

308

SOC2

Les enjeux de la filière uranifère au Québec

6211-08-012

Initial Media Coverage for *Uranium Mining in Virginia*

Report Release: Dec. 19, 2011

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/20/us/virginia-warned-of-hurdles-on-uranium-mining.html? r=1>

Uranium Mining Debate in Virginia Takes a Step

WASHINGTON — The [National Academy of Sciences](#) delivered a long-awaited report on uranium mining to the Virginia legislature on Monday, warning that the state faced “steep hurdles” if it is to safely mine and process the nuclear reactor fuel.

The report’s release marks the start of what is certain to be impassioned debate over whether to lift a nearly three-decade moratorium and permit landowners in southern Virginia to extract ore from a vast underground deposit, as they first sought to do in the 1980s.

The legislature commissioned the \$1.4 million study to provide a thorough and unbiased backdrop for debate over whether to lift the moratorium. The General Assembly asked the panel to study practices in the industry, health and safety issues, and regulatory considerations for the state.

Gov. Bob McDonnell, a Republican, said his administration would review the findings. “I have long maintained that Virginia should be prudent in considering the potential lifting of the uranium mining moratorium in the commonwealth,” he said.

The report did not reach any conclusion as to whether Virginia should lift the moratorium; in fact, the academy was specifically barred from doing so by the legislature.

However, it said that if the moratorium were lifted, uranium mining could not begin for at least five to eight years to allow time for the state to write regulations from scratch, institute health and environmental safeguards, and allow for public input.

“If the Commonwealth of Virginia removes the moratorium on uranium mining, there are steep hurdles to be surmounted before mining and processing could be established in a way that is appropriately protective of the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment,” the report concluded.

In the 1980s, a joint venture between the Marline Uranium Corporation and Union Carbide sought to mine and mill the uranium oxide deposit beneath a farm in the region owned by the Coles family of Chatham, Va. But the legislature quickly put a moratorium in place to allow study of the issue, and the project was eventually shelved because of a dive in global uranium prices and skepticism about nuclear power that lingered after the 1979 Three Mile Island meltdown.

When uranium prices shot up again several years ago, the Coleses revived the project, forming their own company with neighboring families and Canadian investors. The company, [Virginia Uranium Inc.](#), is now seeking an end to the moratorium.

Patrick Wales, a spokesman and project manager for the company, called the study a “clear road map” for safely mining uranium in Virginia. “The N.A.S. study states time and again that best practices now widely adopted by the industry have been effective at protecting water and air quality and overall public health,” Mr. Wales said in a statement. “We fully intend to use these state-of-the-industry practices at Coles Hill.”

But Caleb A. Jaffe, a senior lawyer for the [Southern Environmental Law Center](#), one of the groups leading opposition to uranium mining, said the report echoed concerns his group had raised. “Given the unanswered questions, and the significant concerns that have been validated here, it is unfathomable to me that the General Assembly would move forward” in 2012, he said.

The report noted that Virginia's high water table and heavy rainfall differed from other parts of the United States — typically dry, Western states — where uranium mining has taken place.

“We don't have a lot of experience in these wet environments in the United States,” Paul A. Locke, the panel chairman and an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, said in a conference call with reporters.

Dr. Locke said the panel's work indicated that uranium mining practices around the world suggested that some risks could be mitigated, but not all.

“There are unknowns because this has not been done a lot in the U.S.,” he said.

A version of this article appeared in print on December 20, 2011, on page A22 of the New York edition with the headline: Uranium Mining Study Sees Hurdles for Virginia.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DECEMBER 20, 2011

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204791104577108632762186196.html?KEYWORDS=uranium>

Report Urges New Safety Rules on Uranium Mining

By [JOHN W. MILLER](#)

The effort to lift the ban on mining uranium in Virginia received a mild setback Monday, as a National Academy of Sciences report advised the state to draft tough new regulations to limit health and environmental risks before allowing it.

The \$1.4 million study, commissioned by state lawmakers, was paid for by Virginia Uranium Inc., which owns 119 million pounds of uranium deposits in southern Virginia and has been lobbying the state's legislature to lift a 1982 ban imposed in the wake of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in Pennsylvania. Uranium, used as a fuel in nuclear reactors, is selling for about \$50 a pound, about five times the price a decade ago.

The report concluded that uranium mining in the state was "economically viable" but posed contamination risks, mainly from containment ponds, which hold acids and other by-products of the mining and milling process. The decay process can last thousands of years, the report noted, "substantially outlasting the current U.S. regulations for oversight." Leaking from ponds can lead to "a risk of cancer from drinking water," the report said.

Patrick Wales, a geologist for Virginia Uranium, said the report wasn't surprising and that the company, a unit of Virginia Energy Resources Inc., could address the issues raised. "There are best-practice solutions to every issue raised in the report," he said.

Virginia officials, including Gov. Bob McDonnell, a Republican, have said they would wait for the academy study before lawmakers vote next year on whether to lift the mining ban. The report said it would take "five to eight years" after the granting of a license before mining would be safe in Virginia.

Paul Locke, chairman of the committee of 14 experts that compiled the report, said, "there are unknowns, because this has not been done a lot in the U.S."

Only a few companies, in western states, mine uranium in the U.S.

Kazakhstan, Canada and Australia mine three-fifths of the global supply of uranium. The U.S., the country with the most nuclear plants, imports more than 90% of its uranium.

Write to John W. Miller at john.miller@dowjones.com

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/study-warns-of-health-and-environment-hurdles-to-uranium-mining-in-virginia/2011/12/05/gIQAd1Op4O_story.html

Study warns of health and environment hurdles to uranium mining in Virginia

By [Anita Kumar](#), Published: December 19

RICHMOND — A company lobbying lawmakers to unearth in Southside Virginia what is thought to be the nation's largest uranium deposit needs to overcome significant health and environmental obstacles before the site is mined, according to a long-awaited study released Monday.

The 22-month review by the National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering said that “steep hurdles” need to be surmounted before Virginia’s longtime ban on uranium mining could be lifted.

The [302-page report](#) says uranium could be mined, but the company would have to protect workers, the public and the environment in Virginia, which has no experience unearthing radioactive element.

Many in Richmond expected the study to provide conclusions supportive of lawmakers seeking to lift the ban, but the report instead struck more of a cautionary tone. It also outlined ways mining could be conducted in the state.

“Internationally accepted best practices, which include timely and meaningful public participation, are available to mitigate some of the risks involved,” said Paul Locke, associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and chairman of the committee that wrote the report. “However, there are still many unknowns.”

The state’s [Coal and Energy Commission](#), which ordered the study, will review the findings and recommend to the General Assembly in the next few weeks whether Virginia should lift the ban.

The study failed to address the site — a largely rural 200-acre swath in south-central Virginia — or recommend whether it should be mined. Critics argue that the study is tainted because the company, Virginia Uranium, picked up the \$1.42 million cost.

[Virginia Uranium](#) executives say the study provides a path for the state to repeal a three-decade moratorium next year — making it one of the most controversial and unpredictable issues expected in the 60-day session that starts next month.

“The study shows that major technological and regulatory advances over the past 30 years have dramatically improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry,” said Patrick Wales, a geologist and the company’s project manager.

The company has aggressively lobbied lawmakers. It [has spoken](#) to 100 of 140 legislators and flew more than a dozen of them to [France](#) and [Canada](#) to visit uranium mines. It [has donated more than \\$150,000](#) to candidates in Virginia and [retained five of Richmond’s most influential lobbying and public relations firms](#), according to the [Virginia Public Access Project](#), a nonpartisan tracker of money in politics.

“What concerns me is we are rushing to put legislation forward in some ways before we fully understand what’s before us,” said Sen. William M. Stanley Jr. (R-Franklin), who represents the area. “We deal with thousands of bills ... and what I want is for [legislators] to take careful consideration of this. This is our home.”

Two uranium deposits were found three decades ago in Coles Hill, near Chatham, a small town in Pittsylvania. They begin at the ground’s surface, under land used for cattle, and run about 1,500 feet deep.

Virginia Uranium said [tests indicate](#) that about 119 million pounds of uranium — worth as much as \$10 billion — are below the surface. It is the world’s seventh-largest known deposit — or enough to supply all U.S. nuclear power plants for about two years or Virginia’s demands for 75 years.

The 20-member Coal and Energy Commission [asked the National Academy of Sciences](#) in 2008 to conduct the study, despite objections from the General Assembly.

Several [studies have been released](#), but Del. Terry G. Kilgore (R-Scott), the commission chairman, said his panel, made up of legislative and gubernatorial appointees, will rely on the national academies’ report as well as a [second state-ordered study](#) released this month on mining’s economic impact.

Environmental groups seized on the report as proof that their concerns about mining in Virginia’s relatively rainy climate could contaminate natural resources, cause cancer or other illnesses and have long-term effects on plants and animals.

The Coles Hill area supplies drinking water locally and to parts of Hampton Roads and North Carolina. Thirty-two governmental organizations in Virginia and North Carolina [have passed resolutions](#) to keep the ban.

“This is a huge validation for many of the core concerns that we have been raising,” said Cale Jaffe, senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center.

Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R), who wants to make Virginia the “energy capital of the East Coast,” said he could not comment until after the new year when he expects that his staff will review the study.

Company officials say safeguards have been put in place since mining at Coles Hill was first considered and that the federal government regulates mines and mills with regard to safety and homeland security.

Uranium would be mined underground. The result, a sandy substance called “yellow cake” uranium, would be packed into drums and shipped while the remaining crushed rock would be kept on site, underground or in a pit.

Much-awaiting Va. uranium mining report released

<http://www.vcstar.com/news/2011/dec/19/much-awaiting-va-uranium-mining-report-released/>

- The Associated Press
- Posted December 19, 2011 at 3:08 p.m.

RICHMOND, Va. —A highly anticipated National Academy of Sciences report on uranium mining concluded Monday that Virginia must overcome "steep hurdles" before it can assure that a rich deposit of the radioactive ore can be safely extracted and processed.

The 290-page report is expected to guide the 2012 General Assembly if it considers ending a 30-year ban on uranium mining. The report does not recommend whether it should be lifted, but makes clear the state must address a number of environmental and public safety issues before mining can occur.

The report points to many of the concerns raised by uranium mining opponents, who have argued the East Coast's wet, hurricane-prone climate is a risky environment for mining and milling, and for separating the radioactive ore from rock.

Full-scale uranium mining has never occurred on the East Coast, except as a byproduct of other mining.

Virginia Uranium Inc. has proposed working on a 119-million-pound deposit in Pittsylvania County, near the North Carolina border. The Coles Hill deposit, as it is called, is the largest known deposit in the U.S. and the seventh largest in the world.

The uranium would be processed into yellowcake used to power nuclear power reactors. The U.S. now imports more than 90 percent of its nuclear fuel.

If Virginia decided to end the ban, the NAS study said a muscular regulatory climate would have to be in place to ensure public and worker safety and to protect the environment.

"Significant potential environmental risks are associated with extreme natural events and failures in management practices," the report states. "Extreme natural events (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes, intense rainfall events, drought) have the potential to lead to the release of contaminants if facilities are not designed and constructed to withstand such an event or fail to perform as designed."

Opponents said the report echoed the worries they've had for years.

"From our side, this is a huge validation of the core concerns we've been raising all along," said Cale Jaffe, a staff attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center. Based on the report, he

said, it would be "unfathomable" that the General Assembly would take up the ban in the upcoming session.

The report's authors presented it Monday to the uranium subcommittee of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission. Members were divided on the impact of the report, some saying the issue warrants more study while others said the ban should be lifted so state regulators can answer questions raised by the report.

Sen. John C. Watkins, R-Powhatan, said he'd like to see Gov. Bob McDonnell have several state departments create a regulatory framework

McDonnell's office declined to directly respond to Watkins' suggestion, but issued a statement earlier that he would have state experts review the document and have their opinions by the beginning of the year.

The NAS report squarely placed the burden on the state to construct a regulatory process that protects the public and the environment.

Virginia Uranium, which has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars lobbying legislators, has said the deposit can be mined safely and will create an economic bonanza for Southside Virginia, which has struggled economically with the decline of tobacco and textiles.

The company said the study provides a "clear road map and path forward for operating the world's safest uranium mine in Virginia."

"I don't know that it raised any questions that already hadn't been there," said Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium. "It talks about a lot of things that we've been talking about."

Two studies released in recent weeks have supported Virginia Uranium's rosy economic projections, but have also raised the prospect of potential environmental risks.

Opponents have argued that mining and milling would threaten water supplies if a catastrophic weather event occurred, scattering radioactive tailings into waters that are sources of public supplies as far away as Hampton Roads, nearly 200 miles away. Tailings are the waste product of milling the ore.

The \$1.4 million NAS study, financed by Virginia Uranium, was conducted by the Committee on Uranium Mining in Virginia. Its members including experts in mining, the environment, public health and the nuclear industry.

Among its key findings:

- If the ban was lifted, uranium mining and processing are unlikely to begin for at least five to eight years. "This period of time should be used to build a robust regulatory and management culture focused on safety and citizen involvement," the study states.

- Extreme natural events, including earthquakes, should be considered when assessing the suitability the Southside site of the uranium mining operation. Virginia was rattled by a magnitude 5.8 earthquake in August.
- While Coles Hill is the only known economically viable deposit in Virginia, "significant uranium occurrences" can be found in the Blue Ridge and Piedmont areas. Critics have said lifting the ban would open the entire state to uranium mining.
- Mining, processing and reclamation all have the potential to affect surface and groundwater, soils and air. "These activities in Virginia will depend on site-specific conditions, the rigor of the monitoring program established to provide early warning of contaminant migration, and the efforts to mitigate and control potential impacts," the report states.
- Tailing disposal sites are potential sources of contamination for "thousands of years" and the long-term risks are poorly defined.
- If Virginia develops a regulatory framework for uranium mining and milling, it should exceed international industry standards.
- "The United States federal government has only limited recent experience regulating conventional uranium processing and reclamation of uranium mining and processing facilities," the NAS report states. That experience is even more limited in an East Coast climate.

Steve Szkotak can be reached on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/sszkotakap>.

___(equals)

Online:

National Academy of Science: <http://www.nationalacademies.org/>

Virginia Uranium Inc.: <http://www.nationalacademies.org/>

Keep the Ban Coalition: www.keeptheban.org

Read more: <http://www.vcstar.com/news/2011/dec/19/much-awaiting-va-uranium-mining-report-released/#ixzz1h5QWmNFv>

- vcstar.com

The Washington Times

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/dec/19/study-steep-hurdles-for-uranium-mining-in-virginia/print/>

Study: 'Steep hurdles' for uranium mining in Virginia

By [David Sherfinski](#)

Monday, December 19, 2011



Paul Locke, chairman of the committee that wrote a National Academy of Sciences report on the safety of mining uranium in Virginia, says "there are still many unknowns" about the safety of lifting a ban on mining the radioactive material. (Associated Press)

There are "steep hurdles to be mounted" for Virginia to safely mine uranium, according to a much-anticipated two-year study on the process, released Monday by the National Academy of Sciences.

"Internationally accepted best practices, which include timely and meaningful public participation, are available to mitigate some of the risks involved. However, there are still many unknowns," said Paul Locke, chairman of the committee that wrote the report and associate professor at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Baltimore.

The state requested the study, paid for by Virginia Tech with funds from Virginia Uranium Inc. The company wants to tap a 119-pound deposit at the Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County.

The radioactive ore would be processed, then used to fuel nuclear power reactors.

The company says the process can be done safely, but environmental groups are concerned about the potential environmental impacts mining might have on surrounding areas, including contamination of the state's drinking water.

The committee was not asked whether mining should be allowed or whether the effort should be pursued. If the ban is lifted, mining and processing likely would not begin for five to eight years after the initial granting of a license, the report states.

Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium, said the study provides a "clear road map and path forward for operating the safest uranium mine in Virginia."

"The NAS study states time and again that best practices now widely adopted by the industry have been effective at protecting water and air quality and overall public health," he said.

But Andrew Lester, executive director of the Roanoke River Basin Association, said the group expects Gov. Bob McDonnell and the General Assembly to keep the ban in place because the study does not demonstrate "beyond a reasonable doubt" that mining in Virginia would pose absolutely no threat to public safety and health."

Many lawmakers had said they were reserving judgment on whether they would favor lifting the ban until they had a chance to closely review the study. With less than a month to go before the General Assembly convenes, it leaves them little time to study the nearly-300-page report.

"I look forward to some reading over the Christmas holidays," said Sen. John Watkins, Powhatan Republican.

© Copyright 2011 The Washington Times, LLC. [Click here for reprint permission.](#)

TIMES-DISPATCH INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT
John Marshall boys, Cosby girls win titles

N. Korean transition could be 'watershed moment'

THINK. SHOP. BUY. Local
5 shopping days until Christmas

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Tuesday, December 20, 2011

\$1.00 • VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER • TIMESDISPATCH.COM • A MEDIA GENERAL COMPANY • FINAL

McDonnell's budget targets 'big problems'

Plan cuts \$882M and raises Va. spending on VRS, roads, colleges

BY OLYMPIA MEOLA AND JIM NOLAN
 Richmond Times-Dispatch

Gov. Bob McDonnell on Monday unveiled a two-year, \$84.9 billion spending plan that balances increases in transportation, higher education and the state's pension system with \$882 million in targeted reductions largely to Medicaid and public education funding.

The proposed budget for July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2014, contains no tax increases but raises certain fees, including \$10 million worth from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The 458-page document, which outlines spending priorities for the last two years of McDonnell's four-year term, plows \$2.2 billion into the Virginia Retirement System to shore up state employee and teacher pensions. It provides \$100 million a year for higher education and diverts to transportation an additional \$10 million in sales tax revenue that previously has been spent on general fund expenditures such as schools and police.

The budget bill I am presenting today reflects the core priorities of government and our administration," the governor said in his address to a joint meeting of the General Assembly's money committees in

BUDGET, Page A6



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Highlights of the \$84.9 billion spending plan

Education

- increases K-12 funding by a net \$438 million, mostly to help fund pensions, but cuts millions from other parts of the education budget
- provides \$200 million in new funding for higher education to make it more affordable and accessible

State workers

- makes \$2.2 billion in employer contributions to the Virginia Retirement System to boost the solvency of pensions for state workers and teachers
- gives full-time state workers a 2 percent bonus next December if agencies meet savings goals

Other

- carves out \$882 million in reductions — \$84 million from agencies
- increases Medicaid funding \$650 million over two years, but withholds inflationary increases for hospitals, nursing facilities and home health providers
- eliminates \$7.2 million for public broadcasting
- adds \$300 million to the state's rainy-day fund
- adds \$20 million to a fund to protect Virginia from federal budget cuts

Uranium mining risks outlined

But Va. report says hazards could be eased

BY REX SPRINGSTON
 Richmond Times-Dispatch

Uranium mining in Virginia could pose threats to people and the environment, but modern mining techniques should reduce the risks, a National Academy of Sciences report said Monday.

Overall, the report said, an effort to mine uranium in Virginia faces "steep hurdles."

Those hurdles include little federal experience in recent years, and no Virginia experience in regulating new mines, which can harm workers and the public while producing radioactive waste that can last thousands of years.

The 302-page, \$1.4 million report is the work of a 14-member panel representing the academy,

MINING, Page A6

Uranium mining in Virginia

Read the report from the National Academy of Sciences, TimesDispatch.com, search: state news

3 local men honored as heroes

They receive Carnegie medals for risking lives helping others

BY MARK BOWES
 Richmond Times-Dispatch

A Chester teen and two Mechanicsville men were among a select few to be named nationally last week to receive the Carnegie Hero Fund Medal for risking their lives to help save or attempt to save the lives of others — in their case two area residents.

The three local recipients are among 18 people from nine states who were recognized for their heroism Wednesday by the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission. They bring to 83 the number of medal winners recognized in 2011, and to 9,485 those who have received the award since the Pittsburgh-based fund was

HEROES, Page A5

Making a Difference Everyday people doing extraordinary things

'God gave me a mission. I just do it.'

A longtime volunteer, now hired, leads Va. Asian Chamber

BY PETER BAQUÉ
 Richmond Times-Dispatch

It must be her karma, My Lan Tran says.

She has spent her life in workforce development, helping the poor, the disadvantaged, the immigrants to America.

"God gave me a mission. I just do it," said Tran, the executive director of the Virginia Asian Chamber of Commerce.

"You have to finish your work. It's karma."

The Virginia Asian Chamber is part business and part community organization, said Tran. "We're aspiring to be a gateway of American economic opportunity for all Asian-Americans."

And "community means issues, concerns, vision, needs, fears and dreams," said Tran, a

political refugee herself. "They wonder. They have questions."

"Our job here is to fill the gaps of knowledge," she said, between the members' traditional ways of doing business and American ones.

In 2004, Tran met Kajal B. Kapur at a Virginia Commonwealth University business seminar. "You should get in touch with me," Kapur remembers Tran telling her. "I can help you with a lot of the questions small businesses

TRAN, Page A6



My Lan Tran came to the U.S. from Vietnam in 1975.

Mostly cloudy.
 High: 55.
 Low: 46.
Weather B3

Lee-Davis students charged in homicide
 Metro B1

Burgess on verge of tying VCU streak
 Sports C1

AT&T ends bid to buy T-Mobile
 Business D1



Copyright © 2011 The News Leader. No. 354
 THE RICHMOND NEWS LEADER 1896-1992

A Nation & World	B Metro & State	C Sports	D Business	D Find/Services
Editorials A10	TV/Weather 83	High/Low 85	Wall Street C3	Classified D5
	Obituaries 85	Scoreboard C7	Briefs D3	Comics D13

Gift Giving made Easy.
Franco's
 FINE CLOTHIER
 Lakeside Avenue, 264-2994
 Short Pump Town Ctr., 308-9400
 www.francoes.com

<http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2011/dec/20/tdmain01-report-sees-potential-problems-with-uranium-1555920/>

Report sees potential problems with uranium mining

By: [Rex Springston](#) | Richmond Times Dispatch

Published: December 20, 2011

Uranium mining in Virginia could pose threats to people and the environment, but modern mining techniques should reduce the risks, a National Academy of Sciences report said Monday.

Overall, the report said, an effort to mine uranium in Virginia faces "steep hurdles."

Those hurdles include little federal experience in recent years, and no Virginia experience, in regulating new mines, which can harm workers and the public while producing radioactive waste that can last thousands of years.

The 302-page, \$1.4 million report is the work of a 14-member panel representing the academy, a respected nonprofit institution. Preparing the report took slightly more than a year.

The report laid out a rough and risky, but not impossible, road to uranium mining in Virginia. It said risks can be lessened by using modern mining practices such as managing waste underground.

"The report did not say you can mitigate all risks," said Paul Locke, chairman of the committee that wrote the report. "It said you can mitigate some risks."

Locke, an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, spoke during a telephone news conference.

Virginia Uranium Inc. wants to mine and mill the radioactive metal from what it believes is a 119 million-pound deposit, worth about \$7 billion, in Pittsylvania County about 145 miles southwest of Richmond. It is believed to be the largest undeveloped uranium deposit in the U.S.

The report looked at the health and safety of uranium mining in Virginia, among other issues. The Virginia Commission on Coal and Energy, a legislative panel, sought the report. The commission did not ask the study group to recommend whether Virginia should allow mining.

For the mine to become a reality, the General Assembly would have to lift a 30-year moratorium, or ban, on uranium mining in Virginia.

The energy commission's uranium subcommittee heard Locke describe the report Monday afternoon.

Del. R. Lee Ware Jr., a Powhatan County Republican who is the subcommittee's chairman, said afterward that the report looked like a tough pill for industry.

"I think it raises significant questions to which we have to find adequate answers ... (questions) about the wisdom of lifting the moratorium," he said.

One of the biggest questions involves caring for the long-lasting waste, or tailings, Ware said.

Sen. Frank W. Wagner, R-Virginia Beach, said the report raised questions for him, too, but he still leans toward allowing mining. "There is an inherent risk in everything you do."

Cale Jaffe, an attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center, which opposes ending the mining ban, was pleased with the report.

"This is a huge validation for the core concerns we have been raising all along," Jaffe said.

The report, he noted, says a flood, an earthquake or a hurricane could cause pollution at a mine. "We've had all three of those just this year," Jaffe said.

Almost all uranium mining in the U.S. has been in dry areas unlike Virginia, the report said. The study panel found no place analogous to Pittsylvania where uranium is mined.

Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium, said the report was not an obstacle "because we have always said we are committed to building the safest uranium mine and mill in the world."

The report provides a "road map" for approving and regulating the mine, Wales said.

The report did not assess the suitability of Pittsylvania for mining, but it said the deposit there appears to be the only one in Virginia that is economically attractive.

Without proper controls, uranium mining can expose workers to harmful radiation, and the public can also be at risk from radiation in air pollution and contaminated water supplies, the report said. Health risks include cancer.

A uranium waste disposal site can be a source of contamination for thousands of years, the report said.

Uranium mining can affect streams, underground water, soil, air and living things, the report added.

"The impact ... in Virginia will depend on site-specific conditions... and the efforts to mitigate and control potential impacts," the report said.

The legislature is expected to take up the issue in the session that begins Jan. 11. It's possible that lawmakers will put off for a year the decision on allowing mining.

If Virginia lifts its ban, uranium mining probably would not begin for at least five to eight years, the report said. During that time, Virginia should devise tough regulations, it said.

Gov. Bob McDonnell said state experts are studying the report. "I have long maintained that Virginia should be prudent in considering the potential lifting of the uranium mining moratorium in the commonwealth," McDonnell said in a statement. "All energy development should be pursued if it will create jobs, spur our economy, reduce Virginia's and the nation's dependence upon foreign energy supplies, and be done in a safe and responsible manner."

In a side issue, Del. Bill Janis, R-Henrico, said during the Monday meeting that he had an email saying that a member of the study panel was pressured into going along with the unanimous report. Asked by reporters, Janis declined to release the email.

The member of the study panel that Janis named, metallurgical and chemical engineer Corby G. Anderson of Golden, Colo., said by phone he was pressured by the academy of sciences staff.

Anderson said he was bothered by "the process" but declined to go into detail.

Locke, the study panel's chairman, said, "I haven't seen anything, so I can't answer that question."

rspringston@timesdispatch.com (804) 649-6453

"My jaw dropped," said Helen Ulmer about her \$10,000 bonus from Paramount Builders Inc. "I still can't believe it."



\$1 million in bonuses

Beach firm hands out checks to 47 employees at party

By Josh Brown | The Virginian-Pilot

Helen Ulmer wasn't expecting much more than free food and entertainment when she went to her company holiday party Saturday evening.

What she got was a check for \$10,000 — about half of her yearly salary.

Paramount Builders Inc., a Virginia Beach-based home remodeling firm, doled out bonus checks ranging from \$2,000 to \$75,000 to 47 employees at its party.

"I almost passed out when they told me how much," said

See BONUSES, PAGE 6

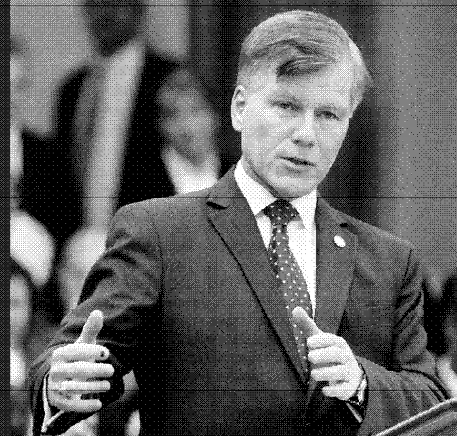
The Virginian-Pilot

Tuesday

Our 147th year | 12.20.11 | PILOTONLINE.COM | 75¢ in Hampton Roads

2012-14 Va. budget proposal

CUTS, FEES, ON TAP



ROSS TAYLOR / THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Governor's plan culls savings in Medicaid, public education

By Julian Walker | The Virginian-Pilot

RICHMOND Gov. Bob McDonnell presented what he called "a budget marked by tough decisions demanded by this difficult economy" on Monday, proposing to pare nearly \$900 million from various state services and programs while avoiding tax increases.

His proposal includes a handful of fee increases, including raising the cost to renew a late vehicle registration and to replace a driver's license or car title.

But those are small items in a budget that targets public education funding and Medicaid, the federal- and state-supported health care program for low-income Virginians.

Overall, the budget will increase to \$85 billion for the two years beginning July 1, up from \$80 billion for the previous two years. But legislative budget analysts had warned that adjustments needed to be made because revenue growth isn't sufficient to keep up with spending commitments.

See BUDGET PROPOSAL, PAGE 6



NEW FACE OF NORTH KOREA

From wire reports

The abrupt death of Kim Jong Il, the hermetic North Korea leader, threw the rest of Asia into deep anxiety Monday and reverberated across the Pacific, as friends and enemies of the nuclear-armed country fretted over whether it was now facing an unpredictable power struggle — even as the official North Korean press proclaimed that Kim's cherubic-faced youngest son was his successor.

The son, Kim Jong Un, is such an unknown that the world did not even know what he looked like until last year. Believed to be in his 20s, the son faces enormous uncertainty over his ability to retain power in one of the most opaque and repressive countries — the last bastion of hard-line communism. Even if he can, questions

INSIDE North Koreans march by the thousands to mourn Kim Jong Il
BACK PAGE

See N. KOREA, BACK PAGE

partly cloudy
High: low:
to mid-50s.
Details on the back page of Sports

coming Wednesday
THE BEST HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PLAYERS
Sports

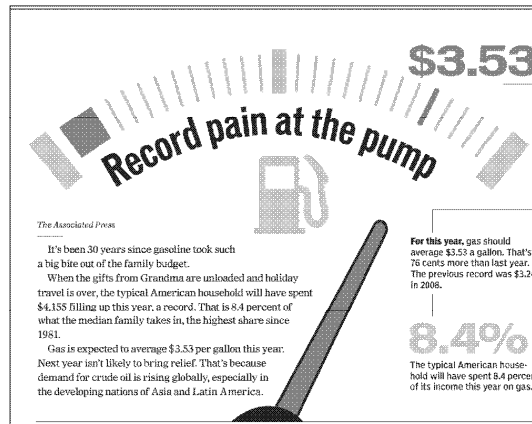
budget growth
Virginia's two-year budget would increase from about \$80 billion to \$85 billion. Revenues are increasing, but not fast enough to meet all demands.

holding back
The governor's proposal saves \$324 million by not increasing Medicaid payments to reflect inflation. Schools won't get \$109 million to cover inflation or \$108 million to replace federal stimulus funds.

more funding
The governor wants to infuse \$2.2 billion into the state pension system; provide more than \$200 million to colleges; and generate \$110 million for road maintenance.

Gov. Bob McDonnell outlines his two-year spending plan Monday to state lawmakers in Richmond, calling it "a budget marked by tough decisions demanded by this difficult economy."

INSIDE Eastern Virginia Medical School to get \$3.5 million a year under proposal. **HAMPTON ROADS**



Big risks, big payoff in Virginia uranium mining, study finds

By Bill Bartel | The Virginian-Pilot



RICHMOND A long-awaited \$1.4 million study of uranium mining in Virginia suggests there are economic benefits to harvesting the underground radia-

about the report

The panel deliberately did not say whether it believes that uranium mining can be done without harming public health or the environment.

The report notes that the state has "essentially no experience in regulating uranium mining." Before opening the door to uranium mining and processing, it says, the state would need a new system of rigorous, transparent

not take sides in the debate over whether to allow uranium mining — instead, it's aimed at giving policymakers and the public an unbiased, accurate look at the issues involved.

The report notes that the state has "essentially no experience in regulating uranium mining." Before opening the door to uranium mining and processing, it says, the state would need a new system of rigorous, transparent

See URANIUM, PAGE 6

Uranium mining report finds risks, benefits for Virginia

By [Bill Bartel](#)
The Virginian-Pilot
© December 20, 2011

RICHMOND

A long-awaited \$1.4 million study of uranium mining in Virginia suggests there are economic benefits to harvesting the underground radioactive material in Pittsylvania County but also huge environmental and health risks that have to be overcome or substantially reduced.

The study by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences made public Monday does not take sides in the debate over whether to allow uranium mining – instead, it's aimed at giving policymakers and the public an unbiased, accurate look at the issues involved.

The report notes that the state has “essentially no experience in regulating uranium mining.” Before opening the door to uranium mining and processing, it says, the state would need a new system of rigorous, transparent procedures for mining operations, environmental protection and proper monitoring of radioactive mining waste for many generations to come. Setting up such a system could take at least four years and actual uranium mining, if approved, likely wouldn't begin for five to eight years after a license is granted.

The 302-page study is expected to be a critical tool in the debate over whether to lift a 30-year ban on uranium mining in the state. Virginia Uranium wants the moratorium lifted to begin extracting and processing uranium buried under Coles Hill, a farm outside the town of Chatham in Pittsylvania County.

Proponents say the site, considered one of the largest uranium deposits in the world, could be the center of an economic boom for the state and supply needed nuclear fuel for the country.

Critics contend that allowing the mining operation would pose an unacceptable risk of radioactive contamination to people and the environment, including the nearby river system that feeds Lake Gaston – a major source of water for Hampton Roads. Virginia Beach officials have expressed particular concern about that possibility.

The panel deliberately did not say whether it believes that uranium mining can be done without harming public health or the environment. The report requirements did not allow it to make that determination, said Paul Locke, an environmental health scientist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who led the 14-member study group. “We tried to lay out all of the things they need to think about.”

Locke, as well as activists on both sides of the issue, acknowledged Monday that any uranium extraction can carry some risks to people and the environment. The debate is over whether such risk can be sufficiently minimized to allow for the mining.

“Best practices exist that if applied should mitigate some of the risk to the public and risk to workers,” Locke said.

Virginia Beach Mayor Will Sessoms doesn't accept that argument.

"There's still risk involved," Sessoms said. "Do we want to take any risk at all jeopardizing the water supply?"

The 14-member study group – all volunteers – wrote that if the state decides to rescind the moratorium, "there are steep hurdles to be surmounted before mining and/or processing could be established within a regulatory environment that is appropriately protective of the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment.

"There is only limited experience with modern underground and open pit uranium mining and processing practices in the wider United States, and no such experience in Virginia. At the same time, there exist internationally accepted best practices, founded on principles of openness, transparency, and public involvement in oversight and decision-making, that could provide a starting point for the commonwealth of Virginia were it to decide that the moratorium should be lifted."

The panel found 55 locations in Virginia where researchers believe uranium deposits exist, but Coles Hill is so far the only known economically viable site for mining, Locke said.

Virginia's wet climate and vulnerability to earthquakes present challenges to designing a mining and uranium milling operation that would minimize public health and environmental risk, the report states.

Not all risks can be removed but there are "best practices" that can be adopted to minimize them, it states.

However, there also are unknowns.

For example, the radioactive mining tailings – the leftovers from processing uranium into yellow cake – would have to be properly stored for thousands of years, Locke said. At present there is only data available on the first 20 years of such storage.

Key players on both sides of the debate praised the study but for different reasons.

Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium, said his firm has no problem with the need for strict regulations and controls. He said the company officials expected it will take several years before they could begin mining.

"Virginia Uranium believes this study provides a clear road map for operating the world's safest uranium mine in Virginia," Wales said.

Cale Jaffe, an attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center, which opposes lifting the moratorium, said the study points out dramatic risks to people and the environment. He said state legislators need to follow through with plans to allow several months for the public to read and comment on the study before the General Assembly considers any legislation to repeal the ban on uranium mining and write new regulations.

"You don't develop regulations before you've made the public policy decision on whether this industry can be safely regulated at all," he said.

State Sen. Frank Wagner, R-Virginia Beach, a subcommittee member, said he expects legislation to repeal the moratorium will be introduced in the 2012 General Assembly session but might not pass until the following year. The moratorium could be abolished in the same bill that also calls for new regulations overseeing the mining, he said.

The uranium study was endorsed by all members of the study panel, according to the Research Council. However, one member, Corby Anderson of the Colorado School of Mines, said he was pressured by National Research Council staff to quickly review and approve the final document in 24 hours so that it could be issued this week.

“This came out in final form and we had no time to approve it,” said Anderson, who added that he wanted to spend more time reviewing a section dealing the possible health effects on humans uranium mining and process.

It was not “an A-plus report,” he said, but he eventually agreed to sign it.

Anderson’s concern was made public during the subcommittee hearing by state Del. Bill Janis, R-Henrico County, who was sent a copy of an email that Anderson wrote to someone else.

Jennifer Walsh, spokeswoman for the National Academy of Sciences, said Anderson’s complaint is being investigated but stressed that he is not objecting to the final report. Any complaint about substance would have to be noted the document, she said.

Staff writer Julian Walker contributed to this report.

Bill Bartel, (757) 446-2398, bill.bartel@pilotonline.com



Virginia Tech
SPORTS GRINDS NORTH FLORIDA

Have you
'barre'd today?
EXTRA



THE ROANOKE TIMES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2011

roanoke.com

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 75¢

Research calculates uranium hazards

The report cites "potential adverse human health risks" if the ban on mining is lifted.

By Laurence Hammack
laurence.hammack@roanoke.com
951-3239

If Virginia lifts a moratorium on mining uranium, it will face "steep hurdles" in protecting the health of its people and environment, a long-awaited study warns.

Digging up the radioactive metal and converting it to fuel for nuclear reactors presents "a wide range of potential adverse human health risks," according to the National Academy of Sciences. While making no firm recommendations, the 302-page report released Monday is expected to play a key role when the General Assembly decides at its upcoming session whether to lift a 30-year ban on uranium mining.

At stake is a 19-million-pound deposit in Pittsylvania County — believed to be the largest undeveloped uranium source in the United States — that Virginia Uranium Inc. wants to extract.

While previous studies have cited the rosy economic impact of such an operation, the academy's report offered a more stark assessment of the public health and ecological implications.

Waste materials from the mine could "contaminate the local environment under certain conditions, in particular by seeping into water sources and thereby increasing radionuclide concentrations," the report stated.

"This, in turn, can lead to a risk of cancer from drinking water." The mining leftovers, called tailings, are especially troublesome because they must be stored in containment ponds at the mine site, where they would maintain their radioactivity for many centuries.

"Tailings disposal sites represent potential sources of contamination for thousands of years, and the long-term risks remain poorly defined," stated the report, which came after two years of study by the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

While significant improvements have been made in recent years to contain tailings, the report found "limited



If you would like to read the 300-plus-page uranium study, go online at roanoke.com

While previous studies have cited the rosy economic impact of such an operation, the academy's report offered a more stark assessment of the public health and ecological implications.

McDonnell charts course for remainder of his term



Gov. Bob McDonnell presents his proposed budget to the General Assembly's key money committees Monday at the Capitol in Richmond. Associated Press

The governor's budget plan would increase spending for state colleges, transportation and economic development, but wrings public schools and health care for savings.

By Michael Sluss
mike.sluss@roanoke.com
961-3373

RICHMOND — Gov. Bob McDonnell unveiled a two-year state budget plan Monday that directs new revenue toward his top policy priorities and restrains spending growth in public schools and health care.

McDonnell's \$84.9 billion spending plan, which would take effect July 1, charts the course for

the second half of his term and frames the debate for the General Assembly session that begins next month. In a speech to the legislature's key money committees, McDonnell said his budget targets spending toward core government functions and holds the line on taxes.

"We should not subscribe to the theory that government can only get better if it gets bigger," McDonnell said. "I believe that government must get more

focused and effective." McDonnell's plan would increase spending for state colleges, transportation and economic development, and would pump cash into underfunded state employee and teacher pension plans, addressing what he described as "specific big problems" that demand action. McDonnell announced most of the new spending initiatives in the week leading up to Monday's speech.

The budget anticipates that state general fund revenues — derived largely from income and sales taxes — will increase by 2.3 percent to \$16.2 billion in the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2012, and by 4.5 percent to nearly \$17 billion the following year.

But with spending pressures exceeding revenue growth, McDonnell's budget wrings nearly \$800 million in savings from

See BUDGET, 14

See URANIUM, 14

North Korea's new leader is mysterious figure

Little is known about Kim Jong Un, who has not appeared publicly since his father's death.

By Jean H. Lee
Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — With the sudden death of his father, Kim Jong Un went from being North Korea's "Respected General" to "Great Successor" — a heady and uncertain promotion for a young man virtually unknown even to the North Korean people just a year ago.

Word of Kim Jong Il's death, announced Monday two days after he suffered a heart attack, thrusts his 20-something son in the spotlight as the future head of a nation grappling with difficult nuclear negotiations and chronic food shortages.

Within hours of breaking the news of his father's death, state media urged the nation's people to rally around Kim Jong Un and to "faithfully reverse" their next leader. The son has not appeared publicly since the announcement of his father's death.

The death speeds up a succession process that began in earnest a little more than a

year ago — scant time to gain experience, build political clout and allay skepticism at home and abroad that he can lead a nation of 24 million. His father, by contrast, had 20 years of grooming before his father, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung, died in 1994.

News of Kim's death shocked a nation largely kept in the dark about their leader's health even after he suffered a stroke in 2008. Abroad, there was widespread speculation throughout 2009 about who would succeed the iron-fisted ruler.

Kim Jong Un's emergence in September 2010 as the

appointed successor settled the question of which of Kim Jong Il's three known sons was chosen as the third-generation leader in a family dynasty that has ruled since North Korea's post-World War II inception in 1948.

And his status as his father's chosen successor has become clear over the course of the past year.

After appointing him vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party, Kim Jong Il unveiled the son to the world just weeks later at a massive military parade to celebrate a key party anniversary.

With the world's media in attendance and transmitting live video, the young son appeared on the balcony of the Grand People's Study Hall in a blue suit, wearing as tanks loaded with long-range missiles barreled by.

Since that first glimpse of the son, North Koreans have seen him regularly on state TV, in the Pyongyang Times newspaper and in the Korean Central News Agency as he accompanied his father on trips around the country.

Stocky and youthful, he bears more than a passing



Associated Press / The 20th Kim Jong Un, who is in his 20s, has been called "Respected General" but on Monday, North Korea's news agency referred to him as "Great Successor."

See KIM, 6

NATION & WORLD PAGE 3

Congress cautions toward standoff on payroll tax legislation

BUSINESS PAGE 7

Saab Automobile gives up long-shot fight to stay afloat



VIRGINIA PAGE 8

Wife pleads no contest in death of husband



<http://www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/302588>

Research calculates uranium mining hazards

The report cites "potential adverse human health risks" if the ban on mining is lifted.

By [Laurence Hammack](#)
981-3239

If Virginia lifts a moratorium on mining uranium, it will face "steep hurdles" in protecting the health of its people and environment, a long-awaited study warns.

Digging up the radioactive metal and converting it to fuel for nuclear reactors presents "a wide range of potential adverse human health risks," according to the National Academy of Sciences.

While making no firm recommendations, [the 302-page report released Monday](#) is expected to play a key role when the General Assembly decides at its upcoming session whether to lift a 30-year ban on uranium mining.

Document

[Report: Uranium Mining in Virginia](#)

At stake is a 119-million-pound deposit in Pittsylvania County -- believed to be the largest undeveloped uranium source in the United States -- that Virginia Uranium Inc. wants to extract.

While previous studies have cited the rosy economic impact of such an operation, the academy's report offered a more stark assessment of the public health and ecological implications.

Waste materials from the mine could "contaminate the local environment under certain conditions, in particular by seeping into water sources and thereby increasing radionuclide concentrations," the report stated.

"This, in turn, can lead to a risk of cancer from drinking water."

The mining leftovers, called tailings, are especially troublesome because they must be stored in containment ponds at the mine site, where they would maintain their radioactivity for many centuries.

"Tailings disposal sites represent potential sources of contamination for thousands of years, and the long-term risks remain poorly defined," stated the report, which came after two years of study by the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

While significant improvements have been made in recent years to contain tailings, the report found "limited data" to confirm the long-term effectiveness of those methods.

Repeating a concern often stressed by mining opponents, the report raises the specter of the tailings being spread by heavy rains or an extreme storm -- more likely to occur in Virginia than in the arid Western United States, where most uranium is currently mined. If approved, the Pittsylvania County mine would be the first of its kind on the East Coast.

The report was not all bad news for mining proponents, though.

Some of the public health and environmental risks could be mitigated by using "best practice" approaches from a number of regulatory bodies, it found.

Use of those methods "has the potential to substantially reduce near- to moderate-term environmental effects," the report stated.

But making assurances is complicated by a number of unknowns: the lack of similar mines to draw comparisons from, for example, and the incredibly long life span of the tailings.

"The report did not say you can mitigate all risks," said Paul Locke, chairman of the National Academy of Sciences study committee. "It said you can mitigate some risks."

Pressed by reporters at a teleconference to say whether uranium can be mined safely in Virginia, Locke referred them to a line in the report's conclusion that he called its "Twitter version."

If the ban is lifted, that line stated, "there are steep hurdles to be surmounted before mining and processing could be established in a way that is appropriately protective of the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment."

But with so much information packed into the exhaustive report (even the "non-technical summary" runs for 11 pages) both advocates and opponents of uranium mining found something to like.

Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium, said the study "provides a clear road map for operating the world's safest uranium mine in Virginia."

The last chapter of the report details a regulatory structure the state could develop, based on a list of best practices.

"The NAS study states time and again that best practices now widely adopted by the industry have been effective at protecting water and air quality and overall public health," Wales said.

But according to Cale Jaffe of the Southern Environmental Law Center, the academy's findings are "a huge validation of the core concerns that we have been raising."

Other findings of the report include:

-- There are 55 underground concentrations of uranium in Virginia, including several in the Roanoke Valley. While some localities have gone on record supporting the ban -- partly because they fear a proliferation of mining -- the deposit in Pittsylvania County is the only one large and pure enough to be economically viable.

-- The current regulatory structure for uranium mining has gaps that need to be filled, and opportunities for meaningful public involvement are "fragmented and limited."

-- Although much concern has been about downstream drinking water supplies, people living near a uranium mine could also be exposed to radioactive dust carried by the wind. Contamination also could make its way into the local food chain, ending up in meat, fish or milk produced in the area.

-- The greatest health risks would apply to people who work in uranium mines. Current occupational standards for workers exposed to radon are inadequate, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

-- If the ban is lifted, uranium mining and milling would not likely begin in Virginia for five to eight years, as the state must come up with regulations for the process.

-- Internationally accepted best practices -- with an emphasis on long-term planning, public participation and use of the best expertise in the field -- "could provide a starting point for the Commonwealth if it decides to lift its moratorium."

The report was presented Monday to a subcommittee of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission, which ordered the study two years ago.

Some subcommittee members said they wanted specific information about the risks of mining at the Pittsylvania County site, a topic the report did not address. Other lawmakers said the state may need to lift the moratorium and develop regulations before deciding whether to allow a mine operation at the site.

Del. Onzlee Ware, D-Roanoke, a member of the subcommittee, said lifting the moratorium would not be an endorsement of uranium mining but would allow more time for additional scrutiny.

"Some General Assembly, whether it be this one or 20 years from now, will have to answer the question, 'Can we do uranium mining in Virginia safely and at minimal risk to human life?'" Ware said. "I don't think you can answer the question until you lift the moratorium."

Staff writer Michael Sluss contributed to this report.



MIND ON MUSIC

E.C. GLASS' GREG CHILDRESS STRIKES CHORD WITH COMPOSITIONS



A MEDIA GENERAL NEWSPAPER
75¢ SINGLE COPY/46¢ HOME DELIVERY

The News & Advance

NEWSADVANCE.COM | TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2011 | LYNCHBURG, VA.

Uranium Mining

Report: 'Hurdles' in path of mining



Opponents say study validates their concerns

AT STAKE

Virginia Uranium Inc. wants the commonwealth to lift the moratorium on uranium mining so they can mine up to \$10 billion worth of uranium in Pittsylvania County.

CONCERN

Opponents to lifting the moratorium say they fear contamination of water supplies among other health risks associated with mining.

BY RAY REED
rreed@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5532

RICHMOND — Virginia needs to overcome "steep hurdles" if lawmakers decide to lift the state's moratorium on uranium mining, according to a National Academy of Sciences report given Monday to the General Assembly's Uranium Mining Subcommittee.

Two of those hurdles involve creating safety regulations for uranium workers and keeping radiation and mine waste out of ground and surface water, the panel's scientists said. Neither need is addressed by Virginia's existing mining regulations.

Virginia Uranium Inc., the company that wants to mine up to \$10 billion worth of uranium from the Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County, said the NAS report "provided a clear road map" for developing a safe mine and milling process.

Opponents said the report validated their concerns that floods and earthquakes could turn a mine site into a source of contamination for rivers

See **URANIUM**, Page A8

With generic rivals, Lipitor sales halved

50%

Drop in sales after two generic rivals were introduced, not as bad as some analysts feared. Pfizer has made a point of trying to keep customers.

The Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. — Sales of cholesterol blockbuster Lipitor plunged by half barely a week after the world's top-selling drug got its first U.S. generic competition, new data show.

That's despite a very aggressive effort by Lipitor maker Pfizer Inc. to keep customers on its pill, which generated peak sales of \$13 billion a year, through

See **LIPITOR**, Page A8

STATE BUDGET PROPOSAL



Gov. Bob McDonnell holds up a copy of his budget proposal during a speech unveiling its details to a joint session of the General Assembly money committees Monday. The budget totals nearly \$85 billion in spending, up from \$80.7 in the current budget.

Budget drafts cuts, priorities



Pensions, colleges, development get boost in proposal

ONLINE
Read highlights of the budget at the state budget director's website at www.dpb.virginia.gov/budget

RICHMOND — The budget Gov. Bob McDonnell introduced Monday takes nearly \$800 million largely from inflation adjustments for health care and school support programs and reassigns money to Virginia's underfunded public pension plan, higher education and economic development.

The two-year state government spending blueprint prescribes no tax increases. Altogether, McDonnell's budget for the 24 months beginning July 1, 2012, totals nearly \$85 billion in combined appropriations, up from about \$80.7 billion for the biennium that ends June 30.

Spending from general tax collections on core services such as public safety, public schools and health care increases from about \$32 billion in the present budget to \$34.5 billion, about the same as total general fund appropriations for 2007-08.

TRACK THE BILL
Follow the bill through the legislative process at <http://leg2.state.vir.us/MoneyWeb/NSF/sb2012>

Non-general spending, largely from specific fees or taxes or federal money that flow to designated uses such as transportation with little if any legislative discretion, increases from nearly \$48 billion in the current budget to about \$50.3 billion. Much of it is federal money that pays for the 2010 health care act Congress passed

See **BUDGET**, Page A5

Budget again backs community housing

BY RAY REED
rreed@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5532

The state budget proposed by Gov. Bob McDonnell on Monday contains another \$30 million cash infusion into Virginia's efforts to provide community-based housing for people with intellectual disabilities.

The community-housing trend means, over time, some of Virginia's five training centers will be closed, the governor said. "I believe Virginia should continue this transition from serving individuals in institutions, and continue this investment in providing needed services in less restrictive and ultimately the much less expensive environment of community-

based settings," McDonnell told the General Assembly's money committees. "The community homes get people closer to their families, it's less expensive, it's the right thing to do, all the advocates support that," McDonnell told reporters afterward.

McDonnell didn't
See **HOUSING**, Page A5

BUDGET PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

REDUCTIONS

- ▶ \$258.6 million saved by not funding inflation costs for hospital rates under Medicaid.
- ▶ \$109 million from eliminating the allowance for inflation growth in non-classroom public school support services.
- ▶ \$108 million in expiring federal stimulus money for public schools that the state won't replace.
- ▶ \$81 million cut from projected enrollment increases to the Virginia Preschool Initiative that McDonnell's advisers say widely exceed actual enrollment growth. Overall, funding for the program increases by about \$5 million.

INCREASES

- ▶ \$2.2 billion previously announced boost in employer contributions to the underfunded Virginia Retirement System, about half of which comes from city and county governments.
 - ▶ \$650 million for increased use of Medicaid, a federal-state health care entitlement program for the aged, needy and disabled that now consumes one-fifth of Virginia's general fund.
 - ▶ \$438 million net increase for public education, most of it to meet revised minimum curriculum benchmarks under state law including classroom staffing ratios and teacher salaries.
- All totals represent actions taken over both years of the biennial budget.

WEATHER
High: 56; Low: 45
Details: A8

LIFESTYLE B1
LOCAL C1
SPORTS D1

B1 Abby
Classifieds C5
Comics A6, 7
Crossword A7
Lottery

A6 Movies
C2 Obituaries
A4 Opinion
D2 Scoreboard
B4 Television

VOLUME 146, NO. 354
COMING WEDNESDAY
All things gardening in Don Davis' weekly column.





<http://www2.newsadvance.com/news/2011/dec/19/steep-hurdles-overcome-lift-virginias-uranium-mini-ar-1555958/>

"Steep hurdles" to overcome to lift Virginia's uranium mining moratorium

By: [Ray Reed](#) | Lynchburg News and Advance
Published: December 19, 2011

Virginia needs to overcome “steep hurdles” if lawmakers decide to lift the state’s moratorium on uranium mining, according to a National Academy of Sciences report given Monday to the General Assembly’s Uranium Mining Subcommittee.

Two of those hurdles involve creating safety regulations for uranium workers and keeping radiation and mine waste out of ground and surface water, the panel’s scientists said. Neither need is addressed by Virginia’s existing mining regulations.

Virginia Uranium Inc., the company that wants to mine up to \$10 billion worth of uranium from the Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County, said the NAS report “provided a clear road map” for developing a safe mine and milling process.

Opponents said the report validated their concerns that floods and earthquakes could turn a mine site into a source of contamination for rivers and drinking water.

Del. Watkins Abbitt, I-Appomattox, a member of the mining subcommittee, said the report left many questions unanswered — chiefly about whether mine tailings, or waste, can be kept out of streams and ground water if a storm dumped torrents of rain on the site.

Abbitt said a mining plan — specifying whether an open-pit mine or deep-shaft mine would be the preferred method — would help the General Assembly decide whether the project could be done safely.

Walter Coles, who owns most of the Coles Hill site, said a mining plan would require several years of engineering studies, and a set of not-yet-written regulations were necessary to guide the engineers.

The NAS report was the fourth, and possibly the most eagerly anticipated, study this year about the possibility of mining the Coles Hill deposit.

Some state legislators have said the NAS report would guide the General Assembly's decision this year on whether to start the regulation-writing process for uranium mining, even if it does not lift the moratorium during its upcoming session.

But the NAS still is under contract to hold community meetings in the Danville area to explain its report to the public.

Also, legislators have more than 700 pages of uranium study reports to read over the holidays before the assembly convenes on Jan. 11.

That combination of more public meetings and heavy reading could mean the assembly won't act on the uranium issue during its upcoming session, several legislators said.

Dr. Paul Locke, a NAS committee member and Virginia resident who directs the public health program at Johns Hopkins University, presented the report Monday, assisted by David Feary, who directed the study for the NAS.

A report circulated during the meeting that a member of the NAS study committee, Corby Anderson of the Colorado School of Mines, had filed a complaint about the committee's report.

Anderson, contacted after the meeting, said he complained because he felt pressured to sign off on the report before he had time to fully review its background material, which came to him late. Anderson said the pressure came from a staff member of the National Research Council, a body associated with the NAS.

Anderson and the other 13 members of the committee, all from universities, laboratories and engineering firms across the United States, compiled the study as unpaid volunteers. They visited mine sites in Colorado and Saskatchewan, Canada.

Unlike two other studies in the past month, the NAS report focused almost completely on risks of mining and processing uranium, and did not mention potential jobs and other economic benefits.

Only two mining methods, an open-pit mine or an underground shaft, can work in Virginia, the NAS study said, because the uranium deposit is contained in hard rock.

Virginia has 55 known uranium sites, the study said, but only the Coles Hill deposit is verified as rich enough to be economically viable for mining at current uranium prices, the NAS study said, echoing several other reports.

Virginia should make sure the water, both on the surface and underground, are protected from mining's effects, the NAS said. The need poses a challenge for mining regulators because of Virginia's relatively wet climate, the study said.

Workers' health should be protected from radon gas, especially in an underground mine environment, the study said. Ventilation systems carrying air through an underground mine can solve the radon problem, other studies have indicated.

The study said the United States' existing mining regulations may not be well suited to Virginia because they were developed more than two decades ago for mines in dry Western climates, the study said.

"There are steep hurdles to be surmounted before mining and processing could be established in a way that is appropriately protective of the health and safety of the workers, the public and the environment," the study said.

Patrick Wales, project manager for Virginia Uranium, said the company "believes this study provides a clear road map and path forward for operating the world's safest uranium mine," and technological and regulatory advances the past 30 years improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry.

Cale Jaffe of the Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville called the report "a huge validation for many of the core concerns that we have been raising," and "a uranium mine or processing facility could be subject to an uncontrolled release as a result of flood, hurricane, or earthquake.

"In Virginia, we've experienced all of those extreme events just this year," Jaffe said.

URANIUM:

'Unknowns' in Va. mining project create regulatory challenges -- NAS

Manuel Quinones, E&E reporter

Published: Monday, December 19, 2011

Virginia regulators would face "steep hurdles" if state lawmakers lift a two-decade moratorium on uranium mining, the National Academy of Sciences said in a release this afternoon.

A National Research Council panel identified regulatory gaps and risks associated with uranium mining but did not make recommendations to the state's General Assembly.

"If Virginia were to lift its moratorium, it would have to create some sort of legal and regulatory structure," said Paul Locke, an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the chairman of the panel, told reporters in a conference call.

The release of the 300-page report comes amid intense lobbying by Virginia Uranium Inc., which is looking to tap a uranium deposit near the town of Chatham in Pittsylvania County ([Greenwire](#), May 27).

Requested by lawmakers in 2009 and funded by the company, the report says the United States is relatively inexperienced with mining uranium in wet climates like Virginia's.

"Extreme natural events have the potential to lead to the release of contaminants if facilities are not designed and constructed to withstand such an event or fail to perform as designed," the report warns.

And the report suggests federal rules are not strong enough to protect miners from radiation risks, particularly because regulatory agencies have not adopted recommendations by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety.

"If uranium mining, processing, and reclamation are designed, constructed, operated, and monitored according to modern best practices," the report says, "near to moderate-term environmental effects should be substantially reduced."

Locke noted, "The report did not say you could mitigate all risks, it says you can mitigate some risks. There are unknowns because this has not been done a lot in the U.S."

Researchers visited two uranium mine sites in Canada and studied regulations in Colorado. The study panel met seven times over 11 months, including two town-hall-style events to gather public input.

Virginia Uranium promised to follow the best practices outlined in the report, including mine ventilation and heavily lined below-grade waste ponds.

"The study shows that major technological and regulatory advances over the past 30 years have dramatically improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry," project manager Patrick Wales said in a statement.

But environmentalists said the report failed to make a case for uranium mining.

"The report highlights the difficulty of storing radioactive waste for thousands of years, given Virginia's climate, geology and population density," said Dan Holmes, state policy director for Warrenton, Va.-based Piedmont Environmental Council. "We are now more convinced that this would be a dangerous experiment in Virginia."

While momentum has been building for state lawmakers to debate the issue during their upcoming session, some are calling for a delay.

Cale Jaffe, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, warned against drafting rules before lawmakers decide on the moratorium.

"You don't put the cart before the horse," Jaffe said in a statement. "You don't develop regulations before you've made the public policy decision on whether this industry can be safely regulated at all."

ALL METRO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
RUNNER OF THE YEAR
 SPORTS » B1

Gas prices drained wallets this year
 INSIDE » B4

Danville Register & Bee

TUESDAY » DECEMBER 20, 2011 • DANVILLE, VA. • www.GoDanRiver.com

A MEDIA GENERAL NEWSPAPER
 75¢ SINGLE COPY/35¢ HOME DELIVERY

URANIUM MINING

'Steep hurdles' or a road map?



Protesters hold signs as they demonstrate against the push to end the moratorium on uranium mining at the Capitol in Richmond on Monday. The House uranium mining subcommittee was presented with the National Academy of Sciences' study on uranium mining.

Opponents say fears validated; study seen as path to advance by company

BY TARA BOZICK
 tbozick@registerandbee.com
 (434) 751-7552

RICHMOND — Virginia must overcome "steep hurdles" if the state wants to take on uranium mining, according to a National Academy of Sciences report released Monday.

The 290-page report can't answer all uranium questions, nor is it a "cookbook" for how Virginia can develop rules for monitoring uranium activity, study committee chair Paul Locke, an associate professor at

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told a legislative subcommittee in Richmond on Monday.

The NAS report doesn't say if uranium mining can be done safely in the state. That's a policy decision for lawmakers who must decide whether to lift a 30-year moratorium so Virginia Uranium Inc. can mine and mill what's thought to be the largest undeveloped U.S. uranium deposit in Pittsylvania County. Legislation on the issue is expected next session, which

See URANIUM, Page A3



Dr. Paul Locke holds a summary of a report on uranium mining during a meeting of the uranium mining subcommittee on Monday.

Ghost signs haunt again

City Council to vote on controversial issue at tonight's meeting

BY DENISE THIBODEAU
 dthibodeau@registerandbee.com
 (434) 751-7555

Ghost signs — those ancient, faded advertising signs that decorate downtown Danville buildings — may soon be visible again.

Danville City Council is expected to vote on a long-worked-over amendment to the city's sign ordinance at its meeting tonight.

The issue with ghost signs came to light in September when Jeffrey Seiden, owner of Dan River Art Works, brought the Coca-Cola sign on the side of the Ferrell Building back to life with a new paint job.

Seiden was stopped by staff from the city's planning and zoning department, who said he was violating the sign ordinance.

The ordinance prohibits billboards in the city, and since this sign advertises a product that is currently available, it violated the ordinance, according to Ken Gillie Jr., director of planning.

The issue was resolved and Seiden completed the work while a new sign ordinance was drafted to include how ghost signs would be handled.

Gillie presented the ordinance to Danville City Council in November, and drew criticism from Councilmen Fred Shanks and David Luther, who considered the ordinance too restrictive, confusing and complicated. Other City Council members agreed, and they decided to table the matter, told Gillie to simplify it and scheduled it for discussion at a work session.

See COUNCIL, Page A3

New \$85B budget cuts health, school inflation allowance

Reassigns funds to state's public pension plan, higher ed, development

The Associated Press

RICHMOND — The Budget Gov. Bob McDonnell introduced Monday takes nearly \$800 million largely from inflation adjustments for health care and school support programs and reassigns money to Virginia's underfunded public pension plan, higher education and economic development.

The two-year state government spending blueprint prescribes no tax increases. Altogether, McDonnell's

budget for the 24 months beginning July 1, 2012, totals nearly \$85 billion in combined appropriations, up from about \$80.7 billion for the biennium that ends June 30.

Spending from general tax collections on core services such as public safety, public schools and health care increases from about \$32 billion in the present budget to \$34.5 billion, about the same as total general fund appropriations for 2007-08.

Non-general fund spending, largely from specific fees or taxes or federal money that flow to designated uses such as transportation with little if

any legislative discretion, increases from nearly \$48 billion in the current budget to about \$50.3 billion. Much of it is federal money that pays for the 2010 health care act Congress passed in 2010 that Virginia and other states want the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional.

McDonnell proposes the elimination of nearly \$259 million in hospitalization inflation costs and more than \$65 million in nursing home inflation adjustments from Virginia's share of the federal-state Medicaid program.

Christopher S. Bailey of the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association said the state has refused for years to recognize increasing costs, and now

See BUDGET, Page A3

Budget at a glance

	REDUCTIONS	\$258.6 million saved by not funding inflation costs for hospital rates under Medicaid
		\$109 million from eliminating the allowance for inflation growth in non-classroom public school support services
		\$108 million in expiring federal stimulus money for public schools that the state won't replace
	INCREASES	\$2.2 billion previously announced boost in employer contributions to the underfunded Virginia Retirement System
		\$650 million for increased use of Medicaid, a federal-state health care entitlement program for the aged, needy and disabled
		\$438 million net increase for public education, most of it to meet revised minimum curriculum benchmarks under state law



57
52

Cloudy with off and on showers at night **A8**

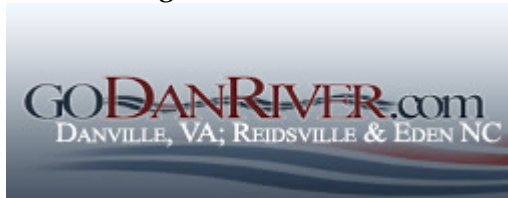


Annie's Mailbox B5
 Classifieds B7
 Comics B6
 Horoscope B6

Lottery A2
 Movie Ticket B5
 Opinions A4

Puzzle B6
 Region & State A2
 Sports B1
 Stocks B4

COMING TOMORROW: Local historian contributes to a five-volume series on the Civil War.



<http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2011/dec/19/steep-hurdles-surround-uranium-mining-ar-1555825/>

'Steep hurdles' surround uranium mining

By: [Tara Bozick](#) | GoDanRiver.com

Published: December 19, 2011

RICHMOND --

Virginia must overcome “steep hurdles” if the state wants to take on uranium mining, according to a National Academy of Sciences report released Monday.

The 290-page report can’t answer all uranium questions, nor is it a “cookbook” for how Virginia can develop rules for monitoring uranium activity, study committee chair Paul Locke, an associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told a legislative subcommittee in Richmond on Monday.

The NAS report doesn’t say if uranium mining can be done safely in the state. That’s a policy decision for lawmakers who must decide whether to lift a 30-year moratorium so Virginia Uranium Inc. can mine and mill what’s thought to be the largest undeveloped U.S. uranium deposit in Pittsylvania County. Legislation on the issue is expected next session, which begins Jan. 11, although some lawmakers are pushing for the General Assembly to wait to debate lifting the moratorium until 2013 to give legislators and the public time to digest the NAS report and other uranium studies.

The Virginia Coal and Energy Commission asked the NAS for the \$1.4 million scientific study, funded by Virginia Uranium through Virginia Tech, and also commissioned a socioeconomic impact study that was released earlier this month.

To guide decision-making, the 14-member NAS study committee clearly explained the risks uranium mining or milling could have on the environment, public health and worker safety and also how best to mitigate some, but not all, of those risks, Locke said. Because Virginia has no uranium monitoring experience, and the U.S. has little experience with modern mines and mills, the study panel based advice on internationally accepted best practices that evolved over the past 25 years.

Should the moratorium be lifted, the NAS report emphasizes the need for holistic planning from the project outset, relying on the appropriate experts and getting the public involved in all phases of the uranium project from mining to long-term site stewardship.

That includes strengthening some of the state’s existing programs to meet best practices, like public involvement in decision-making. For instance, explicit public participation opportunities for permitting a mining facility in the state are currently limited to adjacent landowners, the report stated in Chapter 7.

While Virginia could base a uranium regulatory framework off existing laws, the report said enacting entirely new uranium laws, and a new regulatory program, would be optimal. Interagency coordination and integration is vital.

The committee estimated it would take between five to eight years after lifting the moratorium to commence any uranium mining.

Yet, Locke acknowledged there are still many “unknowns” from a scientific perspective based on data.

Delegate Watkins Abbitt, a member of the uranium mining subcommittee of the Coal and Energy Commission, asked if maintaining a radioactive tailings (uranium mill waste) containment site for 1,000 years, as per federal regulation, was realistic.

Locke acknowledged past problems with tailings contamination, but that tailings management has improved internationally in the past couple decades. Even so, the data only show such modern tailings confinement facilities have been effective for 20-25 years, Locke said. Because the data is insufficient, modeling is used to predict how long they will last.

Subcommittee member Delegate Onzlee Ware asked if health risks have changed with the use of recent best practices, but study director David Feary with the National Research Council explained studying health results of radiation exposure in epidemiological studies requires a period of time to elapse.

Workers with long-term exposure to radon gas are at risk for developing lung cancer.

Ware said his and others’ questions would need to be answered by studies of the Coles Hill site. The NAS report was statewide and more general in nature, and the committee could not find a uranium mining site with conditions like Coles Hill.

While uranium mining opponents found the NAS report to validate their concerns about potential risks to human health and the environment, the uranium mining company viewed the report as a “road map” for moving forward.

“I think it affirmed a lot of our core concerns about the ability for the state of Virginia to enact and enforce a robust regulatory program,” said Executive Director Nathan Lott of the Virginia Conservation Network.

He used Virginia’s difficulty in helping clean up the Chesapeake Bay, let alone monitoring radioactive pollutants, as an example.

Virginia Uranium project manager Patrick Wales said in a statement that the company could strive to exceed regulatory standards and embraces the best practices listed in the report, including participation and review from the public and environmental groups.

“Virginia Uranium believes this study provides a clear road map and path forward for operating the world’s safest uranium mine in Virginia,” Wales said.

The NAS will host public meetings, including in Danville and Richmond, to explain the study’s findings, Feary said.

Potential risks:

- » Uranium mining and processing (milling) brings a wide range of potential adverse human health effect. The potential for such increases in the event of uncontrolled releases from extreme events like floods or human error.
- » Exposure to radon and its radioactive decay products are strongly linked to lung cancer in humans.
- » Radiation exposure to general population from off-site releases of radionuclides presents some risk to health.
- » Workers also at risk from silica dust and diesel exhaust, which also increase lung cancer risk.

- » Uranium activity has potential to impact water quality and quantity, soils and air quality.
- » “Tailings disposal sites represent potential sources of contamination for thousands of years, and the long-term risks remain poorly defined.”

Regulatory insight and advice:

- » Adopting the “as low as reasonably achievable” concept for standards would enhance protection of health and the environment, as striving for compliance only is not a best practice. The current federal occupational exposure limit for radon gas is believed to be too high by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
- » Use best practices: complete life cycle planning, use qualified experts and be transparent with meaningful public involvement.
- » Ensure project costs, including long-term stewardship, are reflected in the type and amount of financial surety.
- » Ensure inspection and enforcement tools are transparent, practical, sufficient, independent and sustainable.
- » Virginia should be involved in regulatory processes of federal agencies to ensure good state-federal coordination.
- » Require an environmental impact assessment before the start of uranium mining. Current laws applicable in Virginia don’t require that before operations begin.

Chatham Star-Tribune

http://www.wpcva.com/news/article_02290932-2a73-11e1-8fb1-0019bb2963f4.html

Virginia faces challenges with uranium mining, study says

By **TIM DAVIS**

Star-Tribune Editor | Posted: Monday, December 19, 2011 1:47 pm

Virginia will face "steep hurdles" to protect the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment if lawmakers lift a 30-year moratorium on uranium mining and milling, according to a long-awaited scientific report released Monday.

The 350-page study, "Uranium Mining in Virginia," was conducted by the National Research Council, the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering.

The 18-month study for the Virginia Commission on Coal and Energy's Uranium Mining Subcommittee looked at the scientific, environmental, human health and safety, and regulatory aspects of mining and processing uranium in Virginia.

The study, presented to the subcommittee Monday in Richmond, was conducted under contract with Virginia Tech and funded by \$1.4 million from Virginia Uranium Inc.

Formed in 2007, Virginia Uranium hopes to mine a huge uranium deposit in Pittsylvania County.

The Coles Hill deposit, about six miles northeast of Chatham, was discovered in 1978 and is one of the largest in the United States. It is worth an estimated \$7 billion.

The study did not specifically address the Coles Hill site, nor did it recommend whether uranium mining should be permitted in Virginia.

"The legislature asked us for advice, not recommendations," said the committee's chairman, Dr. Paul A. Locke, an associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "We tried to lay out all the things they need to think about."

The General Assembly, which placed a moratorium on uranium mining in 1982, could decide to lift the ban when the 2012 session begins in January.

According to the report, uranium mining and processing carries a range of potential health and environmental risks.

"Although some health risks would apply to any type of hard-rock mining or other large-scale industrial or construction activity," the study said, "other health risks are linked to the potential for exposure to radioactive materials that can occur during uranium mining and processing."

The report, however, noted that some health and environmental risks could be mitigated or better controlled if uranium mining, processing, and reclamation are conducted according to best practices.

To read more of this and other stories, pick up a copy of this week's Star-Tribune on newsstands or subscribe online or by calling 432-2791.

A year's subscription, which is just \$26 in Danville and Pittsylvania County, also gives you free access to the Star-Tribune's e-edition, an online version of the entire newspaper.



TALES FROM THE TREE
HOLIDAY ORNAMENTS CHERISHED
D1
T&C



MINIATURE CHRISTMAS
VILLAGES ARE MAN'S HIGHLIGHT
C1
REGION



STORY OF THE YEAR
PENN STATE DOMINATED THE NEWS
B1
SPORTS

The Free Lance-Star

SERVING FREDERICKSBURG, SPOTSYLVANIA, STAFFORD, KING GEORGE, CAROLINE, ORANGE, CULPEPER, WESTMORELAND, FAUQUIER AND LOUISA

75 CENTS

WEATHER: HIGH 54, LOW 51. CLOUDY, RAIN LATE A2

FREDERICKSBURG, VA. FOR 24-HOUR UPDATES, GO TO FREDERICKSBURG.COM

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2011

McDonnell proposes \$85 billion, two-year budget

SPENDING PLAN TRIES TO GIVE CUSHION IN CASE OF FEDERAL CUTS; NO TAX HIKES INCLUDED

BY CHELYN DAVIS
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

RICHMOND—Gov. Bob McDonnell unveiled his two-year, \$85 billion budget to General Assembly

money committees yesterday, saying the budget is conservative and "makes tough decisions."

His proposal relies on expected increases in revenue and almost \$400 million in cuts and savings—largely to Medicaid and public education—to provide more cash for transportation, state colleges

and state worker retirement. It contains no tax increases, although it does increase some DMV fees.

"The budget bill that I am presenting today reflects the core priorities of government and our administration. And it recognizes the realities of the unpredictable global economy," McDonnell said.

HIGHLIGHTS » Some key points in governor's proposed budget. A8

"This is not a status quo period in Virginia history, thus this budget will not be a status quo budget," McDonnell said he tried in the budget to provide a cushion for potential federal budget cuts, and

set money aside in case the economy worsens.

To pay for his spending proposals, McDonnell proposes not to fund inflation increases for Medicaid reimbursements and for public education support services.

Such "targeted savings" will save
SEE BUDGET, BACK PAGE

Uranium report says local sites not viable

ACADEMY STUDY FINDS ONLY PITTSYLVANIA TO HAVE DEPOSITS WITH COMMERCIAL PROMISE

BY RUSTY DENNEN
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Uranium mining and milling in Virginia would present human health and safety and environmental risks, which could be mitigated with best-management practices, according to a long-awaited National Academy of Sciences study released yesterday.

And, of interest to the Fredericksburg area, it concludes that only Virginia Uranium's proposed Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County would be commercially viable among Virginia deposits, for now. The site is about 180 miles southwest of Fredericksburg.

The NAS' National Research Council study, supported by a grant from Virginia Tech and funded by Virginia Uranium Inc., makes no recommendation as to whether mining should be allowed. Scientific, techni-

INSIDE » Read more on the study's findings. A8

cal, environmental, human health and safety, and regulatory aspects of mining the radioactive ore are evaluated across the state.

The study comes as the Virginia General Assembly could decide during its session starting next month to lift a mining moratorium imposed in 1982.

Paul A. Locke, who chaired the committee that prepared the 290-page report, told reporters yesterday that the Pittsylvania site appears to be "the only commercially and economically viable" location to extract uranium ore in the commonwealth.

That should ease concerns here because in the 1970s, Marline Uranium Corp. secured leases on thousands of acres in Orange, Culpeper, Madison and Fauquier counties, with a plan to mine and mill the mineral.

Marline eventually settled on the richer Pittsylvania

SEE URANIUM, BACK PAGE

GERMANNA » 893 STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

College holds first fall commencement



PHOTOS BY PETER CHELKA/THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Becky Morris (left), who works in the Germanna Community College financial aid office, helps business administration major Laura Fusco with last minute cap-and-gown adjustments before the commencement.

BY PAMELA GOULD
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Kevin Jackson started turning his life around his senior year in high school when he recognized that his difficult past didn't need to define him.

At age 8, he and his two younger siblings were taken in from their mother and placed in foster care, leaving him sad, lonely and lacking motivation to apply himself.

A few years later, the three siblings' foster parents adopted them, but the Caroline County youth still felt hurt and misunderstood.

But when he hit 18, he decided to set a new course and start studying in earnest at Germanna Community College.

He told himself: "Don't let a situation that I couldn't control in my past be an excuse for circumstances that I'm in today."

Jackson started setting goals and pursuing them,



Biology instructor Shashuna Gray (left) and instructional designer Julie Mersiosky share a laugh.

he told Germanna's first fall graduating class at the Fredericksburg Expo and Conference Center last night.

And today, at 31, Jackson is director of respiratory care and pediatric pulmonary services at Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond. He is also married, has a 21-month-old son and is taking his education to the limit,

currently working on his doctorate in public health policy.

Germanna's first December graduation ceremony reflected the season with the Fredericksburg Community Concert Band playing Christmas music as students and their families and friends arrived.

At least three faculty members donned black Santa hats—each trimmed

NUMBERS

GERMANNA'S FIRST FALL GRADUATES

Germanna Community College held its first fall semester graduation last night, awarding the following degrees and certificates.

- 483 associate's degrees
- 303 non-credit certificates
- 107 career studies certificates

in a different color—along with their black robes.

And, unlike a spring-time graduation where it's chiefly sandals and heels, some female graduates sported black boots with their burgundy gloves.

Virginia Community College System Chancellor Glenn DuBois commended the students for their spirit in forging ahead undaunted
SEE GERMANNA, BACK PAGE

House to vote on payroll tax today

BY ALAN FRAM
AND DAVID ESPO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—House Republicans last night announced they had set a vote for today to reject a bipartisan two-month extension that cleared the Senate over the weekend.

They said they would seek negotiations on a bill to renew the cuts through 2012. But that left Congress once again at a standoff yesterday on legislation to prevent a Social Security payroll tax increase for 160 million workers on Jan. 1.

"It's time to stop the nonsense. We can resolve these differences and we can do it in a way that provides certainty for job creators and others," said Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio.

SEE PAYROLL, PAGE A5

INSIDE TODAY

north korea
COUNTRYMEN
GRIEVE FOR KIM

World wonders what to expect as leader's youthful son prepares to take over government. New agreement that would have sent U.S. food aid in exchange for new talks over nation's nuclear capability might be on hold. A4

gas prices

AMERICANS PAID
BIG TO FILL 'ER UP

Study finds typical U.S. family spent more than \$4,000 on gasoline in the past year. C5

INDEX: BIC... D1
ADVICE... D1
BUSINESS... C4
CLASSIFIEDS... C6
COMICS... D1
EDITORIALS... A6
HOROSCOPE... D4
LOTTERIES... B4
OUTDOORS... C2
REGION... C1
SPORTS... B1
SUDDOKU... D5
TV PAGE... D4

VOL. 127 NO. 354
© 2011 Free Lance-Star Publishing Co.



COMING UP » KING GEORGE FIRE AND RESCUE SAYS IT'S IN DIRE NEED OF HELP

<http://blogs.fredericksburg.com/newsdesk/2011/12/19/uranium-report-says-local-sites-not-viable/>

Uranium report says local sites not viable

By RUSTY DENNEN

Uranium mining and milling in Virginia would present human health and safety and environmental risks, which could be mitigated with best-management practices, according to a long-awaited National Academy of Sciences study released Monday.

And, of interest to the Fredericksburg area, it concludes that only Virginia Uranium's proposed Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County would be commercially viable among Virginia deposits, for now. The site is about 180 miles southwest of Fredericksburg.

The NAS' National Research Council study, supported by a grant from Virginia Tech and funded by Virginia Uranium Inc., makes no recommendation as to whether mining should be allowed.

Scientific, technical, environmental, human health and safety, and regulatory aspects of mining the radioactive ore are evaluated across the state.

The study comes as the Virginia General Assembly could decide during its session starting next month to lift a mining moratorium imposed in 1982.

Paul A. Locke, who chaired the committee that prepared the 290-page report, told reporters Monday that the Pittsylvania site appears to be "the only commercially and economically viable" location to extract uranium ore in the commonwealth.

That should ease concerns here because in the 1970s, Marline Uranium Corp. secured leases on thousands of acres in Orange, Culpeper, Madison and Fauquier counties, with a plan to mine and mill the mineral.

Marline eventually settled on the richer Pittsylvania deposit. Leases here were withdrawn in the early 1980s when uranium prices plummeted after the 1979 partial meltdown at Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania.

In response to the Marline plan, the Orange County Board of Supervisors in the early 1980s passed a resolution recognizing "a threat to the county water supply and its agriculture products via the possible mining and milling of uranium."

In 2007, Orange supervisors, Planning Commission and Farm Bureau voted unanimously to ask lawmakers to continue the moratorium. The supervisors recently restated that position.

If lawmakers lift the moratorium, opponents say, it could open up other areas across the state to mining.

Patrick Wales, Virginia Uranium's project manager, has said the company wants to mine only at Coles Hill, though the company reportedly told investors that other Virginia deposits could be developed.

Locke, a professor of environmental science at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said even if the moratorium is lifted, it would take five to eight years for any mining to commence.

Any licensee would face "steep hurdles," he said, to allow for a regulatory setting that protects workers, the public and the environment, given that Virginia has no such framework for mining radioactive materials.

"Internationally accepted best practices, which include timely and meaningful public participation, are available to mitigate some of the risks involved," Locke said. "However, there are still many unknowns."

Groups on both sides of the issue were reviewing the document Monday.

"Virginia Uranium believes this study provides a clear road map and path forward for operating the world's safest uranium mine in Virginia," Wales said in a press release.

"The study shows that major technological and regulatory advances over the past 30 years have dramatically improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry."

Gov. Bob McDonnell said all energy development should be pursued "if it will create jobs, spur our economy, reduce Virginia's and the nation's dependence on foreign energy supplies, and be done in a safe and responsible manner."

He said state regulatory agencies will do a "detailed and thorough review" and that he expects to have their analysis by early next month.

Chris Miller, president of the Warrenton-based Piedmont Environmental Council, said the report "confirms that uranium mining would be a dangerous experiment for Virginia" and that "neither the mining industry nor federal or state regulators have any experience with uranium mining or milling" in areas with a relatively wet climate, such as Virginia. Most uranium mining worldwide is done in dry climates.

The Keep the Ban Coalition said the General Assembly should take no action toward developing regulations until after the NAS has completed a public outreach on the study's conclusions.

Rusty Dennen: 540/374-5431

rdennen@freelancestar.com

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

Virginia Uranium Inc.'s Coles Hill site in Pittsylvania County is the only commercially viable site in the state.

Uranium mining and processing carries with it a wide range of potential adverse human health risks.

A detailed assessment of both the potential site and its surrounding area (including natural, historical and social characteristics) would be needed.

It is not yet possible to predict what specific type of uranium mining or processing might apply to ore deposits in Virginia.

A mining project could affect surface water quality and quantity, groundwater quality and quantity, soils, air quality and organisms in the vicinity.

Because of the 1982 moratorium, the state has no experience regulating uranium mining and there is no regulatory infrastructure.

Planning should take into account all aspects of the process—including the eventual closure, site remediation and reclamation—prior to initiation of a project, and there should be opportunities for public involvement throughout.

For more on the report, nationalacademies.org
—National Research Council of the National Academies



Boys team falls to Liberty, 57-48 | Field hockey goalie Fox named 1st team all-state

STAR EXPONENT CULPEPER, VIRGINIA A Media General Newspaper • Star Exponent.com 75c TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2011

Budget cuts two allowances

Tax increases not included in plan

The Associated Press. RICHMOND — The budget Gov. Bob McDonnell introduced Monday takes nearly \$800 million largely from inflation adjustments for health care and school support programs, guts his predecessor's pre-kindergarten program, and reassigns money to Virginia's underfunded public pension plan, higher education and economic development.

The two-year state government spending blueprint prescribes no tax increases. Altogether, McDonnell's budget for the 24 months beginning July 1, 2012, totals nearly \$85 billion in combined appropriations, up from about \$80.7 billion for the



Gov. Bob McDonnell on Monday introduced his two-year budget proposal, which includes nearly \$85 billion in combined appropriations.

\$32 billion in the present budget to \$34.5 billion, about the same as total general fund appropriations for 2007-08. Non-general fund spending, largely from specific fees or taxes or federal money that flow to designated uses such as transportation with little if any legislative discretion, increases from nearly \$48 billion in the current budget to about \$50.3 billion. Much of it is federal money that

pays for the 2010 health care act Congress passed in 2010 that Virginia and other states want the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional. McDonnell proposes the elimination of nearly \$259 million in hospitalization inflation costs and more than \$65 million in nursing home inflation adjustments from Virginia's share of

See BUDGET, Page A6

CULPEPER SLEEP CENTERS



David Neel, CEO of Calpeper Sleep Center in downtown Culpeper, explains Monday the equipment certified technicians use to monitor patients suffering from sleep disorders. Neel celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Dec. 9.

Rest assured

Area medical experts stress importance of monitoring potential, existing disorders

BY RHONDA SIMMONS rhosimmons@starnewspaper.com (540) 825-0771 ext. 125. Enjoying a good night's sleep may come easy to most. But that's not the case for some 50 to 70 million Americans who suffer from chronic sleep disorders, which could lead to longer term health issues

such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity, according to the National Health, Lung and Blood Institute. Of the numerous sleep disorders, insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea and narcolepsy are some of the most common. Some medical experts say obstructive sleep apnea could possibly put a person's life in danger because the "airway collapses during sleep and prevents air from getting to your lungs." As a case in point, David Neel, CEO of the Culpeper Sleep Center located at 246 E. Davis St., explained that sleep apnea is when a person is starved for oxygen.

INSIDE See a list of sleep disorder symptoms and solutions, tips for good sleep hygiene and anti-snoring techniques on Page A4 literally putting a person's life in danger because of heart damage. "The problem is by having the airway cut off, their heart rate shoots through the roof and their blood pressure skyrockets and their oxygen levels go down because they are not getting proper oxygen and that's when they start gasping and choking," Neel explained Monday. See SLEEP, Page A4

Uranium Mining report released

Findings: State must conquer 'steep hurdles' before extraction safe

The Associated Press. RICHMOND — A highly anticipated National Academy of Sciences report on uranium mining concluded Monday that Virginia must overcome "steep hurdles" before it can assure that a rich deposit of the radioactive ore can be safely extracted and processed, as a mining company wants to do. The 290-page report is expected to guide the 2012 General Assembly if it considers ending a 30-year ban on uranium mining. The report does not recommend whether the ban be lifted or remain in place, but makes clear the state must address a number of environmental and public safety issues before mining can occur. The report points to many of the concerns raised by opponents of uranium mining, who have argued the East Coast's wet, hurricane-prone climate is a risky environment for mining uranium and milling, or separating the

See MINING, Page A4

KEY FINDINGS The \$14 million NAS study, which was financed by Virginia Uranium, was conducted by the Committee on Uranium Mining in Virginia. Its members including experts in mining, the environment, public health and the nuclear industry. If the moratorium was removed, uranium mining and processing are unlikely to begin for at least five to eight years. Extreme natural events, including earthquakes, should be considered when assessing the suitability of the Southside site of the uranium mining operation. Virginia was rattled by a magnitude 5.8 earthquake in August. While Coles Hill is the only known economically viable deposit in Virginia, "significant uranium occurrences" can be found in the Blue Ridge and Piedmont areas. Critics have said lifting the ban would open the entire state to uranium mining. Mining, processing and reclamation all have the potential to affect surface and groundwater, soils and air. Tailing disposal sites are potential sources of contamination for "thousands of years" and the long-term risks are poorly defined. If Virginia develops a regulatory framework for uranium mining and milling, it should exceed international industry standards.

Woman airlifted to UVa following two-car wreck

Star-Exponent Staff. Route 633, striking a 1998 Ford van operated by Samuel Baca, of Alexandria. Baca, and his passenger Osman Baca, were transported to Calpeper Regional Hospital. Tyler said trooper K.G. Snyder responded to the scene and the crash is still under investigation. The Culpeper County Sheriff's Office and volunteer fire and rescue squads assisted at the scene.



According to state police, a woman was hurt when she struck another vehicle after pulling out from a stop sign at U.S. 29 South and Route 633.



INSIDE Community, A2 Lottery, A2 Local & State, A3 Obituaries, A4 Editorial, A5 Sports, B1 Scoreboard, B2 Classified, B4 Comics, B6



49 | 41 Mostly cloudy chance of showers Forecast: A5

DELIVERY PROBLEM? Call the circulation department at 540-825-0771 ext. 133 or 540-829-5496

COMING UP | HOLIDAY GIVING Wayland Blue Ridge Baptist Deacon's group buys gifts for 18 children at Walmart.



<http://www.platts.com/RSSFeedDetailedNews/RSSFeed/ElectricPower/6782931>

Virginia not yet ready for uranium mining: study

Washington (Platts)--19Dec2011/446 pm EST/2146 GMT

Virginia has to overcome "steep hurdles" before it could open the state to uranium mining while adequately protecting its public and environment, according to a National Research Council report released Monday.

The 300-plus-page report was presented to a panel of the Virginia Legislature, which is considering whether to lift a 30-year-old moratorium on uranium mining in the state.

The report did not make recommendations on whether to remove or keep the moratorium, but warned that the state is currently not equipped to regulate uranium mining -- which it said could pose a threat to public health and environmental quality in the state.

The study was conducted at the request of Virginia state delegate Terry Kilgore, a Republican who chairs the Legislature's Coal and Energy Commission. It was funded by Virginia Uranium, a company formed to explore the Coles Hill uranium deposit in south central Virginia's Pittsylvania County with the hope to mine the area once the moratorium is lifted.

Coles Hill is the only area in Virginia with uranium ores that could be mined for a profit, with a total potential deposit of 119 million pounds uranium, the report said.

According to the website of Virginia Uranium, the uranium deposit, if extracted, could fuel the 104 nuclear reactors in the US for two years.

"Uranium mining and processing carries with it a wide range of potential adverse human health risks" to both the miners and the general public nearby, said the report by the council, which is a branch of the National Academies. It also said uranium mining and its associated activities "have the potential to impact" surface and groundwater supply, soil, as well as animals and plants.

Yet because of the moratorium, the report said, Virginia has "no experience regulating uranium mining and there is no existing regulatory infrastructure specifically for uranium mining" in the state. As the Coles Hill deposit is located on private land, it said, federal law on uranium mining would not apply, leaving "gaps in legal and regulatory coverage for activities involved in uranium mining, processing, reclamation, and long-term stewardship."

The deposit at Coles Hill was first discovered in 1978 and was explored by a company called Marline Uranium, but interest in it waned after Virginia placed a temporary ban on uranium mining in 1982 to develop proper regulations, and at the same time uranium prices tanked.

Virginia Uranium, according to the company website, was formed by two families living in the area and with \$39 million invested by funders in Toronto, Vancouver, and New York. The company said it has spent the bulk of the investment in further exploration and lobbying Virginians and state legislators to rescind the uranium mining ban.

The report suggested that Virginia fill its regulatory gaps and conduct further site-specific studies before opening the state to uranium mining. As "a starting point," it said, Virginia should learn from countries such as Canada and states such as Colorado that have years of experience regulating uranium mines.

The Virginia Legislature is expected to debate whether to remove the mining ban next year.

--Yanmei Xie, yanmei_xie@platts.com



<http://www.virginiabusiness.com/index.php/news/article/report-virginia-faces-obstacles-with-uranium-mining/315852/>

Report: Virginia faces obstacles with uranium mining

December 19, 2011 2:46 PM

Jessica Sabbath

Virginia faces “steep hurdles” if it chooses to lift a moratorium on uranium mining, according to a report released today by the National Research Council, the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

“If the Commonwealth of Virginia rescinds the existing moratorium on uranium mining, there are steep hurdles to be surmounted before mining and/or processing could be established within a regulatory environment that is appropriately protective of the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment,” the report concluded.

The 18-month study, conducted by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), identified key concerns over public health and the environment associated with uranium mining such as radon exposure and groundwater contamination but included recommendations on how Virginia could include to mitigate these risks.

The report concluded that uranium mining in Virginia would require: adoption and stringent regulation of international best practices for uranium mining, detailed scientific and technical studies, and a lengthy public input and review process.

The study was commissioned by Virginia’s Coal and Energy Commission after Virginia Uranium Inc. showed interest in mining two uranium deposits, known as the Coles Hill deposits, in Pittsylvania County worth an estimated \$7 billion. Virginia has had a moratorium in uranium mining for almost 30 years.

The National Academy of Sciences report did not provide a recommendation on whether Virginia should allow uranium mining or provide site-specific data on the Coles Hill deposits. Virginia has 55 areas known with high concentrations of uranium, but only the Coles Hill sites are known to be economically viable at today’s uranium prices.

One of the key obstacles Virginia would face is the state and federal lack of experience in regulating uranium mines, according to the study.

“There is only limited experience with modern underground and open pit uranium mining and processing practices in the wider United States, and no such experience in Virginia,” the report says.

The committee also recommended that the state consider the entire lifecycle of a mine or mill upfront, including engineering and design, startup, operations, reclamation and post-mining monitoring of uranium tailings.

Containment of uranium tailings, the solids which are produced from uranium mining, is one of the most significant concerns when covering environmental health, according to the report. Significant weather events or degradation of containment facilities can breach the tailings, contaminating groundwater that feeds into local water sources.

“Tailings will remain radioactive for thousands of years,” Paul Locke, chair of the NAS committee and associate professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said during a press conference Monday. He added that although modern technology has improved containments, data do not exist on the long-term effects of current containment technology.

Locke said that below-grade tailing containment, which is currently being proposed by Virginia Uranium, is a safer option for the storage of tailings, but that current regulations do allow for above-ground containment.

“The best practice is to build these below grade,” Locke said. But he pointed out that Colorado regulations did allow the storage of containments above ground.

Virginia Uranium said the study showed that uranium mining could be done under modern standards.

“The study shows that major technological and regulatory advances over the past 30 years have dramatically improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry,” Virginia Uranium Inc. Project Manager Patrick Wales said in a statement. “Virginia Uranium is committed to continuing that process by adopting the best practices and regulatory requirements identified by the NAS as essential to protecting the environment and public health.”

Environmental groups had a different conclusion about the study. “The NAS study does not demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that uranium mining in Virginia’s wet climate will pose absolutely no threat to public health and safety, we expect our Governor and public servants to sustain their commitment and keep the uranium mining ban in place,” said Andrew Lester, executive director of the Roanoke River Basin Association. “In fact, the study lists potentially insurmountable challenges in addressing the technological and regulatory problems with uranium mining in Virginia.

The report recommended that Virginia use best practices in uranium mining that are outlined by the World Nuclear Association, International Atomic Energy Agency, and International Radiation Protection Association.



(Roanoke, Va.)

Click on link to watch video

<http://www.wset.com/story/16356393/a-closer-look-at-uranium-mining-report>

A Closer Look at Uranium Mining Report

Posted: Dec 19, 2011 5:40 PM EST

Reporter: James Gherardi | Videographer: RJ Burnette

Danville, VA - It's the culmination of 18 long months of research, and Monday the National Academy of Sciences released its study on the impact of uranium mining.

It's expected to be very important in influencing the state legislature when they vote on potentially lifting the moratorium.

The 290-page report is a long and detailed list of potential health hazards stemming from uranium mining.

Everything from radon exposure, to possible ground water contamination, even impacts to the air quality.

The study looked at mining that would occur at the Cole's Hill site in Pittsylvania County.

The Academy was commissioned to look at the human health and environmental impacts, not economic or social influences.

According to the study, the most vulnerable to radon and other harmful mining byproducts are the mining workers themselves.

They did suggest though that these impacts could influence the general population as well. The study goes on to provide a list of suggestions for how safe mining can occur.

Funding for the study was provided through Virginia Uranium Incorporated.

In a statement, Virginia Uranium said the study found "major technological and regulatory advances over the past thirty years have dramatically improved the environmental and public health performance of the uranium mining and milling industry."

The study makes clear though, the potential for environmental and human health impacts are very real. One example is severe weather dangers.

"The report highlights the risk of an extreme weather event. It talks about hurricanes, it talks about earthquakes, it talks about floods. We've had all of those risks just this year alone," said Cale Jaffe, senior attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center.

The National Academy of Sciences will spend the next five months explaining the report to the general public. A vote on whether to lift the mining moratorium is expected sometime this General Assembly session.

Bacon's Rebellion

Reinventing Virginia for the 21st Century

<http://www.baconsrebellion.com/2011/12/virginias-energy-fantasies.html>

Virginia's Energy Fantasies

Posted on [December 20, 2011](#) by [Peter Galuszka](#) [2 Comments](#)

By Peter Galuszka

Plans to mine uranium in Southside Virginia did not get the boost some had been hoping for now that a 22-month-long review by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering has been released.

Far from rubber-stamping the plan, the independent analysis reported that there are “significant” health and environmental obstacles with the plan, which would allow mining 119 million pounds of uranium from the properties of several politically connected families near Chatham.

Among those challenges are that Virginia, which must protect the environment and the lives of mining workers, has no experience doing so and lacks any regulations covering mining uranium. The study did not give a go or no-go recommendation but said that mining could occur if proper safeguards were put in place. Getting them will take much time and effort.

In other words, the juggernaut towards the uranium mining idea, which has included all-expenses-paid trips to France for legislatures considering ending a two-decades-long ban on such mining, just got a big, bright yellow caution light, not exactly what proponents had hoped for.

Even supporters started backing away from the idea. Gov. Robert F. McDonnell, who wants to make Virginia “the Energy Capital of the East Coast” seemed to mumble that uranium mining should be done safely. Virginia Energy Resources Inc., which owns 29 percent of the mining project, put the happiest face it could on the report, stating that we now have a “roadmap” to employ the “best practices” in safety that have been in practice in the U.S. and Canada. Mining opponents hailed the report as vindication of their fears.

What's going to be interesting is the next step. How Virginia's business elite handles the report and the moratorium will be the determining factor about whether the ban is ended and the mining goes through.

The sad truth is that many of these people see only one side of the energy equation and are loath to consider environmental issues or even get a deeper understanding of energy itself. Instead, legitimate concerns are painted as over-regulation madness by the likes of Barack Obama and his band of socialists. What is sad is that these very critics really have no real idea of what the global energy mix and what the markets really are.

For proof, read a piece of a couple of weeks ago by Barry E. DuVal, the new president of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce who was once mayor of Newport News and a cabinet secretary under Republican Gov. Jim Gilmore. DuVal's piece was a diatribe against the Obama Administration for not including areas offshore Virginia for exploration and drilling. He also attacked Obama's concerns about the controversial Keystone XL pipeline that would take fossil fuel energy from an oil sands project in Canada to Gulf Coast refineries. Without a major change in direction from the White House," DuVal wrote, Virginia won't be able to drill offshore, expand renewable electricity sources and build nuclear power plants.

A few little problems here. First, there are no known, large deposits of oil off the Virginia coast. There may be natural gas, but nothing certain. If you want to discuss natural gas, one thing DuVal fails to mention, is that hydraulic fracking of Marcellus shale in Pennsylvania and New York, has resulted in an unexpected flood of new gas. The quantity is so great that electric utilities are shifting to gas from coal. As far as nuclear, DuVal seems to have forgotten the August earthquake that pushed the North Anna nuclear plant to its design limits and caused a national review of just how susceptible the country's nuclear stations are to earthquakes. As for wind, Google plans a huge wind farm just off Virginia's coast. No mention there. As for the Keystone pipeline, the petroleum is exceptionally dirty. The pipeline will result in zero jobs in Virginia, if you bother to look at a map.

And lastly, for the first time in decades, the U.S. has become a net exporter of energy. This is all happening without Bob McDonnell's fantasy of the state becoming the "Energy Capital of the East Coast." The Old Dominion is a huge shipping port for coal exports, but it involves coking coal for steel for skyscrapers in Shanghai and Mumbai and has nothing to do with energy.

So, given the level of understanding of the energy outlook, it should come as no surprise that this crowd will be pushing for an end to uranium mining and pressing on without substantive regulations. We hate regulations. We're Virginians. In any event, it's all Barack Obama's fault.



http://nuclearstreet.com/nuclear_power_industry_news/b/nuclear_power_news/archive/2011/12/20/report-outlines-challenges-of-mining-large-va.-uranium-deposit-122002.aspx

Report Outlines Challenges of Mining Large Va. Uranium Deposit

[Peter Barnes](#)

Tue, Dec 20 2011 6:26 AM

A report by the National Academy of Sciences suggested it would take five to eight years to develop the regulatory framework to allow uranium mining in Virginia, home to potentially the largest undeveloped deposit in the U.S.

Released on Monday, the report comes in time for next year's state legislative session, in which Virginia politicians will consider lifting a uranium mining ban in place since 1982. With uranium prices more than five times higher than a decade ago, state leaders commissioned the \$1.4 million study in 2009 to gather information on the feasibility and potential environmental impacts of mining and processing. Lifting the moratorium would require drafting a range of environmental regulations and processes from scratch.

According to the report, only the deposits at Coles Hill in Pittsylvania County appear to be economically viable. The site's geology makes it unsuitable for in-situ leaching/in-situ recovery. The report outlines a number of environmental impacts that would require mitigation, although, per instructions from the state, it does not make a recommendation on the mining one way or the other.

The Coles family that originally proposed the mine in the 80s joined with neighbors and Canadian investors to form Virginia Uranium Inc., which is pushing to overturn the moratorium. According to Virginia Uranium, the deposit lies 1,500 feet below the surface on 200 acres near the state's southern border. It is believed to contain 119 million pounds of uranium oxide worth more than \$7 billion.