

Daily Herald

## Build nuke plant in Emery County

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Water is vital in a dry climate. Jobs are important in a recession. Energy is important in a modern economy.

Plans to build a nuclear power plant in Green River bring all these factors into sharp relief. The Utah Division of Water Rights recently held hearings on a proposal by Utah-based Blue Castle Holdings to use some of the river's water for the plant. The company says the facility would use about 53,000 acre feet of water annually -- a tad more than 1 percent of the 4.3 million acre-feet per year that flows past the city.

Blue Castle also notes that it's leasing the water from two water conservancy districts, which have long held the rights.

Environmentalists charge that 1 percent is too much to draw from the river, especially in arid Emery County, where water availability is always a concern.

But then, making a living is a concern too. Blue Castle says that building the plant will employ at least a couple of thousand workers for up to seven years. Once up and running, the plant will employ more than a thousand, with average wages said to be about \$85,000 a year.

We'll hazard a guess that right now there are a lot of Utahns who'd like to get jobs like that. And we'd guess there are business people in the region who'd like their business -- not to mention cities, school districts and other community enterprises that could use an influx of people and cash.

The plant would supply electricity that Utah families and businesses will need in the future. Environmentalists talk about getting more people to use electric or hybrid cars. Well, you've got to recharge the batteries somewhere. Some estimates indicate that the West's electric capacity could be maxed out before this decade is over, so more power is needed. The only question is where it will come from.

The nation needs more clean nuclear power. A nuclear plant doesn't emit pollution into the atmosphere nor consume huge amounts of minerals as a coal plant does. It doesn't cover huge swaths of ground, as solar or wind farms do. Aside from misplaced phobias, nuclear power is the greenest, cheapest, most abundant energy source available to mankind that can also service the need.

Will other sources ride to the rescue anytime soon to satisfy the nation's appetite for power? No. Alternatives simply do not generate enough juice.

And then there's the politics. Solar power is a favorite of some environmentalists, but others want to block a massive solar project in California's Mojave Desert.

Wind power is another possibility. But here, too, environmentalists can't accept the necessary trade-offs. For example, over the last nine years, a company called Cape Wind Associates has been trying to build a

huge wind farm in Nantucket Sound, near Cape Cod, Massachusetts -- 24 miles square. Opponents say the turbines would mar the famous seascape.

Then two American Indian tribes said the sight would clash with their sacred sun rites and affect ancestral burial grounds on the sea bed. The National Park Service announced that the entire Sound was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, which obviously would kill the whole plan.

Sigh ... Wind power raises as many issues as any other energy source, in Massachusetts or Utah or anywhere else.

In fact, there are no alternative energy sources without significant trade-offs. The one with the fewest is nuclear power.

We urge local, state and federal officials to approve Blue Castle's plans in Emery County. There is no time to lose in bringing more nuclear power plants online in America. But development shouldn't end there. Utah has immense resources in natural gas and oil shale, for example. Those should be exploited.

America can become energy independent, if only it will.