STOP THE DIRTY DOZEN!

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For forty years, the Snake River Alliance has fought against nuclear weapons and power projects, particularly those that would harm Idaho and spread nuclear contamination above the Snake River Aquifer. But we've always been mindful that all nuclear projects pose far-reaching peril. Last summer we waged a successful campaign – *Don't Waste Idaho* – to stop the plan to ship plutonium-laden nuclear weapons waste from Hanford, WA, to the Idaho National Laboratory. Now we're going to *Stop the Dirty Dozen* – a proposal to build a 12-nuclear reactor power plants in eastern Idaho.

Nuclear power costs too much money and takes too much time to be an effective counter to climate change, particularly when matched up against renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

The nuclear industry is dying at an accelerating rate, but the federal government wants to ignore market forces and save it. The Department of Energy (DOE) is pouring money into a slate of last gasp efforts at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL). The early stages of the Dirty Dozen proposal, the twelve nuclear power reactors at INL, have already cost federal taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Dirty Dozen's proposed reactors would be part of the new "small modular" category, all of which are supposed to produce less than 300 megawatts of electricity, though none have ever come on line.

Big Southern Butte, near INL – Idaho
Courtesy of US Department of State

The country's earliest scheduled "small modular" reactor construction comes from the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems, a political subdivision of the State of Utah. The Utah proposal is based on plans to build a dozen "small modular" NuScale-designed reactors totaling 720 megawatts on the federal land at INL.

To be clear, the Dirty Dozen nuclear power plant is not small! At 720 MW, it would be the largest power plant in Idaho and would produce more electricity annually than the entire Hells Canyon complex (the dams at Hells Canyon, Oxbow, and Brownlee combined).

The whole array is scheduled to be on line by 2027. But that won't happen without billions more in direct payments and subsidies. The Utah group expects taxpayers to cover at least 50% of the construction costs, now pegged at $4.2 billion.

But even with taxpayer funding for construction, the electricity from these reactors is too expensive, compared with solar and wind. The Utah group has only been able to convince its own member utilities to sign up for 124 MW of the expensive nuclear electricity, meaning the electricity from only two of the 12 planned modules. As a result, the federal government plans to buy the remaining power – with our taxpayer money.

Currently federal agencies are only allowed to sign 10-year contracts for power. Now, as the costs of renewable power and battery storage continue to fall, Congress wants to abandon that rule. Federal agencies might have to sign contracts that lock them into paying the Utah group inflated nuclear costs for the next 40 years. The group is already eyeing 11 DOE and Department of Defense sites in the west. Who pays the Pentagon's power bill? We do.

Here's how the nuclear power bailout would play out in Idaho. INL has already put dibs on two of the new nuclear modules, which together would produce 120 MW – more than four times as much electricity as INL uses in an average year. One module would be for research and the other for electricity. The power that could be generated by the Dirty Dozen reactors will cost more than INL currently pays. What will INL be doing with our money?

Courtesy of Zable, Dunston & Civil – "the Nuclear Posters"

It's not just money. There are steep environmental costs as well. The Dirty Dozen nuclear reactors would use 40% more enriched uranium fuel than regular reactors to produce a megawatt of electricity. That means the reactors would produce more intensely radioactive spent fuel for which there is no final repository. And the waste would stay in Idaho!

Finally, nuclear power is a water hog. It uses more water than any other electricity source. The proposed reactors might consume as much as 21,000 acre feet of water every year. In response to concerns about the massive water consumption, the Utah group is now switching gears and saying it might go to "dry cooling" and cut its use to 2,000 acre feet per year. No domestic nuclear power reactor uses dry cooling technology. It adds to nuclear power's risks, inefficiency, and expense.

With your help, the Snake River Alliance will Stop the Dirty Dozen!