

***Not Here, Not There, Not Anywhere: Politics, Social Movements, and the Disposal of Low-Level Radioactive Waste.* London: Earthscan/RFF Press. 240 pages. ISBN 9781933115924, \$39.95 paperback. Daniel J. Sherman. 2011.**

Nuclear waste management in the United States has largely become synonymous with high-level waste and the three-decade odyssey over the proposed creation of a single national repository near Yucca Mountain, Nevada. However, Daniel Sherman's new book, *Not Here, Not There, Not Anywhere*, provides insight into a different form of American engagement with nuclear waste that has also defied resolution over multiple decades.

In this case, the focus is low-level radioactive waste. On the up side, this waste is not nearly as lethal as its high-level cousin, hence not requiring a management scenario that calls for tens of thousands of years of secure handling. On the down side, this waste is far more ubiquitous in volume and sources, produced not only by every nuclear power plant but also a wide range of medical service and research facilities.

In both cases, respective congresses, presidents, and state governments became increasingly concerned about the fate of these wastes in the late 1970s, leading to a remarkable flurry of federal legislation in the 1980s. In the low-level waste case, this resulted in the passage of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act (LLRWPA) in 1980 and a major legislative revision 5 years later. Whereas the high-level approach involved a political and technical search for a small set of permanent national resting places that ultimately collapsed down to a prolonged battle over the suitability of Yucca, the low-level approach involved a far more complex process that was, in many respects, a policy wonk's dream.

Sherman opens his book with a splendid history of the steps that produced this unique intergovernmental approach to waste management. After a series of scandals in existing waste facilities led to several closures, only three operational facilities remained in place. The governors hosting these remaining sites (Nevada, South Carolina, and Washington State) began to press their concerns over the possibility of becoming permanent national repositories and threatened site closure in the absence of a new federal strategy.

This led to a complicated legislative formulation that created a series of incentives and sanctions that were intended to prod states to begin to form multistate partnerships that could be blessed by congress as formal interstate compacts. Such compacts could then allocate responsibility for waste management within their boundaries, bolstered by federal transfer payments and the ability (denied states going solo) to seal off their borders from unwanted imports. All of this was anticipated to produce, in the minds of policy supporters, an "evenly distributed network of more than a dozen regional LLRW disposal sites" (p. 9).

The bulk of Sherman's book examines the extensive effort to secure siting agreements around the nation over subsequent decades. It is particularly effective in digging into the local politics that emerged in cases when specific sites emerged as possible candidates, whether through some selection criteria imposed upon them or some initial expression of possible interest by local officials. A great many of these communities were relatively small and in remote locations. Sherman carefully unpacks this process through extensive interviews and review of small media

sources, including letters to the editor in publications that will likely be very unfamiliar to most readers.

No two cases are identical, and yet Sherman identifies a fairly common pattern whereby communities rally and find ways to deter further consideration of the site, amid an array of state and regional siting initiatives. His analysis focuses heavily on the use of “injustice frames,” demonstrating varied ways in which environmental justice claims can be brought to attempt to block proposed siting of a very controversial facility. This is integrated with careful discussion of other elements, such as a key Supreme Court decision that disallowed a federal plan to impose “take title” requirements on states for waste management, in explaining the near-collapse of siting processes around the nation. As Sherman notes, “Neither top-down nor bottom-up ‘voluntary’ approaches to the siting process have successfully established new LRRW sites” (p. 3).

Sherman’s book thus fills a significant gap in the facility siting literature, demonstrating that a uniquely complex intergovernmental formula proved insufficient to crack this difficult area. Indeed, as policy analyst Benjamin Able has noted, states “collectively supported” the initial LLRWPA strategy but “ultimately subverted” the policy whenever a proposed remedy came close to home.

Ironically, the timing of this book publication only allows the author a brief review in concluding pages of a relatively new development that appears to represent a major shift in siting experience. In this case, Andrews County in Western Texas has expressed strong interest in expanding its existing capacity in hazardous waste disposal to address low-level radioactive waste. This facility is backed by a number of local and state policies, creating the strong possibility that it could emerge as a major regional and even national waste management facility. However, this case opens up many of the questions that surface throughout the book, including environmental justice frames that involve the close proximity of the site to the New Mexico border as well as geological issues at the site.

The Andrews County case may indeed present Sherman and other scholars with an opportunity to examine a case that involves a voluntary siting offer in the absence of any structured review of siting options or extended public deliberation. At the same time, Canada and some European Union Member States continue to experiment with extended siting processes that emphasize public engagement through highly deliberative processes, with at least a few European cases suggesting possible agreements. Sherman’s foundational work in this book clearly positions him to weigh in on these larger and longer term considerations.

Barry G. Rabe
University of Michigan