

The nuclear insanity that doesn't have to be

Your Turn
Robert Dodge
Guest columnist

This week marks 73 years since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and Aug. 9. Following the first detonation of a nuclear weapon — the Trinity test on July 16, 1945, in the New Mexico desert — and the bombings three weeks later that ultimately killed more than 200,000 people, the world forever changed and the future of mankind has been threatened.

The threat continues to this day, fueled by a new nuclear arms race initiated by a U.S. proposal to spend upwards of \$1.5 trillion over the next 30 years to rebuild our entire nuclear arsenal. Every other nuclear nation is following suit in modernizing their arsenals as well, giving rise to the myth of nuclear deterrence.

This renewed arms race threatens us every moment of every day. As tensions have grown between the nuclear superpowers, the threat of nuclear war by intent or miscalculation or increasingly by cyberattack threatens us and everything we care about.

This insanity is not a reality that has to be. Recognizing the catastrophic humanitarian consequences from any use of nuclear weapons, an international effort over the past decade aims to abolish them. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, is leading this effort.

On July 7, 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by 122 nations, representing a majority of the world's people, at the United Nations. Opened for signature on Sept. 20, 2017 — the International Day of Peace — the treaty makes nuclear weapons illegal under international law, just as all other weapons of mass destruction have been declared.

Once 50 nations have ratified the treaty, it goes into effect 90 days later. So far, 15 nations have ratified it, with New Zealand signing this past week.

Under Article 6 of the treaty, nations are prohibited from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, transferring, deploying, stationing, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, under any circumstances.

The nine nations who possess nuclear weapons have officially boycotted the effort. There are significant efforts by residents of these countries, however, to move their governments to come in line with the international community working to eliminate nuclear weapons. Most of these countries are legally bound to do so under their 48-year obligation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which commits them to "work in good faith to eliminate nuclear weapons."

In the United States, a rapidly growing movement called "Back from the Brink" (preventnuclearwar.org) is gaining momentum as individuals, organizations, cities and communities across the nation endorse its five-policy solution. It calls on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

- Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first.
- Ending the sole, unchecked authority of any U.S. president to launch a nuclear attack.
- Taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.
- Canceling the plan to replace its entire nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons.
- Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

This week, solemn memorials around the world commemorating the nuclear attacks of 1945 will be attended by a decreasing number of the "hibakusha" bomb survivors.

These individuals have never lost hope — hope demonstrated from their courage, compassion, conviction and witness that no one should ever suffer or see the horror of what they experienced.

We owe it to them and to all future generations to do everything in our power to eliminate this immoral and illegal man-made threat to humanity. The time is now to add your voice to the growing chorus calling for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.

Robert Dodge is a family physician practicing in Ventura, chairman of Citizens for Peaceful Resolutions and president of Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles.



Securing a reliable water future

Your Turn
Steve Blois
Guest columnist

The imported water that keeps most of Ventura County running comes from one main source — Northern California. It is delivered to us through the State Water Project.

Protecting our supply — and our economy — means modernizing the heart of this delivery system hundreds of miles away in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The state is on the verge of doing so with a project known as California WaterFix, with Ventura County securing an important role in managing its construction.

After more than 11 long years of study, planning and debate, WaterFix is moving forward. It involves building new water intakes in the northern Delta, two main tunnels and new pumping facilities.

WaterFix will reliably transport water from the new intakes through the twin tunnels to the existing California Aqueduct, securing high-quality supplies, reducing conflicts with fish species, and protecting these vital public water supplies from earthquakes, sea level rise (the existing pumps are only 3 feet above sea level) and other natural threats in the Delta.

As anyone who has lived in California knows, our extreme weather patterns can go from very dry to very wet in a matter of days. Today's water sys-

tem cannot reliably capture and deliver supplies when nature provides them. We have to fix that, and soon we hopefully will with California WaterFix.

Securing reliable water for Ventura County or anywhere in California doesn't come without the right investments. For WaterFix, the six-county Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, of which the Calleguas Municipal Water District is a member, took a decisive step in July to invest in the majority of the project.

Our partners in Silicon Valley also stepped up when the Santa Clara Valley Water District agreed to invest in its share as well. Other public agencies receiving State Water Project supplies, from the Livermore Valley to the Mojave Desert, have voted to support WaterFix as well.

While more needs to be done, the financing for the project is taking shape. That means it is time to begin to prepare to construct the project. That is where Ventura County's new important role via Calleguas comes in.

As its name implies, the State Water Project is a vital California water system owned and managed by the state Department of Water Resources. WaterFix will modernize this project and remain a state facility. Yet to construct it, DWR has agreed to partner with Metropolitan, Santa Clara and other public water agencies funding the project.

These agencies will manage the con-

struction through a new joint powers authority created in May. I was honored to be selected by Metropolitan to represent our region as one of Metropolitan's two members on this board. The state, meanwhile, will oversee the key design and implementation decisions by this new construction authority.

This is an exciting and collaborative way to construct one of the largest water projects on the drawing boards anywhere in the nation. The water agencies paying for the project will get a direct say on how to manage it as cost-effectively as possible to ensure it is built on time and on budget.

More milestones lie ahead. The project still needs two key state authorizations to build the new diversion facilities and to confirm that the project fits broader state plans for the Delta. And like any major project, this one has legal challenges as well. Yet so far, these hurdles have not slowed progress on the project.

California WaterFix is the perfect complement to our efforts to diversify our local water supply with more local projects and increased conservation. We have much to do to secure a reliable water future for our communities, but we are making important progress with these recent historic steps.

Steve Blois is on the boards of the Calleguas Municipal Water District and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

County shirks oil, gas oversight duties

Your Turn
Kimberly Rivers
Guest columnist

Where did public health and safety go?

On July 17, in response to legal action against the county, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors revised the permitting rules for outdoor events. Yet buried in those changes, deletions were made with serious repercussions beyond outdoor events. Language was removed that had nothing to do with the lawsuit.

Several changes raise concerns, but the removal of public health and safety language from what the county can consider in order to modify, suspend or revoke an existing land use permit is the most egregious.

Supervisors removed the words "public interest, health, safety, convenience and welfare" from section 8III-6.2 of the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance. That section applies to all discretionary development projects — including oil and gas extraction and waste disposal — in the unincorporated county.

This section describes the seven "causes" that must be proven to modify, suspend or revoke an existing conditional use permit, presumably over the objection of the permit holder.

This change diminishes the county's ability to consider public health and safety when reviewing health impacts of existing oil and gas activities and the permits that govern them. This deletion

was completely unnecessary. Public health and safety language was not an issue in the lawsuit that prompted the outdoor events revisions. The deletion effectively restricts the county's ability to execute its oversight role and duty within the discretionary permit process. Many other permits will be impacted by this change.

Two cases in point:

First, in June, Anterra Energy, located on Wooley Road in the Oxnard Plain, applied for an extension to its existing permit. Anterra is seeking permission to operate an Oxnard-area facility that disposes of oil waste fluids for another 30 years. This would allow Anterra to continue to accept oil field waste from throughout Southern California and inject it underground for disposal for another 30 years.

This despite the fact that in 2013, when Anterra was trying to expand with a second facility near Santa Paula, company officials told the Santa Paula City Council they had "outgrown" the Oxnard facility. Then in 2014, the county cited Anterra for permit violations that included exceeding the number of allowed truck trips.

And in 2015, the Board of Supervisors voted against amending the agriculture exclusive zoning rules, which would have allowed oil field waste injection at this location to continue if the current permit was renewed. Supervisors stated "public health and safety" as a reason for that vote to no longer allow oil field waste injection in the agriculture exclusive zone.

Second, Peak Operator has applied to the county to drill 79 new wells, most of which will be used to extract tar sands from below the Oxnard Plain off Sturgis Road. The county is processing this as a "zoning clearance," which does not include a modern-day environmental impact review.

So impacts of this project related to air quality, water, traffic, subsidence, visual impacts and environmental justice will not be assessed today. Instead the county may rely on a decades-old environmental review, dated 1979. A lot has changed in the area since then, and today's science provides more information about health impacts related to pollution than was previously known.

The current practices of the county, now bolstered by the removal of the words public health and safety from this section, result in an ongoing and systemic failure to assess the true costs of oil and gas projects.

The public has not been informed about the long-lasting impacts of granting these permits and renewing them for decades. We simply do not know how they impact people who live nearby. We don't have a clear picture of how our local water sources are impacted. We don't have solid data on how aging oil wells, some long idle that should have been plugged years ago, impact air and water quality.

Instead of renewing public health and safety, the county should be putting it front and center.

Kimberly Rivers is executive director of Citizens for Responsible Oil & Gas.