

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT INTERIM
COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 17, 2006 – 9:00 a.m. – Room W125 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Thomas V. Hatch, Senate Chair
Rep. Roger E. Barrus, House Chair
Rep. Jackie Biskupski
Rep. Craig W. Butters
Rep. Carl W. Duckworth
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Kory M. Holdaway
Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. David Ure
Rep. Richard W. Wheeler
Rep. Mark A. Wheatley

Members Absent:

Sen. Beverly Ann Evans
Sen. Gene Davis
Sen. Parley G. Hellewell
Sen. Michael G. Waddoups
Rep. Margaret Dayton
Rep. Bradley T. Johnson

Staff Present:

Mr. J Brian Allred, Policy Analyst
Ms. Emily Brown, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Joy L. Miller, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Hatch called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. Sen. Hellewell, Sen. Waddoups, Rep. Dayton, and Rep. Johnson were excused from the meeting.

The minutes of the April 19, 2006 meeting were not approved due to lack of a quorum.

2. Briefing on High Level Nuclear Waste Disposal

Ms. Denise Chancellor, Office of the Attorney General, distributed "Private Fuel Storage, LLC." She stated there are 104 nuclear power plants licensed to operate in the U.S. She reviewed PFS's (Private Fuel Storage) proposal to store spent nuclear fuel rods at Skull Valley. PFS has asked the Bureau of Land Management for a right-of-way for 21 acres of land in order to offload the casks from rail cars onto heavy-haul trucks. She reviewed the legal challenges and financial uncertainties associated with the PFS proposal.

Ms. Chancellor explained that Utah's opposition to the proposed facility is based on public policy and safety. Those who benefit from nuclear power must take responsibility for their spent fuel until the federal government disposes of it. She indicated there is no need for away-from reactor storage and pointed out that there are advantages for storing the fuel at reactor sites.

3. Mercury Contamination

Ms. Dianne Nielson, Executive Director, Department of Environmental Quality, distributed a copy of her presentation "Mercury in Utah" and a brochure entitled "Get the Mercury Out." Mercury is a naturally

occurring element and also occurs through manmade sources. She outlined the five basic problems with mercury. The two key forms of mercury are inorganic or organic. Inorganic mercury is a less toxic form which is not absorbed into the system. The organic form is much more toxic and is easily ingested and absorbed. She reviewed the chronic effects mercury can have on someone who has been exposed to it.

Ms. Nielson stated that mercury deposition from air pollution is an increasing concern. She reviewed mercury emissions from power plants and pointed out that Utah's coal-fired power plant produces significantly lower levels of mercury compared to other western states. Ms. Nielson indicated that 46 states have issued mercury fish advisories and reviewed the results of fish tissue sampling in Utah. She discussed Utah's voluntary statewide household mercury collection programs and pointed out that 145 pounds of mercury have been collected as a result of those voluntary programs.

4. Other Items

Rep. Barrus distributed "Nevada Water Issues 2006" to the Committee as an informational item.

The committee cochairs discussed the proposed tour of various farm operations within the state. They indicated they would try to schedule the tour during the first week of September.

5. State Energy Policy - Preliminary Report and Discussion

Rep. Barrus distributed "Enrolled Copy, H.B. 46, Energy Policy Amendments" and "Intent Language for 3rd Sub. H.B. 46."

Dr. Laura Nelson, Energy Policy Advisor, Governor's Office, explained her responsibilities as outlined in H.B. 46 and reviewed activities that are taking place in each area. She said the following six areas of the state's energy resources have been identified as top priority: transmission, energy efficiency, natural gas and oil extraction, coal, renewables, and oil shale and tar sands. H.B. 46 also added the promotion of nuclear power generation. A final report will be provided to the Committee later in the year. Dr. Nelson responded to questions from the Committee.

MOTION: Rep. Gowans moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hatch adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.