

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Mercury Management

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for major federal actions that could have significant impacts on the environment.

The Mercury Management Environmental Impact Statement

The Defense National Stockpile Center (DNSC) is preparing a Mercury Management Environmental Impact Statement (MM EIS) to analyze a range of reasonable alternatives for the long-term management of DNSC's inventory of excess elemental mercury and to consider potential impacts of these alternatives. DNSC is committed to involving all stakeholders, including appropriate regulatory agencies, in the decision-making process.

DNSC maintains a stockpile of 56 strategic and critical commodities for use in times of national emergency, including 4,436 metric tons of mercury currently stored at four locations. The storage locations are DNSC depots in Hillsborough, NJ; New Haven, IN; and Warren, OH; and a Department of Energy Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, TN. The mercury stockpile has been deemed excess to national needs. This excess mercury was offered for sale in the open market until 1994 when concerns over mercury accumulation in the global environment prompted DNSC to suspend sales.

The Proposed Action

DNSC must identify and implement an alternative for the long-term management of excess mercury that is protective of the health of the public and workers, environmentally sound, and cost-effective. The Draft MM EIS evaluates the potential environmental and human health impacts of three alternatives for long-term mercury management. The three alternatives considered are:

- Long term consolidated mercury storage at one site
- Mercury sales
- No action, i.e., maintaining storage at existing sites

Preferred Alternative

At this time, DNSC's Preferred Alternative is consolidated storage at one site. Based on a combination of environmental, economic and technical factors, policy considerations, and public comment, DNSC's Preferred Alternative for mercury management is long-term, consolidated storage at one site. The term, 'Preferred Alternative' means that, at this time, DNSC believes that storing the mercury at one site is the best way to meet its objectives. Managing the mercury at one site would simplify mercury storage operations and reduce costs. No final decision will be made until after the public has commented on the Draft MM EIS and comments have been addressed in the Final MM EIS.

The MM EIS Process

DNSC began the EIS process by publishing a **Notice of Intent (NOI)** in the *Federal Register* on February 5, 2001, to let the public know that it was considering an action. The NOI described

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the proposed action, provided background information on anticipated issues and potential impacts, and identified a preliminary list of alternatives to the proposed action.

The **scoping** process began after the NOI was published. During the scoping period, DNSC welcomed comments from the public on the alternatives, issues, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIS. The scoping period, which included public meetings in communities near DNSC's current mercury storage sites, ended June 30, 2001.

Preparation of the **Draft MM EIS** was the next step in the process. The Draft

MM EIS presents, analyzes, and compares the potential environmental impacts of the various alternatives for mercury management, and provides additional information on the methodologies and assumptions used for the analyses. A Notice of Availability is announced when the Draft MM EIS is available for public review, with the dates of the 90-day comment period.

Next, a **Final EIS**, which will include any new technical data and studies, will be published. Responses to all public comments received will be included in this document.

After the Final EIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period is required before a decision can be made and recorded in a **Record of Decision (ROD)**. The ROD will notify the public of DNSC's decision and the reasons for that decision. No action can be taken until the decision has been made public and the ROD is published in the *Federal Register*. The ROD is part of a decision making process that may include consideration of factors such as cost, technical feasibility, agencies' statutory missions, and national objectives.

NEPA PROCESS

