

Letter: Protect Idaho from nuke waste

By Beatrice Brailsford

The federal government plans to bring 7,000 cubic meters of plutonium waste from the shut-down nuclear bomb plant at Hanford, Wash., to the Idaho National Laboratory.

That would violate the 1995 Nuclear Settlement Agreement with the federal government — a hard-won agreement which protects Idaho from nuclear waste. Two Idaho governors, with popular support, pursued the agreement because of Idaho's long, frustrating history of seeing nuclear waste shipped to INL and never leaving. That frustration led to a key provision of the 1995 agreement: nuclear waste can come to Idaho for treatment, but it has to be shipped out within one year.

The importance of our protections from nuclear waste cannot be overstated. The INL sits above the Snake River Aquifer, Idaho's lifeblood. The aquifer is the sole source of drinking water for 300,000 people and supports vital industries, including the robust agricultural hub in the Magic Valley.

Activities at INL have already contaminated the aquifer. The federal government estimates the program to address current environmental damage will continue until 2060. Despite the billions that will be spent, nuclear contamination will remain in our soil and groundwater until the end of time.

There are future threats at the INL as well. An out-of-state company wants to build 12 nuclear reactors there. Nearly all the electricity would leave Idaho. The reactors would consume 18,000 acre-feet of our water every year and produce nuclear waste that would be stored above the Snake River Plain aquifer for decades at least.

Idahoans have united to protect ourselves from nuclear harm. Our new governor must continue this work. And every Idahoan must tell their local and state officials to protect Idaho from nuclear danger.

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Snake River Alliance