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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 194

[FRL-7142-2]

RIN 2060-AG85

Waste Characterization Program Documents Applicable to Transuranic Radioactive Waste From Los Alamos National Laboratories for Disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency.

ACTION: Notice of availability; opening of public comment period.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the availability of, and soliciting public comments for 30 days on, Department of Energy (DOE) documents applicable to characterization of transuranic (TRU) radioactive waste at Los Alamos National Laboratories (LANL) proposed for disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The documents (Item II-A2-37, Docket A-98-49) are available for review in the public dockets listed in **ADDRESSES**. EPA will conduct an inspection of waste characterization systems and processes for waste characterization at LANL to verify that the site can characterize transuranic waste in accordance with EPA's WIPP compliance criteria. EPA will perform this inspection the week of February 25, 2002. This notice of the inspection and comment period accords with 40 CFR 194.8.

DATES: EPA is requesting public comment on the documents. Comments must be received by EPA's official Air Docket on or before March 15, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted to: Docket No. A-98-49, Air Docket, Room M-1500, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Mail Code 6102, Washington, DC 20460. The DOE documents are available for review in the official EPA Air Docket in Washington, DC, Docket No. A-98-49, Category II-A2, and at the following three EPA WIPP informational docket locations in New Mexico: in Carlsbad at the Municipal Library, Hours: Monday-Thursday, 10am-9pm, Friday-Saturday, 10am-6pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm; in Albuquerque at the Government Publications Department, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Hours: vary by semester; and in Santa

Fe at the New Mexico State Library, Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

As provided in EPA's regulations at 40 CFR part 2, and in accordance with normal EPA docket procedures, if copies of any docket materials are requested, a reasonable fee may be charged for photocopying. Air Docket A-98-49 in Washington, DC, accepts comments sent electronically or by fax (fax: 202-260-4400; e-mail: *a-and-r-docket@epa.gov*).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ed Feltcorn, Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, (202) 564-9422. You can also call EPA's toll-free WIPP Information Line, 1-800-331-WIPP or visit our website at <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/wipp>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

DOE is developing the WIPP near Carlsbad in southeastern New Mexico as a deep geologic repository for disposal of TRU radioactive waste. As defined by the WIPP Land Withdrawal Act (LWA) of 1992 (Pub. L. No. 102-579), as amended (Pub. L. No. 104-201), TRU waste consists of materials containing elements having atomic numbers greater than 92 (with half-lives greater than twenty years), in concentrations greater than 100 nanocuries of alpha-emitting TRU isotopes per gram of waste. Much of the existing TRU waste consists of items contaminated during the production of nuclear weapons, such as rags, equipment, tools, and sludges.

On May 13, 1998, EPA announced its final compliance certification decision to the Secretary of Energy (published May 18, 1998, 63 FR 27354). This decision stated that the WIPP will comply with EPA's radioactive waste disposal regulations at 40 CFR part 191, Subparts B and C.

The final WIPP certification decision includes conditions that (1) prohibit shipment of TRU waste for disposal at WIPP from any site other than the Los Alamos National Laboratories (LANL) until the EPA determines that the site has established and executed a quality assurance program, in accordance with §§ 194.22(a)(2)(i), 194.24(c)(3), and 194.24(c)(5) for waste characterization activities and assumptions (Condition 2 of Appendix A to 40 CFR part 194); and (2) (with the exception of specific, limited waste streams and equipment at LANL) prohibit shipment of TRU waste for disposal at WIPP (from LANL or any other site) until EPA has approved the procedures developed to comply with the waste characterization requirements of § 194.22(c)(4) (Condition 3 of Appendix A to 40 CFR part 194). The EPA's approval process for waste

generator sites is described in § 194.8. As part of EPA's decision-making process, the DOE is required to submit to EPA appropriate documentation of quality assurance and waste characterization programs at each DOE waste generator site seeking approval for shipment of TRU radioactive waste to WIPP. In accordance with § 194.8, EPA will place such documentation in the official Air Docket in Washington, DC, and informational dockets in the State of New Mexico for public review and comment.

EPA will perform an inspection of LANL's waste characterization systems and processes for TRU waste in accordance with Conditions 2 and 3 of the WIPP certification. More specifically, we will be focusing on the performance of a variety of new equipment (neutron, gamma, and other NDA-related systems) as well as their acceptable knowledge (AK) and WIPP Waste Information System (WWIS) interface used to characterize TRU waste. The inspection is scheduled to take place the week of February 25, 2002.

EPA has placed a number of documents pertinent to the inspection in the public docket described in **ADDRESSES**. The documents are listed as Item II-A2-37 in Docket A-98-49. In accordance with 40 CFR 194.8, as amended by the final certification decision, EPA is providing the public 30 days to comment on these documents.

If EPA determines as a result of the inspection that the proposed processes, systems, and equipment at LANL adequately control the characterization of transuranic waste, we will notify DOE by letter and place the letter in the official Air Docket in Washington, DC, as well as in the informational docket locations in New Mexico. A letter of approval will allow DOE to ship TRU waste to WIPP using the approved characterization processes. The EPA will not make a determination of compliance prior to the inspection or before the 30-day comment period has closed.

Information on the certification decision is filed in the official EPA Air Docket, Docket No. A-93-02 and is available for review in Washington, DC, and at three EPA WIPP informational docket locations in New Mexico. The dockets in New Mexico contain only major items from the official Air Docket in Washington, DC, plus those documents added to the official Air Docket since the October 1992 enactment of the WIPP LWA.

Dated: February 6, 2002.

Robert Brenner,

Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 011218304-1304-01; I.D. 020802A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Offshore Component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season amount of the Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 9, 2002, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2002 A season Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,011 metric tons (mt) as established by an emergency interim rule implementing 2002 harvest specifications and associated management measures for the groundfish fisheries off Alaska (67 FR 956, January 8, 2002).

In accordance with § 679.20 (d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the A season amount of the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(11)(iii), Pacific cod bycatch taken between the closure of the A season and opening of the B season shall be deducted from the B season TAC apportionment. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,011 mt. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in

the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds that the need to immediately implement this action to prevent exceeding the amount of the 2002 A season Pacific cod TAC specified for the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA constitutes good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553 (b)(3)(B) and 50 CFR 679.20 (b)(3)(iii)(A), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Similarly, the need to implement these measures in a timely fashion to prevent exceeding the 2002 A season Pacific cod TAC specified for the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA constitutes good cause to find that the effective date of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 8, 2002.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 02-3521 Filed 2-8-02; 4:03 pm]

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