

■ SPENT-FUEL PLANT

# Hobbs approves alliance

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NEWS-SUN

The process to bring a spent-fuel plant to the area gained some legitimacy on Friday when the Hobbs City Commission approved the formation of a limited liability corporation to apply for the project.

The City Commission's action comes after the Lea County Commission and the City of Carlsbad approved the LLC, with Eddy County expected to approve it Tuesday. All four of the Hobbs commissioners present on Friday morning voted to approve the measure. Those present included Robert Wallach, Gary Fonay, Joe Calderon and John Boyd.

There was no discussion prior to the vote.

Harry Teague, Lea County Commission chairman, said the formation of an LLC is necessary because there has to be a legal entity to accept and spend funds from the federal government.

"This is the only thing that gives all the entities the protection that they need," Teague said.

The Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance LLC might be one of four sites to receive \$5 million each from the U.S. Department of Energy to conduct an environmental impact study. At least one of the sites would then be chosen as the site of the spent-fuel recycling plant that would employ 3,000-5,000 people. Six sites have submitted expressions of interest in the project.

It was necessary for the cities of Hobbs and Carlsbad to approve the LLC's formation, Teague said, because it shows a commitment from the largest communities in the counties as well as from the counties themselves.

The size of the project and its budget requires broader support than just the two counties, he added.

The \$50 million search for a recycling plant is an initiative under President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership to

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develop nuclear energy and encourage U.S. energy independence.

By next week the Eddy-Lea alliance plans to select one of two sites about halfway between Hobbs and Carlsbad as the site for the environmental impact study. The alliance has to respond to a request for proposals from the DOE by Sept. 7.

The alliance has hired a

woman to write the proposal who specializes in responding to requests from the DOE.

Spent-fuel recycling plants are located in other countries, but none exist in the United States. The recycling process, also known as nuclear reprocessing, separates the usable elements in spent nuclear fuel rods from the waste elements. Fuel rods are used by nuclear power plants to produce electricity.

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