format (*e.g.*, Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of the application package in an alternate format, also, by contacting that person. However, the Department is not able to reproduce in an alternate format the standard forms included in the application package.

Electronic Access to This Document

You may view this document, as well as all other Department of Education documents published in the **Federal Register**, in text or portable document format (pdf) on the Internet at either of the following sites:

http;//ocfo.ed.gov/fedreg.hmt
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To use the pdf you must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader Program with Search, which is available free at either of the previous sites. If you have any questions about using the pdf, call the U.S. Government Printing Office at (202) 512–1530, or, toll free at 1–888–293–6498.

Dated: January 22, 1999.

Gerald N. Tirozzi,

Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.

[FR Doc. 99–1866 Filed 1–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for a Transuranic Waste Treatment Facility at Oak Ridge, TN

AGENCY: Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: The U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations on the proposed construction, operation, and decontamination/decommissioning of a Transuranic (TRU) Waste Treatment Facility at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The four types of TRU waste that would be treated at the facility are remote-handled (RH)–TRU waste sludge, low-level radioactive waste supernatant associated with the sludge, contact-handled (CH)–TRU/alpha low-level radioactive waste solids, and RH–TRU/alpha low-level radioactive waste solids. Because much of the waste displays Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) characteristics, the proposed facility would be permitted under RCRA. All the waste DOE proposes to treat currently is stored at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The proposed site for the treatment facility is adjacent to the Melton Valley Storage Tanks, where the waste sludge and supernatant are being stored.

DOE invites the public, organizations, and agencies to present oral or written comments concerning the scope of the EIS, including the issues the EIS should address and the alternatives it would analyze.

DATES: The public scoping period begins on the date of this publication and continues until February 26, 1999. Written comments submitted by mail should be postmarked by the closing date to ensure consideration. Comments mailed after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

DOE will conduct public scoping meetings to assist in defining the appropriate scope of the EIS and to identify significant environmental issues to be addressed. These meetings will be held at the following time(s) and location:

February 11, 1999, American Museum of Science and Energy, 300 South Tulane Avenue, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830; Time: 6:30–9:30 p.m.

February 16, 1999, American Museum of Science and Energy, 300 South Tulane Avenue, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830; Time: 6:30–9:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: Please direct comments or suggestions on the scope of the EIS, requests to speak at the public scoping meetings, requests for special accommodations to enable participation at scoping meetings (e.g., interpreter for the hearing-impaired), and questions concerning the project to: Gary L. Riner, U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge Operations Office, P.O. Box 2001, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, telephone: (423) 241–3498, facsimile: (423) 576–5333, or e-mail rinerg@oro.doe.gov.

For general information on the DOE NEPA process, please contact: Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance, EH–42, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20585–0119, telephone: (202) 586–4600 or leave a message at (800) 472–2756.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Research and development activities supporting national defense and energy initiatives have been performed at ORNL since its construction in eastern Tennessee in 1943, generating radioactive and hazardous waste legacies that now pose environmental concerns. Meeting the cleanup challenges associated with legacy TRU waste is a high priority for the DOE, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), and stakeholders. The TRU waste treatment project at the ORNL will be an important component of DOE cleanup efforts at the site.

TRU waste is radioactive waste that is not classified as high-level radioactive waste and that contains more than 100 nanocuries per gram of alpha-emitting transuranic (atomic numbers greater than 92) isotopes with half-lives greater than 20 years. Alpha low-level radioactive waste contains alpha-emitting transuranic isotopes with half-lives greater than 20 years at concentrations less than 100 nanocuries per gram.

The TRU waste to be treated also contains beta- and gamma-emitting isotopes in addition to alpha-emitting isotopes, which result in its classification as either CH (surface dose rate of 200 mrem/hr or less) or RH (surface dose rate of greater than 200 mrem/hr).

Solid waste at ORNL is a heterogeneous mixture consisting of paper, glass, rubber, cloth, plastic, and metal from glove boxes, fuel processing, hot cells, and reactors. Solid waste is currently packaged in metal boxes, drums and concrete overpacks, and stored in RCRA permitted facilities. Most of the solid waste containers do not meet current Department of Transportation regulations and would require repackaging prior to shipment.

Based on generator records, the solid waste has been classified as either TRU or alpha low-level radioactive waste. However, because the nature of the solid waste can only be confirmed after retrieval and characterization, solid wastes addressed in this Notice of Intent are characterized as ''TRU/alpha low-level radioactive waste'' to note the current uncertainty. The solid waste may contain RCRA characteristic metals, but generator records do not indicate the presence of any RCRA listed constituents. The supernatant, the liquid layer covering the sludge in the tanks, is considered a low-level waste but is not considered hazardous under the RCRA definitions.

Approximately 62 percent of the legacy TRU wastes are currently stored in 50 year-old tanks. The remaining 38 percent of the legacy TRU wastes are currently stored in subsurface trenches, vaults, and metal buildings.

Approximate quantities of the four primary waste streams needing

treatment are: 900 m^3 of RH–TRU sludge, located in the tanks; 1600 m^3 of low-level supernatant, located in tanks; 550 m^3 of RH–TRU waste/alpha low-level radioactive waste solids in vaults and trenches; and 1,000 m^3 of CH–TRU waste/alpha low-level radioactive waste solids in metal buildings.

Purpose and Need for Agency Action

The DOE needs to ensure the safe and efficient retrieval, processing, certification, and disposition of legacy TRU waste at ORNL. There are legal mandates for DOE to address TRU waste management needs. DOE has been directed by the TDEC and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address environmental issues including disposal of its legacy TRU waste. DOE is under a Commissioner's Order issued by the State of Tennessee (September 1995) to implement the Site Treatment Plan, under the Federal Facility Compliance Act, that mandates specific requirements for the processing and disposal of ORNL's TRU waste. The primary milestone in the Commissioner's Order is that DOE begin processing TRU sludge in order to make the first shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) (a DOE transuranic waste disposal facility) in New Mexico by January 2003. In addition, two Records of Decision issued in connection with the Federal Facility Agreement among EPA, TDEC, and DOE, under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, mandate that the waste from the Gunite and Associated Tanks Project (in Bethel Valley) and the Old Hydrofracture Facility Tanks Project (in Melton Valley) be processed and disposed of along with the TRU waste from the Melton Valley Storage Tanks.

Waste retrieval operations are currently underway to prepare ORNL TRU waste storage tanks for closure, and the waste removed from the Bethel Valley tanks will be consolidated in the Melton Valley Storage Tanks before processing. After processing, TRU waste must be certified for shipment to and disposal at WIPP, and any low-level radioactive waste resulting from TRU waste processing must be certified for shipment to and disposal at the DOE site(s) to be selected in a Record of Decision for the Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Treatment, Storage, and Disposal of Radioactive and Hazardous Waste (WM PEIS) (DOE/EIS–0200–F, May 1997). No facilities for processing TRU/alpha low level radioactive waste exist at the Oak Ridge Reservation.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, a waste treatment facility for the ORNL legacy TRU waste would be constructed, operated, and decontaminated/decommissioned under a contract awarded to the Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation. Under the contract, the action would be carried out in four phases: Phase I, Licensing and Permitting (currently in process, includes DOE's NEPA analysis and contractor design activities); Phase II, Construction and Pre-Operational Testing; Phase III, Treatment and Packaging; Phase IV, Decontamination and Decommissioning. If the current NEPA review results in the selection of an alternative other than the proposed action, Phase II (Construction and Pre-Operational Testing) of the contract would not be executed. Waste volume reduction would be a major component of the processing in order to minimize waste generation and costs and to conserve resources. After processing, the waste would be certified for disposal as either low-level radioactive, alpha low-level radioactive, or TRU waste, as discussed above.

All activities associated with the proposed action must be performed safely and in compliance with applicable Federal and state regulatory requirements. Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation would be responsible for achieving compliance with all applicable environmental, safety and health laws and regulations, and regulatory agencies would be responsible for monitoring the Corporation's compliance. The State of Tennessee and EPA would regulate the Corporation according to permits under their purview. DOE would regulate occupational safety and health and nuclear safety according to specific environment, safety and health requirements.

DOE would lease the Melton Valley Storage Tanks, subject to notification of EPA and the State of Tennessee, and an adjacent land area totaling approximately 10 acres to Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation for construction of the facility. The Melton Valley Storage Tanks are separate from ORNL's main plant area. The proposed treatment facility would be fenced, with controlled access to Tennessee State Highway 95.

Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation has proposed a process of evaporating and drying the sludges and supernatant that is flexible enough to address a wide range of waste properties. The low temperature treatment would reduce waste volume, generate additional waste as a result of treatment, and meet specified waste acceptance criteria. To ensure that the waste would meet RCRA Land Disposal Restrictions (LDR) standards, additives that reduce the solubility of the RCRA metals in the waste would be added to form stable compounds. The dried stabilized sludge would pass the Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedures and no longer exhibit a RCRA characteristic. The relatively inexpensive stabilization process could be easily performed during the overall treatment process and would result in waste that meets the LDR treatments standards and could be stored on site, if necessary, pending disposal. The supernatant would be dried for final disposal at an approved DOE low-level radioactive waste disposal site consistent with a WM PEIS Record of Decision yet to be issued for low-level radioactive waste. Segregation of the supernatant from the sludge would result in significant life-cycle cost avoidance when compared to disposal at WIPP.

The proposed action includes no treatment for the bulk of the solid waste that is not regulated under RCRA other than repackaging with some compaction to meet the 50% volume reduction required by the contract. The solid waste would be better characterized during the repackaging effort to achieve final waste form certification before disposal. RCRA characteristic items would be isolated for macroencapsulation or other processing techniques to comply with applicable RCRA LDRs. This would ensure that alpha low-level radioactive waste would meet non-RCRA low-level waste disposal requirements and comply with RCRA LDRs if interim storage is required on site.

Alternatives

DOE will consider alternatives to the proposed action, such as shipment of TRU wastes to other DOE sites for processing, alternative technologies for sludge waste, and no action. Under a shipment alternative, DOE would ship CH-TRU/alpha low-level and RH–TRU/alpha low-level radioactive waste solids to other DOE site(s) for processing. Most of the solid waste containers do not meet current Department of Transportation regulations and would require repackaging prior to shipment. After processing, the waste would be certified for disposal as either low-level radioactive, alpha low-level radioactive, or TRU waste and transported to appropriate disposal facilities. Under a treatment alternative, DOE would process RH–TRU sludge waste and the

low-level radioactive waste supernatant associated with the sludge by using vitrification or grouting technology. This alternative would include no treatment for the bulk of the solid waste that is not regulated under RCRA other than repackaging with some compaction. The solid waste would be better characterized during the repackaging effort to achieve final waste form certification before disposal. RCRA characteristic items would be isolated for macroencapsulation or other processing techniques to comply with applicable RCRA LDRs. This would ensure that alpha low-level radioactive waste would meet non-RCRA low-level waste disposal requirements and comply with RCRA LDRs if interim storage is required on site.

As required by the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), a no action alternative will be evaluated. Under this alternative, DOE would continue to store the TRU waste in tanks, subsurface trenches, vaults, and metal buildings, as discussed in the Background section, above.

Preliminary Environmental Analysis

DOE incorporated environmental information very early in the project planning. Prior to selection of the contractor, DOE held two public meetings with stakeholders, had ongoing discussions with regulators, prepared a characterization report for the site of the proposed action, and sponsored an independent study of treatment technologies and contracting alternatives known as the Parallax study (ORNL/M–4693, Feasibility Study for Processing ORNL TRU Waste in Existing and Modified Facilities, September 15, 1995) (available in the public reading rooms listed below). Bidders were required to submit environmental data, and DOE prepared an environmental critique (under 10 CFR 1021.216) for consideration in the procurement process. A synopsis of this critique has been filed with the EPA and made available to the public.

NEPA Process

The EIS for the proposed project will be prepared according to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the CEQ NEPA regulations, and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR Part 1021).

Through the NEPA process begun with this Notice of Intent, DOE will continue to analyze environmental impacts and evaluate alternative actions while Phase I of the awarded contract is underway. The EIS for the proposed TRU waste treatment will incorporate pertinent analyses performed as part of the DOE's WIPP Disposal Phase Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS–0026–S–2, September, 1997) and the WM PEIS. Processing the ORNL TRU waste in Oak Ridge is consistent with the Records of Decision issued for management of the transuranic waste for the aforementioned Environmental Impact Statements (63 FR 3624 and 3629, respectively, January 23, 1998). The disposal of low-level radioactive waste included in this contract will be consistent with the WM PEIS ROD for low-level waste that is yet to be issued.

The contract allows DOE and Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation to identify during Phase I other potential waste streams for processing at this facility. Any such waste streams would be considered in this EIS and subject to further NEPA review, as appropriate.

Preliminary Identification of EIS Issues

DOE intends to address the following issues when assessing the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives in this EIS. DOE invites comment on these and any other issues that should be addressed in the EIS.

—Potential effects on air, soil, and water quality from normal operations and reasonably foreseeable accidents.
—Potential effects on the public, including minority and low-income populations, and workers from exposure to radiological and hazardous materials from normal operations and reasonably foreseeable accidents.
—Compliance with applicable Federal, state, and local requirements and agreements.
—Pollution prevention, waste minimization, and energy and water use reduction technologies to eliminate or reduce use of energy, water, and hazardous substances and to minimize environmental impacts.
—Potential socioeconomic impacts, including potential impacts associated with the workforce needed for operations.
—Potential cumulative environmental impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future operations, including impacts from using the proposed facility for potential waste streams other than those currently being proposed.
—Potential irreversible and irretrievable commitment or resources.

Related NEPA Reviews

Final Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Treatment, Storage, and Disposal of Radioactive and Hazardous Waste (DOE/EIS–0200–F, May 1997); Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Disposal Phase Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS–0026–S–2, September 1997); and Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS–0290–F, to be issued January 1999).

Scoping Meetings

The purpose of this NOI is to encourage early public involvement in the EIS process and to solicit public comments on the proposed scope of the EIS, including the issues and alternatives it would analyze. DOE plans to hold public scoping meetings in Oak Ridge to solicit both oral and written comments from interested parties. See **DATES** and **ADDRESSES**, above, for the times and locations of these meetings.

DOE will designate a presiding officer for the scoping meetings. The scoping meetings will not be conducted as evidentiary hearings, and there will be no questioning of the commentors.

However, DOE personnel may ask for clarification of statements to ensure that they fully understand the comments and suggestions. The presiding officer will establish the order of speakers. At the opening of each meeting, the presiding officer will announce any additional procedures necessary for the conduct of the meetings. If necessary to ensure that all persons wishing to make a presentation are given the opportunity, a five-minute limit may be applied for each speaker, except for public officials and representatives of groups who would be allotted ten minutes each. Comment cards will also be available for those who would prefer to submit written comments.

DOE will make transcripts of the scoping meetings and other environmental 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 1 E–190, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585, Telephone: (202) 586–3142

U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge Operations Office, 200 Administration Road, Room G–217, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, Telephone: (423) 241–4780.

EIS Schedule

The draft EIS is scheduled to be published by August 1999. A 45-day comment period on the draft EIS is planned, and public hearings to receive comments will be held approximately one month after issuance. Availability of the draft EIS, 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.

The final EIS, which will incorporate public comments received on the draft EIS, is scheduled for January 2000. A Record of Decision would be issued no sooner than 30 days after a notice of availability of the final EIS is published in the **Federal Register**.

Signed in Washington, DC, this 21st day of January 1999.

Peter N. Brush,

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Environment, Safety and Health.

[FR Doc. 99–1856 Filed 1–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6450–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. CP99–156–000]

Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation; Notice of Request Under Blanket Authorization

January 21, 1999.

Take notice that on January 14, 1999, Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation (Columbia), 12801 Fair Lakes Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22030–1046, filed in Docket No. CP99–156–000 a request pursuant to Sections 157.205 and 157.216, of the Commission's Regulations under the Natural Gas Act (18 CFR 157.205, 157.216) for authorization to abandon approximately 0.05 miles of 4- and 8-inch pipeline and a point of delivery under Columbia's blanket certificate issued in Docket No. CP83–76–000 pursuant to Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act, all as more fully set forth in the request that is on file with the Commission and open to public inspection.

Columbia requests authorization to abandon approximately 0.05 miles of 4- and 8-inch pipeline and a point of delivery to Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Inc. (CPA), all located in Elk County, Pennsylvania. Columbia states that the pipeline will be abandoned in place and all above ground facilities will be removed. CPA states that it no longer requires service from this point of delivery.

Any person or the Commission's staff may, within 45 days after issuance of the instant notice by the Commission, file pursuant to Rule 214 of the Commission's Procedural Rules (18 CFR 385.214) a motion to intervene or notice of intervention and pursuant to Section 157.205 of the Regulations under the Natural Gas Act (18 CFR 157.205) a protest to the request. If no protest is filed within the time allowed therefor, the proposed activity shall be deemed to be authorized effective the day after the time allowed for filing a protest. If a protest is filed and not withdrawn within 30 days after the time allowed for filing a protest, the instant request shall be treated as an application for authorization pursuant to Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act.

David P. Boergers,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 99–1819 Filed 1–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6717–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. CP99–155–00]

Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation; Notice of Application

January 21, 1999.

Take notice that on January 13, 1999, Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation (Columbia), filed in Docket No. CP99–155–000 an application pursuant to Section 7(b) of the Natural Gas Act for permission and approval to abandon natural gas service currently provided by Columbia to Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. (O&R) and UGI Corporation (UGI) under its Rate Schedule X–124, and to abandon the operation of two segments of pipeline owned by O&R and UGI, all as more fully set forth in the application on file with the Commission and open to public inspection.

Specifically, Columbia proposes to abandon: (i) the transportation service currently provided under its Rate Schedule X–124 and, (ii) the certificate authority to operate the facilities located in Steuben and Allegany Counties, New York, that were constructed to provide the service proposed to be abandoned. Columbia states that its Rate Schedule X–124 provided for firm transportation service by Columbia to O&R for 4,600 Dth/d and to UGI Utilities, Inc., the successor in interest to UGI, for 22,400 Dth/d. Columbia states that the service, facilities and Columbia's authorization to lease and operate the facilities were approved by the Commission on June 28, 1984 in Docket No. CP83–478. Columbia also states that as it does not own the subject facilities, no facilities will be physically abandoned or removed by Columbia as a result of the proposed abandonment.

Any person desiring to be heard or to make any protest with reference to said application should on or before February 11, 1999, file with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426, a motion to intervene or a protest in accordance with the requirements of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (18 CFR 385.214 or 385.211) and the Regulations under the Natural Gas Act (18 CFR 157.10). All protests filed with the Commission will be considered by it in determining the appropriate action to be taken but will not serve to make the protestants parties to the proceeding. Any person wishing to become a party to a proceeding or to participate as a party in any hearing therein must file a motion to intervene in accordance with the Commission's Rules.

Take further notice that, pursuant to the authority contained in and subject to the jurisdiction conferred upon the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission by Sections 7 and 15 of the Natural Gas Act and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, a hearing will be held without further notice before the Commission or its designee on this application if no motion to intervene is filed within the time required herein, if the Commission on its own review of the matter finds that permission and approval for the proposed abandonment are required by the public convenience and necessity. If a motion for leave to intervene is timely filed, or if the Commission on its own motion believes that a formal hearing is required, further notice of such hearing will be duly given.

Under the procedure herein provided for, unless otherwise advised, it will be unnecessary for Columbia to appear or be represented at the hearing.

David P. Boergers,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 99–1820 Filed 1–26–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6717–01–M