

The following comments (designed to meet the PCAP's strict three-minute time limit) were made verbally by Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste specialist at Beyond Nuclear, and board of directors member, Don't Waste Michigan, at the April 13, 2022 Palisades [Decommissioning] Community Advisory Panel, held at Lake Michigan College in South Haven, MI:

I would like to say a word about radioactive stigma effect, which I raised at the last meeting as well. Radioactive stigma effect is the negative impact on real estate property values, and other economic sectors, associated with nuclear risks. This includes local real estate property values, the tourism and recreation industries, agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

Radioactive stigma will result from the significant amounts of lingering hazardous radioactive contamination Holtec intends to leave behind, in soil, groundwater, and Lake Michigan sediments, with a wink and a nod from NRC.

Yet more radioactive stigma will result from Holtec dumping radioactive water from the indoor wet storage pool into Lake Michigan, as well as other radioactive wastewater streams during decommissioning. More stigma will result due to high-risk barge shipments of radioactive waste on Lake Michigan, including intensely contaminated steam generators, as well as hundreds of casks of highly radioactive irradiated nuclear fuel.

Another radioactive stigma has to do with reactor pressure vessels. Holtec is already in possession of the third worst embrittled reactor pressure vessel in the country, the closed Indian Point 3 in NY. If Holtec gets its way, it will also soon be in possession of the single worst embrittled reactor pressure vessel in the country, Palisades. Despite this, Holtec — as well as Entergy, and even NRC — are displaying a curious incuriosity about the actual physical status of these dangerously embrittled reactor pressure vessels, and even of some remaining metallic coupons or capsules which were intended to be tested for embrittlement, and yet never have been, and likely never will be. The plan is simply to bury all of this as waste, in leaking so-called “low-level” nuke dumps, such as Waste Control Specialists in Texas, above the Ogallala Aquifer, surrounded by majority Latin American communities. All the embrittlement data would be wasted, lost, literally covered up.

This would be a mistake. Because after IP3, and the Palisades shut down, the worst embrittled RPV in the US will be Point Beach Unit 2, on Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shore. Rather than shutting down after 50 years of operations like Palisades and IP3, however, Point Beach 2 plans to operate for another three decades, out to 80 years. This will really test NRC's and industry's false confidence about RPV embrittlement risks.

A meltdown at Point Beach would represent a radioactive stigma impact of catastrophic proportions. Imagine the economic impact on all economic sectors in southwest Michigan, to be downwind and downstream of a catastrophic reactor meltdown across the Lake. One that could have been prevented, if only Holtec, Entergy, NRC, and the nuclear industry writ large, had performed basic scientific and engineering due diligence, to test their overly optimistic computer models and hypothesis against the real world physical data, and apply lessons learned at Point Beach.

In Japan, when the worst embrittled reactor, Genkai 1, was actually physically tested post-Fukushima for embrittlement, it was discovered that the computer models were overly optimistic. Embrittlement was much worse than the hypotheses had predicted. The reactor was quickly shut down for good.