

The New York Times

Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

AUGUST 13, 2010, 8:33 AM

Address Mistrust, Scientists Urge Nuclear Panel

By [LESLIE KAUFMAN](#)

Across the globe, nuclear power is experiencing a bit of a renaissance.

Despite enormous financial challenges and some fears lingering since the accident at the Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania in 1979, a few new reactors are in the pipeline in the United States, too. Meanwhile, 60,000 tons of radioactive waste are being stored at or near nuclear plants that churned it out, and successive administrations have planned but failed to build a safe storage site at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Making good on a campaign pledge, President Obama canceled plans for the Yucca Mountain repository altogether. Instead he appointed a 15-member blue-ribbon panel of experts to offer new recommendations for the safe storage of nuclear waste.

His administration has also made commitments for \$8.6 billion in loan guarantees to two new plants in Georgia and made a budget request for 2011 for tens of billions more. But if President Obama is seeking to promote nuclear energy and find a new waste strategy, the waste panel needs to focus on the issue of public mistrust as well as technological solutions, some scientists argue in an article in the journal *Science*.

“While scientific and technical analyses are essential, they will not and arguably should not carry the day unless they address, substantively and procedurally, the issues that concern the public,” the authors write in a policy paper in Friday’s issue.

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