

# The Manomet Current

Your source for news of Manomet and the Pine Hills



## Spent fuel casks vulnerable, say Pilgrim Station critics

By: MATTHEW NADLER | February 13, 2015

Critics of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station accused the plant's operator of using inaccurate information in reporting its elevation.

That means, according to Pine Dubois of the Jones River Watershed Association, that the plant is vulnerable to flooding and other weather-based troubles. The newly installed casks for storing spent fuel rods are a particular concern, she said.

Dubois presented her findings to the Board of Selectmen, Tuesday night. She called the information used by Entergy, Pilgrim's owner, in siting the new storage area as "inaccurate and misleading." The information, she said, dates back to the original plan for the power plant back in the late 1960s. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, she said, has found a 6 inch rise in the sea level in that area since 1970.

Pilgrim Station's David Noyes said he has never seen standing water at the plant above the floodplain. During the January 26 blizzard, he said, staff cleaned out vents on the casks.

While DuBois worries about the weather, Mary Lampert of Pilgrim Watch is worried that the spent fuel that remains in the plant's pool is too tightly packed. And she has a novel solution to the problem. Tax it. Lampert told selectmen that State Senator Daniel Wolf, D-Cape and Islands, has filed legislation that would tax spent fuel at the rate of \$10,000 per assembly in the pool. The legislation, she said, would give 30 percent of the money to Plymouth. That could mean, she said, \$9 million a year for the town.

While she agrees storage is preferable to wet for the spent fuel, she restated her worries about the dry casks. The casks are closely set together, making them vulnerable to a bomb, she said. They can also crack, she said. There is no means for repairing or inspecting the casks, she added. She said the type of cask Pilgrim is using have shown corrosion at plants in Diablo Canyon, California and Hope Creek, New Jersey.

The casks, made by the Holtec Corporation, are used at 100 locations in the US., Noyes said. They weigh 360,000 pounds and stand on 3 feet of reinforced concrete, he added.

If the casks are damaged, Noyes said, the spent fuel can be returned to the pool until a replacement cask is brought in. In fact, he noted, staff had to show Nuclear Regulatory Officials they could do that. There is, he said, sufficient space in the pool if needed.

Lampert called for improved monitoring of the casks, with regular checks of temperature, helium release and radiation levels.