



Want to Restore American Nuclear Leadership? Look to Local Communities

**ECA Staff
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In late May, ECA participated in a DOE webinar, “Trump Administration Strategy to Restore American Nuclear Energy Leadership: A DOE and Industry Discussion.” U.S. Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette and Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Rita Baranwal were among speakers addressing the need and strategy for restoring America’s leadership in nuclear energy and technology at home and internationally.

Secretary Brouillette noted in his opening remarks that the U.S. nuclear program is “essential for national security,” a sentiment echoed by John Hamre, President and CEO of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) who asserted, “We cannot support a nuclear navy if we do not have a commercial nuclear industry.” Discussion followed on how to build a robust domestic supply chain, develop competitive financing and replicate the bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress at the state level.

When asked what needs to be done, Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) President and CEO Maria Korsick emphasized the need to support development of small modular reactors (SMRs), advanced reactors and ensure fuel for both the current and future fleet of nuclear reactors. But Clarence “Bud” Albright, President and CEO of the U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure Council, added, “We’ve lost the ball on deployment. We can develop all we want but need to be able to deploy it,” which underscored for ECA the role our communities have played and can play again to support a renewal of the nuclear industry in the U.S.

ECA Communities Taking the Lead on New Nuclear Development Projects

Since the beginning of the Manhattan Project, ECA communities have supported DOE’s federal facilities and the country’s national security mission. The communities around sites such as Hanford, Oak Ridge, Idaho Falls, Los Alamos, and Savannah River, have provided more than a generation of skilled workers, local leadership and cooperation. Through the history of these communities, local leaders understand and can be champions when faced with the challenges (real or perceived) of nuclear expansion: public acceptance, trust in DOE and the nuclear industry, safety and proliferation concerns, comparative energy costs and waste management.

Most importantly, these communities already demonstrate an interest in hosting new energy production and related manufacturing facilities. Many are currently pursuing new nuclear opportunities. For example, in communities around DOE national laboratories:

- Los Alamos County, NM and the City of Idaho Falls are involved with Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) that will own the first NuScale small modular reactor



(SMR). It will be sited at the Idaho National Laboratory and will be operated by Energy Northwest, a company based in Richland, Washington, near the Hanford site.

- Oak Ridge, Roane County, and other communities surrounding the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), will support the laboratory’s partnership with the Tennessee Valley Authority and DOE to improve the economic feasibility of potentially licensing, building, operating and maintaining one or more advanced reactors, including an SMR.
- In Aiken County, SC, and neighboring communities, there is support from the community for the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (a partnership with SRNL, Economic Development Partnership, University of South Carolina - Aiken) that will be a hub for manufacturing, fostering modern industrial practices and advancing new technologies and workforce training.

ECA communities were built alongside the Manhattan Project and there is a sense of pride related to supporting the country’s national security mission. They do not say “not-in-my-backyard;” rather, they ask how to help support research, development and demonstration projects like the Versatile Test Reactor, planned for INL, that will “allow DOE to modernize its essential nuclear energy research and development infrastructure” by testing advanced nuclear fuels, materials, instrumentation, and sensors.

Energy communities are actively coordinating with DOE and industry to ensure their schools, community colleges and universities develop the right programs to attract and train the next generation of nuclear workers. Many of those future workers are likely growing up right now with friends and families employed at the federal facilities that are so integral to the past but also to the future.

As DOE and the nuclear industry work on the strategy to restore American nuclear leadership, they would be wise to reach out and engage again meaningfully with the communities that have long been partners in achieving this mission.

DOE’s Fact Sheet on the Strategy to Restore American Nuclear Energy Leadership can be found [HERE](#). The full report to the President can be found [HERE](#).