

**Common Ground 2.0: Advancing Consent-based Siting Research  
for Spent Nuclear Fuel Management**

**PI: Kathleen Araújo** – Boise State  
University/CAES Energy Policy Institute

**Collaborators: R. A. Borrelli** – University of Idaho  
· Idaho Falls Center for Higher Education

**Richelle Johnson** – University of Alaska, Anchorage

**Cassie Koerner** – Boise State University/CAES  
Energy Policy Institute

**Program:** Topic Area 7 – Public Perceptions  
of an Integrated Waste Management System

**Andrew Orrell** – United Global Technologies

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**ABSTRACT:**

The *overall goal* of this project is to **advance use-inspired knowledge and analytical approaches for characterizing and assessing regional ambition as well as public engagement in the context of national readiness for integrated nuclear waste management.** In doing so, this project develops methodological frameworks, indicators, models and typologies that complement those for the Common Ground Consortium (CGC). Additionally, the project fosters theory-building that will bridge principles and theory on utility functions, mutual gains, collective action, national readiness, and engagement.

**Description, scope, methods, and deliverables:** Today’s net zero and energy security priorities underscore the importance of nuclear energy. Yet, a national strategy for consolidated interim storage of spent nuclear fuel and long-term storage of waste remains to be more fully realized. This project systematically compares factors influencing ambition and engagement in current cases of spent nuclear fuel/nuclear waste siting in the US and Canada. We leverage a mixed methods approach (quantitative, qualitative and geospatial) to account for drivers, degrees of influence, and logics underpinning ambition and risk-benefit considerations (tradeoffs and weighting); to characterize engagement across cases relative to governmental and private sector involvement; and to examine the role of champions and trusted information flows. This nuanced approach of understudied conditions should yield valuable insights to support a more informed strategy for integrated waste management.

**Deliverables** will include (1) methodological frameworks with indicators for evaluating ambition, risk-benefit logic, engagement, influences and decision making; (2) in-depth assessments of contemporary and cases of relevance in the U.S. and Canada; (3) conceptual models, typologies, and theory-building to explain varied configurations and functional relationships for engagement and adoption ambition; and (4) peer-reviewed articles and reports with recommendations, including future research. The above will support ongoing consent-based siting efforts by the US DOE, the Common Ground Consortium (CGC) and other consortia as well as groups related to the management of nuclear facilities. *Major participants* will include cross-sectoral stakeholders associated with the studied cases, including experts from industry, civic organizations, and public agencies.

**Outcomes** are expected to improve applied knowledge and approaches for consent-based siting of the nation’s spent nuclear fuel, nuclear waste and/or new nuclear plants with a more engaged public. New research directions are also expected to be opened with the tools, theory-building and findings. The project builds on a unique combination of capabilities with a multi-disciplinary team of experts from Boise State, University of Alaska, University of Idaho and United Global Technologies.