

Ongoing leaks of radioactive water at Indian Point are urgent priority for 2007

It is well documented that Indian Point has been leaking radioactive water from multiple sources, which has created several lakes, or plumes, of contaminated groundwater under the plant, one under the transformer yard and from the Unit 1 & 2 reactors. Hydrologists and spent-fuel experts are trying to locate origin of large amounts of Tritium and Strontium-90, which is present in excess of drinking water standards.

Leaking of radioactive water at the plant has been known since the 1980's, but intensified monitoring at 54 test wells was initiated after a contract worker accidentally discovered an additional leak. The extent of leaking has been found in increasing amounts since 2005, without pinpointing all the sources. A third leak from under Unit 3 was recently added to the list.

Currently plant owner, Entergy, is actively discharging more than 20 million gallons of radioactive water per year into the Hudson, while tens of thousands of gallons are leaking from underground sources. In order to protect nearby groundwater supplies, Entergy is planning to pump and dilute additional radioactive material from under the plant into the river. While these leaks and discharges would not be allowed under NY SPDES regulations, because Nuclear Regulatory Agency's jurisdiction supercedes State law, a legal loophole to prevent this contamination has been created. Clearwater and others may soon seek injunctive relief to remedy this deficiency.

Tritium (H_3O) is a radioactive isotope, which cannot be filtered out of water; the only treatment for tritiated water is electrolysis, which is very costly. Other radionuclides from the spent-fuel pools, such as the heavier isotopes of Strontium-90 and Cesium 137, are even more highly toxic to human health and the environment.

Independent Safety Assessment: Because Indian Point Reactors 2 & 3 are due for relicensing in 2013 and 2015 (an application may be submitted as soon as April of 2007), Congressional representatives John Hall, Nita Lowey, Eliot Engel, and Maurice Hinchey, have sponsored a bill calling for an in-depth independent safety assessment (ISA) of the plant. Such an assessment would be a top to bottom review to determine the extent of danger to the public from radiated leaks, failures of the plants' emergency siren system, and other deficiencies that affect public safety.

On March 2, Clearwater, Riverkeeper and the organizations in the Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition (IPSEC) hosted a roundtable, bringing together elected officials, the public and the media with hydrogeologists, ecologists and public health experts to evaluate the impacts of the leaks, followed by a roundtable discussion to promote the ISA and to get at an acceptable course of action for this unacceptable problem. On April 12, there was a second roundtable on Bringing Sustainable Energy into the Hudson Valley. Please check the Clearwater website www.clearwater.org/news/indianpoint2007.html the IPSEC website at www.ipsecinfo.org or the Riverkeeper website at www.riverkeeper.org or call Katy Dunlap at 845-454-7673 x116 for further information.