

Idaho and Trump Administration sign agreement to support U.S. nuclear energy future

Tuesday April 29, 2025

(IDAHO FALLS, Idaho) — The State of Idaho and the U.S. Department of Energy have agreed to a targeted waiver of the 1995 Settlement Agreement. The agreement established milestones to remove legacy waste at the Idaho National Laboratory site while allowing nuclear energy research and development at the lab.

The waiver will enable critical research on a high burnup nuclear fuel cask from a commercial nuclear power plant. This research will provide data to support licensing for the extended storage of spent fuel at 54 nuclear power plants in 28 states.

"The collaborative effort between the State of Idaho, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the Idaho National Laboratory showcases our commitment to advancing nuclear energy research while upholding the goals of the 1995 Settlement Agreement. We are proud to support innovation in nuclear energy that will support national security and energy independence into the future," Governor Brad Little said.

"Idaho National Laboratory is DOE's lead lab for nuclear energy research and development, and it is critical that we continue to grow this research capacity and maintain American competitiveness," U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright said. "This agreement between the State of Idaho and DOE ensures the lab can continue its cutting-edge research to advance nuclear technology, helping to meet President Trump's commitment to unleash American energy dominance."

"As the nation's center for nuclear energy research and development, we look forward to utilizing our unique facilities and expertise to support this critical national need. We are thankful to the Department of Energy and the state of Idaho for entrusting us with the safe and secure execution of our vital mission," INL Director John Wagner said.

"This agreement protects Idaho's interests and supports important research that will strengthen America's energy security. We're grateful for the Trump Administration's work with Idaho to honor the 1995 Settlement Agreement and advance innovation safely and responsibly. Idaho will always protect our land, our people, and our future," Attorney General Raul Labrador said.

"Thanks to the state of Idaho's foresight, INL will continue to uphold and expand its legacy as the nation's premier nuclear energy research, development and demonstration laboratory," DOE-Idaho Operations Manager Robert Boston said.

Modern commercial nuclear fuels are more efficient, lowering costs for utilities and their customers. To ensure continued safe storage, the nuclear industry and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission require data to confirm the performance of nuclear fuel during long-term storage. These data are crucial to over 70% of today's dry storage facilities, allowing them to renew their licenses and continue safely storing this nuclear fuel.

The waiver enables INL to address a national need not envisioned when the Settlement Agreement was established three decades ago while supporting the national commitment to energy independence. This research will help sustain the current U.S. nuclear reactor fleet, which produces nearly 20% of the nation's electricity, and reinforces Idaho's critical role in supporting the U.S. nuclear industry.

The waiver also supports research reactors at American universities, which play an essential role in educating the next generation of nuclear scientists and engineers while enabling vital nuclear research. This waiver permits INL to safely manage small amounts of spent nuclear fuel from domestic university reactors, preserving this crucial national research and talent pipeline. Without this waiver, some universities risk having to shut down their research reactors due to regulatory limits on spent fuel storage.

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