HEU core, and (2) MOX core for approximately 6 years followed by 29 years of operation with a HEU core. The impacts of spent fuel produced by FFTF operation and for transporting German fuel to FFTF will be evaluated in the PEIS. The PEIS will include sufficient project-specific analyses of the FFTF to enable DOE to support a restart decision.

This PEIS will also analyze the impacts of performing medical, industrial, and plutonium-238 isotope processing operations associated with the identified missions in hot cell facilities in the DOE complex. Processing operations include storage of target and process feedstock material, fabrication of targets for irradiation, processing irradiated targets to separate the product and recycling the unconverted feedstock material for the fabrication of new targets.

The processing operations portion of this alternative includes three options. Because space is not available in currently operating facilities on the Hanford site to support all of the processing requirements for the identified missions, new or off-site facilities will be needed to support activities conducted using the FFTF. The first option incorporates the use of a large existing and never used hot cell facility located near the FFTF to support all process facility operations for the identified missions. The second and third options incorporate the use of off site processing facilities to support the plutonium-238 production mission in conjunction with the use of existing operational processing facilities at the Hanford Site to support the FFTF in the remaining missions.

Option 1 will assess the impact of using the Fuels and Materials Examination Facility (FMEF) located near the FFTF in the 400 Area of the Hanford Site to support the FFTF missions.

Option 2 will assess the impact of using the Radiochemical Engineering Development Center (REDC) located in the Oak Ridge National Laboratory at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in support of FFTF for the production of plutonium-238 and other existing facilities located in the 300 and 400 Areas of the Hanford Site to support the FFTF in the remaining mission areas (i.e., production of medical and industrial isotopes and nuclear research and development).

Option 3 will assess the impact of using the Fluorinel Dissolution Process Facility (FDPF) located in the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory near Idaho Falls, Idaho, in support of FFTF for the production of plutonium-238 and other existing facilities located in the 300 Area and 400 Area of the Hanford Site to support the FFTF in the remaining mission areas (i.e., production of medical and industrial isotopes and nuclear research and development).

Alternative 2—Use Only Existing Operational Facilities to the Extent Possible

Under this alternative, the PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of meeting the projected mission needs to the extent possible using only existing operational facilities (without FFTF). The Department's analyses indicate that the plutonium-238 production objectives can be met using existing facilities. However, should plutonium-238 production be conducted at existing facilities, significant new medical and industrial isotope production and nuclear research and development mission objectives cannot be achieved without impacting current missions at these facilities. This PEIS will analyze the impact of the continuing, existing isotope production and nuclear research and development missions at current levels as part of the No Action alternative. The cumulative impacts from operating the affected facilities for all missions will be addressed under this alternative. This PEIS will evaluate the potential impacts of nine options for plutonium-238 production, that is, the combinations of three reactor sites (for the irradiation of targets) with three different processing facilities (for the storage of neptunium-237, fabrication of neptunium-237

targets for irradiation, and the processing of irradiated targets to separate plutonium-238). The three reactor sites are the Advanced Test Reactor located at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory near Idaho Falls, Idaho; the High Flux Isotope Reactor located at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and a commercial light water reactor located at an undefined generic site. The three processing facilities, previously discussed under Alternative 1, are REDC, FDPF, and FMEF. The impacts of transporting neptunium-237 to the storage facility from the Savannah River Site (SRS); unirradiated and irradiated targets between the irradiation facilities and processing facilities; and plutonium-238 from the processing facilities to the Los Alamos National Laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico where it is processed for use in advanced radioisotope power systems, will be evaluated for each combination.

Alternative Sites for Plutonium-238 Production Target Irradiation

Advanced Test Reactor (ATR) at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory: Under this alternative, DOE would irradiate targets (fabricated from neptunium-237 currently stored at SRS) in the ATR to produce up to 5 kilograms per year of plutonium-238, the maximum annual production requirement for the plutonium-238 production mission under current planning. ATR is an operating test reactor with a primary programmatic mission to support the Naval Reactor Fuels Program. A prerequisite of applying this alternative is that no impacts to the primary mission of the reactor would be allowed. In addition, nuclear research and isotope production missions at the ATR would also continue within the facility's current mission envelope.

High Flux Isotope Reactor (HFIR) at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory: Under this alternative, DOE would irradiate neptunium-237 targets in HFIR to produce up to 2 kilograms per year of plutonium-238. HFIR is an operating research reactor with its main programmatic mission to support DOE's Office of Science. A prerequisite of applying this alternative is that no impacts to the primary mission of the reactor would occur. Nuclear research and isotope production missions at the HFIR would also continue within the facility's current mission envelope. The use of HFIR for production of small quantities of plutonium-238 is compatible with the primary neutron scattering and radioisotope production mission of that reactor. Production of plutonium-238 at a rate higher than two kilograms per year would disrupt experimental programs currently being conducted at HFIR. Use of HFIR for the plutonium-238 production would need to be supplemented by the ATR to meet the 5 kilograms per year production objective.

Commercial Light Water Reactor (CLWR) at a generic site location: Under this alternative, DOE would irradiate neptunium-237 targets in an existing CLWR to produce up to five kilograms per year of plutonium-238. A CLWR is an operating reactor with a primary mission to deliver electric power to the local power grid. A prerequisite of applying this alternative is that no impacts to the primary mission of the reactor would be allowed.

Under Alternative 2, the PEIS will also analyze the potential environmental impacts of meeting projected medical and industrial isotope production and nuclear research and development mission needs, to the extent possible (i.e., without impacting existing missions), using existing neutron spallation sources (i.e., neutron-producing accelerators), such as, for example, the Brookhaven LINAC Isotope Producer at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York, or the Isotope Production Facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico). The FFTF would be deactivated under Alternative 2.

Alternative 3—Construct New Accelerator(s)

Under this alternative, the PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating one or more (if necessary, depending on power level requirements) new neutron-producing accelerators and new process facility at a generic DOE site for all identified missions. The role of the process facility is the same as in Alternative 1. Under Alternative 3, the FFTF would be deactivated.

Alternative 4—Construct New Research Reactor

Under this alternative, the PEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating a new research reactor and new process facility at a generic DOE site for all identified missions. The role of the process facility is the same as in Alternative 1. Under Alternative 4, the FFTF would be deactivated.

Environmental Impact Areas To Be Analyzed

The following areas have been tentatively identified for analysis in the PEIS. This list is neither intended to be all inclusive nor is it a predetermination of potential environmental impacts. The list is presented to facilitate comments on the scope of this PEIS. Additions to or deletions from this list may occur as a result of the public scoping process:

- Health and Safety: Potential public and occupational consequences from construction, routine operation, transportation, and credible accident scenarios;
- Waste Management/Pollution Prevention: Types of wastes expected to be generated, handled, and stored; pollution prevention opportunities and the potential consequences to public safety and the environment;
- Hazardous Materials: Handling, storage, and use; both present and future;
- Background Radiation: Cosmic, rock, soil, water, and air and the potential addition of radiation;
- Water Resources: Surface and groundwater hydrology, water use and quality, and the potential for degradation;
- Air Quality: Meteorological conditions, ambient background, sources, and potential for degradation;
- Earth Resources: Physiography, topography, geology, and soil characteristics;
- Land Use: Plans, policies, and controls;
- Noise: Ambient, sources, and sensitive receptors;
- Ecological Resources: Wetlands, aquatic, terrestrial, economically and recreationally important species, and threatened and endangered species;
- Socioeconomic: Demography, economic base, labor pool, housing, transportation, utilities, public services/facilities, education, recreation, and cultural resources;
- Natural Disasters: Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and seismic events;
- Cumulative Effects: Including impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions at and in the vicinity of the sites;
- Unavoidable Adverse Impacts;
- Natural and Depletable Resources: Requirements and conservation potential; and
- Environmental Justice: Any potential disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority and low income populations.

Pending Decisions

This PEIS is only one of many inputs required for a decision to be made relating to the infrastructure to support new nuclear research and development and isotope production missions. Other elements that will provide major inputs into the decision process include:

- DOE's Nuclear Science and Technology Long-Range Research and Development Plan;
- DOE's Nuclear Science and Technology Infrastructure Road Map;
- Nonproliferation Study, a review of potential impacts to the U.S. nonproliferation policy from the

alternatives under consideration in the PEIS;

- Cost Study, a review of costs for the alternatives under consideration in the PEIS; and
- Implementation schedule for the alternatives under consideration in the PEIS.

The primary decision is related to the ability of DOE to support the future missions evaluated in the PEIS. DOE will make a decision whether its infrastructure should be enhanced to support these missions.

- If the decision is for enhancement, then subsequent decisions will be made relating to Alternatives 1, 3, and 4.

► If Alternative 1 (FFTF Restart) is selected for implementation, subsequent decisions will be made relating to the support facilities. The FMEF could support FFTF for all of the missions or existing operational onsite facilities in combination with either the REDC in the Oak Ridge National Laboratory or the FDPF at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory could support FFTF for all the missions.

► If Alternative 3 (New Accelerator(s)) or Alternative 4 (New Research Reactor) is selected, subsequent NEPA review would be required for site selection, construction, and operation of the facility(ies).

- If the decision is not to enhance or expand the infrastructure, then subsequent decisions will be made relating to No Action or Alternative 2 (Use Only Existing Facilities).

► If No Action Scenario 1 is selected, a subsequent decision would be required to determine if Russian plutonium-238 should be purchased to support future NASA space missions.

► If No Action Scenario 2 is selected, a subsequent decision would be required to determine if Russian plutonium-238 should be purchased to support future NASA space missions. In addition, the site for the storage of the neptunium-237 would be selected.

► If Alternative 2 is selected, a series of decisions are required: (1) The selection of neutron accelerator sites to support, to the extent possible, the medical and industrial isotope production and research and development missions; (2) the selection of the reactor option to support the plutonium-238 mission; and (3) the selection of the processing facility site to support the plutonium-238 mission.

DOE, in its Record of Decision (ROD), may elect to implement a combination of the pathways and/or individual elements within the outlined pathways.

Scoping Meetings

The purpose of this Notice is to encourage public involvement in the PEIS process and to solicit public comments on the proposed scope and content of this PEIS. Through this notice, DOE formally invites Federal, state, tribal, and other government agencies, as well as the public to comment on the scope of this PEIS. DOE will hold scoping meetings in Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon, Hood River, Oregon, Richland, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Washington DC. The dates, times, and locations of these meetings are identified under **DATES** above.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the program's objectives, DOE personnel will also be available at the scoping meetings to explain the program to the public and answer any questions. DOE will designate a facilitator for the scoping meetings. At the opening of each meeting, the facilitator will establish the order of speakers and will announce any additional procedures necessary for conducting the meetings. To ensure that all persons wishing to make a presentation are given the opportunity, each speaker may be limited to five minutes except for public officials and representatives of groups, who will each be allotted ten minutes. DOE encourages those providing oral comments to also submit them in writing. Comment cards will also be available for those who prefer to submit their comments in written form. Speakers may be asked clarifying questions, but the scoping meetings will not be conducted as evidentiary hearings.

Toll-free telephone and facsimile (FAX) numbers have been established to receive public comments. Interested parties may call 1–877–562–4593 and leave a detailed message with their comments or FAX their comments to 1–877–562–4592. Comments will also be accepted by electronic mail. Interested parties may e-mail their comments to: Nuclear.Infrastructure-PEIS@hq.doe.gov

DOE will make transcripts of the scoping meetings and project-related materials available for public review in the following reading rooms:

U.S. Department of Energy, Freedom of Information Public Reading Room, Forrestal Building, Room 1E–190, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585, Telephone: (202) 586–3142

Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, DOE—Idaho Operations Office Public Reading Room, 1776 Science Center Drive, Idaho Falls, ID 83415, Telephone: (208) 526–1144

Portland State University, Branford Price Millar Library, Government Documents Section, 951 Southwest Hall, Portland, OR 97207, Telephone: (503) 725–3690

U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge Operations Office, Oak Ridge Public Reading Room, 230 Warehouse Road, Building 1916–T–2, Suite 300, Oak Ridge, TN 37830, Telephone: (423) 241–4780

Richland Public Library, 955 Northgate Drive, Richland, WA 99352, Telephone: (509) 942–7457

U.S. Department of Energy, Richland Operations Office, DOE Public Reading Room, 2770 University Drive CIC, Room 101L, Richland, WA 99352, Telephone: (509) 372–7443

University of Washington, Suzzallo Library, Government Publications Room, Seattle, WA 98195, Telephone: (206) 543–1937

Gonzaga University, Foley Center Library, East 502 Boone, Spokane, WA 99258, Telephone: (509) 323–6532

NEPA Process

The Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Accomplishing Expanded Civilian Nuclear Energy Research and Development and Isotope Production Missions in the United States, Including the Role of the Fast Flux Test Facility will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), and DOE's NEPA Regulations (10 CFR part 1021).

A 45-day comment period on the draft PEIS is planned, and public hearings to receive comments will be held approximately 3 to 4 weeks after distribution of the draft PEIS. The draft PEIS is expected to be issued during the Spring 2000. Availability of the draft PEIS, the dates of the public comment period, and information about the public hearings will be announced in the **Federal Register** and in the local news media when the draft PEIS is distributed.

The final PEIS, which will consider the public comments received on the draft PEIS, is expected to be published during the Fall 2000. No sooner than 30 days after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability of the final PEIS is published in the **Federal Register**, DOE will issue its Record of Decision and publish it in the **Federal Register**.

Signed in Washington, D.C., this 10th day of September 1999.

David Michaels, PhD,

Assistant Secretary, Environment, Safety and Health.

[FR Doc. 99–24086 Filed 9–14–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6450–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Office of Fossil Energy

[FE Docket Nos. 92–109–NG; 99–56–NG; 99–55–NG; 99–57–NG; 93–34–NG; 99–54–NG; 99–59–NG; 99–58–NG; 96–47–NG and 96–48–NG]

Kamine/Besicorp Beaver Falls L.P. et al.; Orders Granting, Amending and Vacating Authorizations to Import and Export Natural Gas

AGENCY: Office of Fossil Energy, DOE.

ACTION: Notice of Orders.

SUMMARY: The Office of Fossil Energy (FE) of the Department of Energy gives notice that it has issued Orders granting, amending and vacating natural gas import and export authorizations. These Orders are summarized in the attached appendix.

These Orders may be found on the FE web site at http://www.fe.doe.gov., or on the electronic bulletin board at (202) 586–7853.

They are also available for inspection and copying in the Office of Natural Gas & Petroleum Import & Export Activities, Docket Room 3E–033, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20585, (202) 586–9478. The Docket Room is open between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Issued in Washington, D.C., on September 8, 1999.

Clifford P. Tomaszewski,

Manager, Natural Gas Regulation, Office of Natural Gas & Petroleum Import & Export Activities, Office of Fossil Energy.

Appendix

ORDERS GRANTING, AMENDING AND VACATING IMPORT/EXPORT AUTHORIZATIONS

DOE/fe authority

Order No.	Date issued	Importer/exporter FE docket No.	Import volume	Export volume	Comments
746–A	8–11–99	Kamine/Besicorp Beaver Falls L.P. 92–109–NG.	.....	.....	Vacating long-term authority.
1504	8–13–99	Barrington Petroleum LTD. 99–56–NG	3.65 Bcf ...	.....	Import from Canada over a two-year term beginning on September 1, 1999, and extending through August 31, 2001.
1505	8–16–99	Sunoma Energy Corp. 99–55–NG	3.65 Bcf ...	.....	Import from Canada over a two-year term beginning on September 1, 1999, and extending through August 31, 2001.
1506	8–17–99	Conoco Inc. 99–57–NG	100 Bcf		Import and export from and to Canada and Mexico up to a combined total beginning on August 27, 1999, and extending through August 26, 2001.
795–A	8–19–99	TransCanada PipeLines Limited 93–34–NG	.....	.....	Amending long-term authorization to increase volumes from 1,405,000 Mcf per day to 1,717,000 Mcf per day for the remaining term through November 1, 2005.
1508	8–27–99	Reliant Energy Services, Inc. 99–54–NG ...	292 Bcf 292Bcf.	292 Bcf 292 Bcf.	Import and export from and to Canada, and import and export from and to Mexico, over a two-year term beginning on the date of first import or export.
1509	8–27–99	El Paso Energy Marketing Company 99–59–NG.	200 Bcf	Import from Mexico over a two-year term beginning on the date of first delivery after August 30, 1999..	
1510	8–27–99	El Paso Energy Marketing Company 99–58–NG.	.....	200 Bcf .... 200 Bcf	Export to Canada and export to Mexico over a two-year term beginning on the date of first delivery after September 30, 1999.
1188–A	8–31–99	Cinergy Marketing & Trading, LLC (Formerly Producers Energy Marketing, LLC) 96–47–NG.	.....	.....	Name change.
1189–A	8–31–99	Cinergy Marketing & Trading, LLC (Formerly Producers Energy Marketing, LLC) 96–48–NG.	.....	.....	Name change.