

## Subcommittee Debates Ways to Secure HLW Final Disposal Site

On September 16, discussions were made on how to secure a final disposal site for high-level radioactive waste (HLW) at the third meeting of the working committee on radioactive waste of the Nuclear Power Subcommittee of the Electric Utility Industry Subcommittee, under the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy. President Kenji Fushimi of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization of Japan (NUMO) first presented a report about the current status of the acquisition of candidate disposal sites, after which committee members broached such matters as the relationship of site recruitment to local revitalization measures, subsidies during the investigatory stage, and public-relation (PR) efforts.

At the meeting, the representatives of the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy (ANRE) explained the current system of subsidies, which sets a limit of ¥210 million (\$1.9 million at \$1.00=¥112.5) per fiscal year during the document investigation stage and ¥2 billion (\$18 million) per year during the general investigation stage. It also outlined the steps being taken to enhance local support measures, beginning with ANRE's request for the general budget in the upcoming fiscal year, as well as its plan to carry out more intensive PR activities starting in early 2006.

NUMO's Fushimi stated that five municipalities have already expressed interest in becoming candidates for the HLW final disposal site: Izumi Village (Fukui Pref.), Saga Town (Kochi Pref.), Goshoura Town (Kumamoto Pref.), Kasasa Town (Kagoshima Pref.), and Shin-Kamigoto Town (Nagasaki Pref.). He also gave concrete examples of the model plan for coexistence with local communities. Fushimi also said that several of the municipalities continued to be the subject of consideration as candidate sites.

The committee members then spoke up, offering their opinions. One person said, "While the system of subsidies seems to be patterned after that for nuclear power plants (NPPs), the difference in nature between the HLW final disposal site and NPPs means that an independent system of subsidies ought to be developed." Another member stated, "It is necessary to develop the mentality that subsidies are a reward and form of appreciation from all the users of electricity nationwide," while another person said, "The electric power utilities are helping to support PR activities, but we should also think about what else can be done."

Members also referred to the issue of containing false rumors. One person declared, "It is important to devise measures to deal with the damage caused by false rumors. If priority is given instead to subsidies, an ineffective discussion will result. First of all, it is important to explain how the site is appropriate for final disposal, listening to the opinions of the local people, and to consider ways in which the site can coexist with the local community. If the facility is regarded as a menace, no progress can be made." Similarly, another member said, "We must develop responses to the damage caused by false rumors. Incentives are needed, given that part of the operation is yet unknown, and that it will last an exceedingly long time."

The members agreed at the meeting on proposals to revise the final disposal plan and to review the final disposal expenses and the unit value of subsidies. By the end of the year, an additional report will be released on the securing of a HLW final disposal site, at which time the subcommittee members intend to delve into the matter more deeply.

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