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Testimony before the Interim Committee on Energy and the Environment

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Hello, my name is Liz Woodruff and I am the Executive Director of the Snake River Alliance. As the committee knows, the Alliance has been deeply involved in the Energy Plan since before it was completed in 2007. Our clean energy staff has addressed this committee on multiple occasions regarding the importance of energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate awareness in the 2012 review. Thank you for taking this process so seriously and for providing robust opportunity for public comment.

Today, I would like to speak to you briefly about the section on nuclear power that begins on page p. 43, section 2.3.6 in the draft provided by the Idaho Strategic Energy Alliance. As you know, the Snake River Alliance has been Idaho's nuclear watchdog for more than 32 years. In this role we have monitored operations at the Idaho National Laboratory, worked to stop the construction of nuclear weapons facilities in the state, and played an instrumental role in safeguarding Idaho from the importation of radioactive waste. As such, we feel it is important to share our perspective and offer insight on the nuclear section of the state Energy Plan.

After this committee's meeting in September, Alliance staff met with Dr. Aumeier to offer suggestions for this section. While adjustments were made, we still have some refinements we feel should be made to this section. Our intent is not to tilt the plan towards our perspective, but rather to attempt to achieve balance by suggesting changes that could make this section more objective and by offering some information that may be of interest to the committee as you finalize the Plan's language.

Turning to suggested changes now:

In the first paragraph the reference to the 2005 EPA spurring business in nuclear is unnecessary. In reality the EPA designated enough money for two total loan guarantees for new reactors (\$18.5 billion). Only one of those has been awarded to Plant Vogtle at \$8 billion. That reactor is still not licensed and only preconstruction has occurred. No other facility has received a loan guarantee. What many assumed to be the next facility in line for the remaining EPA money, the South Texas Project, cancelled plans in April, citing the effect of Fukushima on the financial viability of new nuclear projects. This sentence in

the draft is subjective and unproven. **I would suggest striking from “spurred” to “United States.” And beginning with “Since 2007...”**

The beginning of the next paragraph is incorrect. There have not been “several” developers that have expressed an interest in siting commercial nuclear generating stations” or “reactors” in Idaho. There have been two: Warren Buffet’s Mid-American and AEHI. The former decided that it was not economically feasible to site a reactor here and the latter is being sued by the SEC for fraud.

In that same paragraph, in the listing of issues that are “factors” in siting a reactor in Idaho, noticeably missing from that listing is reference to waste storage. I suggest that **“no current plan to address long term storage of nuclear waste”** be added to this section. As the Committee is likely aware, Yucca Mountain, what was assumed to be a potential site for the long-term storage of commercial radioactive waste, has been canceled. The Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future has been tasked with recommending what to do with the 65,000 metric tons of commercial radioactive fuel in this country. They have not reached any decision yet.

In the remainder of that paragraph we would contest the claim that new nuclear power construction is “relatively competitive.” Upfront capitol costs for new reactors are widely estimated at above \$10 billion/reactor. This translates into high rate payer costs ranging from 15-30 cents/kwh. We suggest changing the wording that starts with “Cost for new nuclear construction...” to **“New nuclear power plants face high upfront capitol costs that may slow the pace of new nuclear reactor construction.”**

In that paragraph’s subsequent discussion of public opinion, we would like to see acknowledgement that Fukushima did have a dramatic affect on public acceptance of nuclear power. I suggest adding **“as a result of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor meltdown”** after “very negative.” Just today, I heard news reports that TEPCO has detected evidence of radioactive fusion in one of the Fukushima reactors, indication that an ultimate shut-down of that reactor remains difficult. Huge swaths of land have been contaminated from the Fukushima meltdown. 18 of the 104 reactors operating in the US are of the same design as those at Fukushima (GE Mark 1). Thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and communities and may not be able to return for decades. This was a massive crisis that cannot be forgotten.

Nuclear power faces many hurdles including cost, waste, water, and public acceptance. This section of the plan should be plain about those obstacles. Finally, I will just mention, in reference to the last paragraph about the Areva uranium enrichment factory that it remains unclear that this plant will be built: 1) they still are awaiting the \$2billion tax-payer funded loan guarantee they have been promised by the DOE and 2) Areva France has said they are reconsidering their investments and may not move forward on all planned projects. We will know by late December what Areva France chooses to do, and the status of Areva’s loan guarantee may remain mired in DC based budget debates. Moreover, while Fukushima had a massive public health and safety effect, it has had an equally significant affect on the global nuclear market, which has shrunk steadily since Fukushima. There is no guarantee there will be demand for highly enriched uranium in the international market, let alone in the US. The last paragraph may require some re-writing, and we would be happy to work with the committee on that.

I would also mention that the addition of language about the 1995 Settlement Agreement may be helpful. This agreement protects Idaho from commercial radioactive fuel storage. Adding this to the Energy Plan makes sense.

Thank you again for your time and consideration of our points. Our hard work on behalf of all Idahoans and our collective energy future is deeply appreciated.