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CLEAN WATER. HEALTHY RIVERS.

March 5, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Re: Oppose SB 215 and SB 216

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock Smith and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Kelly Campbell and I am the Policy Director for Columbia Riverkeeper and my testimony today will focus on the problem of nuclear waste.

Columbia Riverkeeper is a 25 year old organization with a mission to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River from the headwaters to the ocean and all life connected to it. We represent more than 25,000 members and supporters in Oregon.

Columbia Riverkeeper was founded on concerns around the Hanford nuclear cleanup site on the banks of the Columbia River, the largest, most toxic and radioactive nuclear cleanup site in the Western Hemisphere. While some treat Hanford as a sacrifice zone, we view Hanford as a place that matters and advocate for thorough Hanford cleanup. For years we have been looking into the various schemes to build Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMNRs) at Hanford[1]. We believe the focus should be on cleanup, not adding more sources of nuclear waste near the Columbia River, on the Washington side or the Oregon side.

SB 215 and SB 216 and the other pro-nuclear bills introduced in the Oregon legislature this session allow an opportunity to take a deeper look at the claims of nuclear advocates and see how they measure up to scrutiny.

Since the dawn of nuclear technologies, we have faced the challenge of what to do with nuclear waste. This problem has not been resolved. We still have no permanent federal waste repository, and we are no closer to having one than we were in 1980 when voters passed measure 7 which requires a federal waste repository and another vote of the people of the

[1] https://www.columbiariverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2021.9.14-FINAL-SMR-Report.pdf

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state before any new nuclear power reactors can be sited. Nuclear reactors, including SMNRs, produce **radioactive waste that must be isolated from people and the environment for hundreds of thousands of years[2]. Just let that sink in.**

You heard today from nuclear proponents that nuclear waste can be "recycled" or "reprocessed" but this is misleading[3]. Reprocessing is costly, polluting, and produces high level waste streams that make interim and long-term storage even more difficult. It also poses a significant nuclear weapons proliferation risk.

You will hear that small modular nuclear reactors make less waste, but this is not the case. In fact, a Stanford study found that SMNR waste is 2-30 times the waste of the current reactors.[4] Building new nuclear reactors means saddling generations to come with radioactive waste that we had the short-sightedness to produce.

Because there is no national waste repository, any community that hosts an SMNR will become, in effect, a long-term nuclear waste disposal site. You will hear nuclear advocates say that the dry cask storage is safe. Dry-casks are not intended to be a permanent form of storage, just a temporary system before the waste is sent to a repository. They are licensed for 40 years, and are only expected to last for up to 100 years. **And remember, we are talking about waste that will remain dangerous for tens of thousands of years.**

The other possibility for the waste, is the new so-called "consent based siting" project to find communities that will accept "interim" waste to be stored in their communities, in exchange for financial incentives.[5] Think about this for a minute. What community would actively seek to host nuclear waste? This is a blatant attempt to do what has always been done with hazardous substances: create a sacrifice zone of low income people where waste will be sited. We should not be putting any communities in this position.

Nuclear advocates love to talk about it as "clean" energy. But in order to buy into this fantasy, you have to have blinders firmly in place. Let's pull off the blinders and take a hard look at this supposedly "clean" form of energy. Our journey starts in the uranium mines, almost always on indigenous land, through the dirty milling process, a greenhouse gas intensive building process,

[2] https://www.gao.gov/nuclear-waste-disposal
[3] https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/reprocessing-nuclear-waste
[4] https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2022/05/small-modular-reactors-produce-high-levels-nuclear-waste
[5] https://www.energy.gov/ne/consent-based-siting-consortia

and ending up with radioactive, toxic waste that will be around for many generations[6]. It may not emit a lot of greenhouse gasses, but there is nothing clean about nuclear power.

Finally, I want to emphasize that for all the talk of small modular nuclear reactors, not a single one has been built in the US. In fact, world wide, there are only a couple: one in Russia and one or two in China, and these are all underperforming.

So don't fall for the false solution of nuclear power, a dirty form of energy that creates nuclear waste that will be with us for countless generations. We have better options. Please do not advance SB 215 or SB 216.

Sincerely,

Kelly Campbell, Policy Director

[6] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3222290/