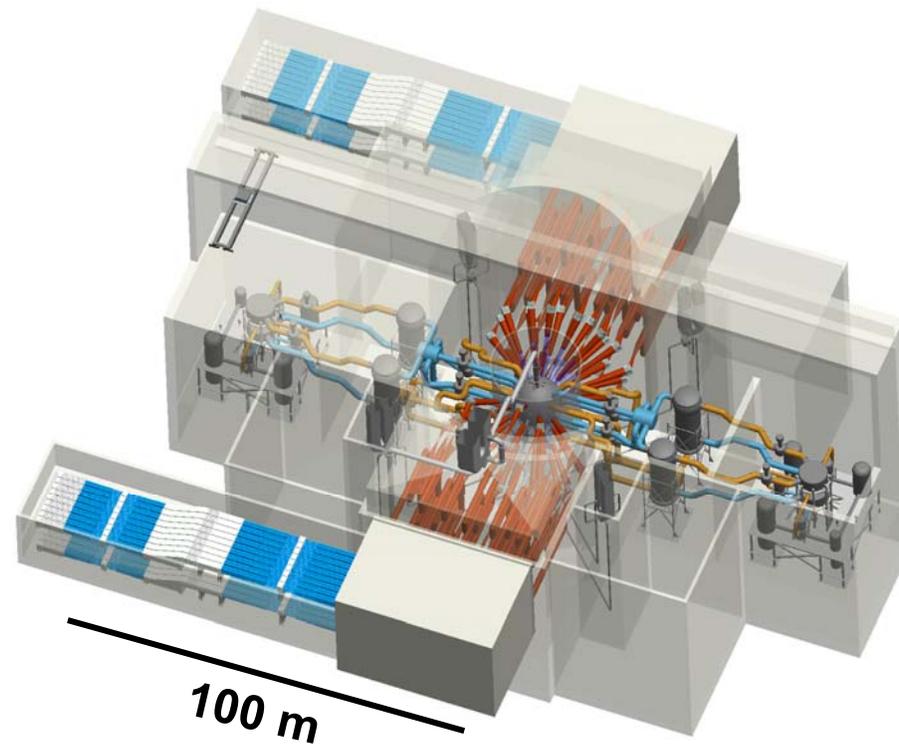


# LIFE – Laser Inertial Fusion Energy based systems for electricity production and waste burning

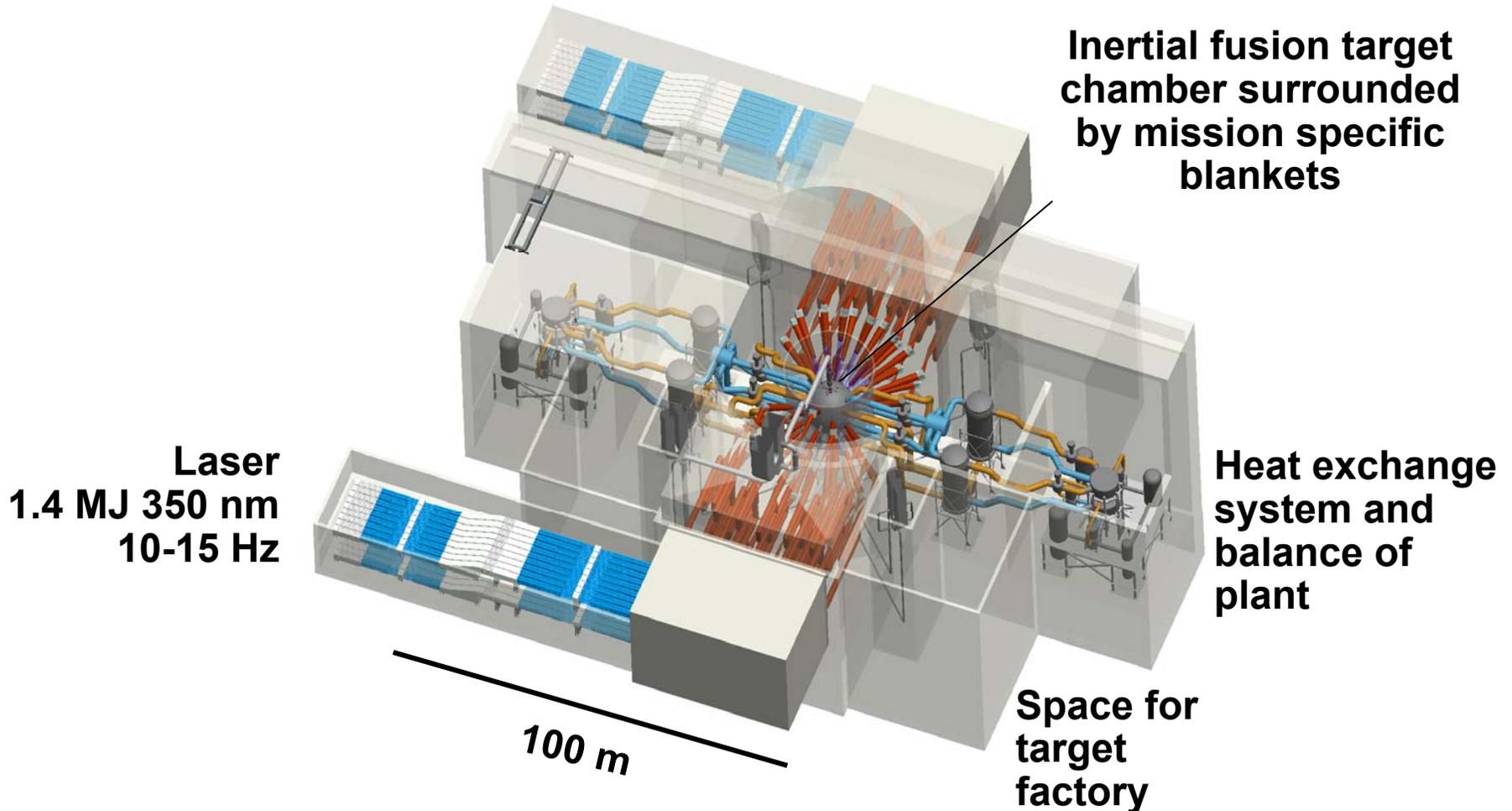


March 10, 2009

Erik Storm

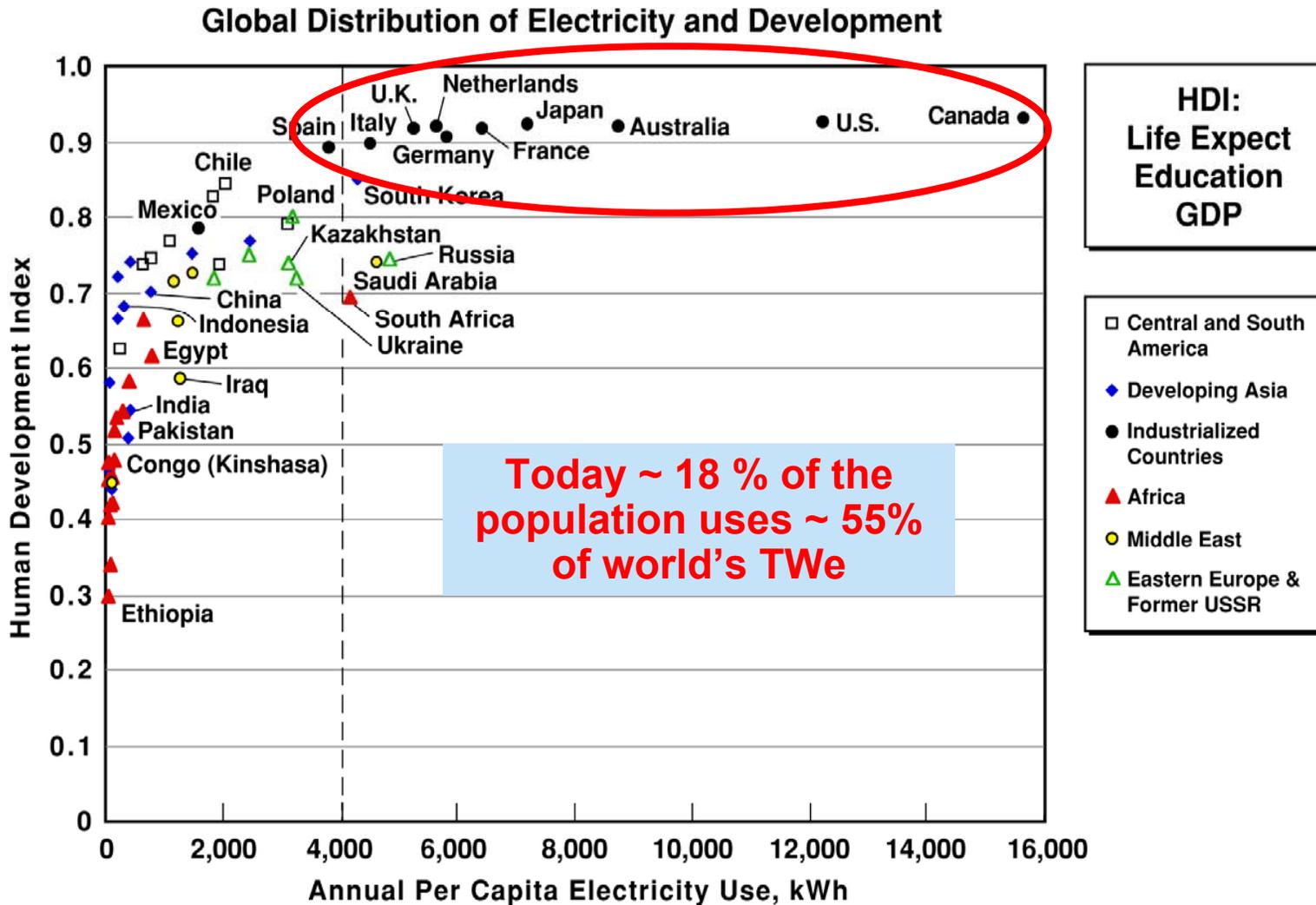
This work was performed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory under Contract DE-AC52-07NA27344.

# One of LIFE's goals is to provide an option for a once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle



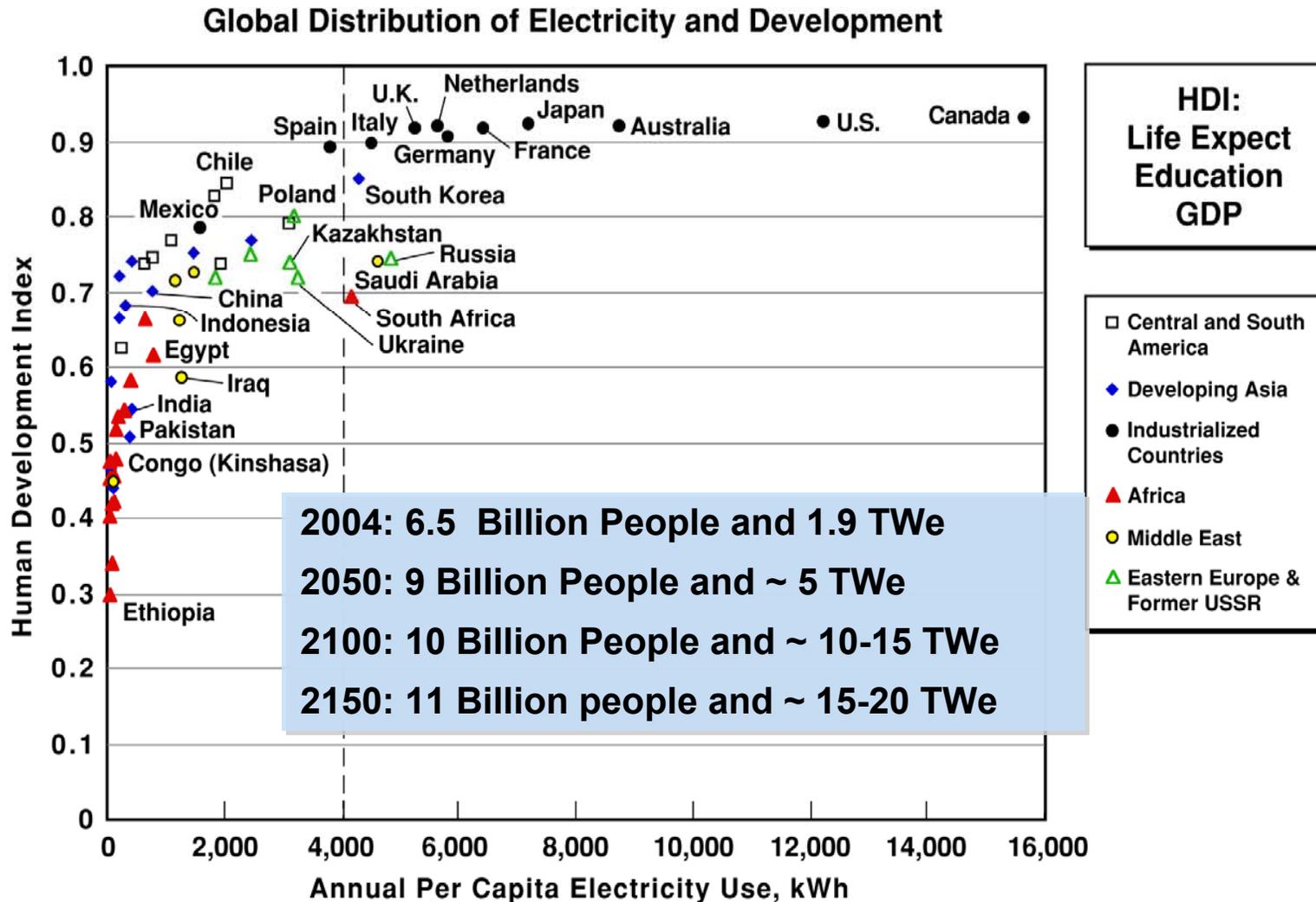
**LIFE could provide the bridge from today's nuclear power to a pure fusion option later in this century**

# The energy picture is not sustainable when we factor in future changes in global standard of living



Source: Pasternak, "Global Energy Futures and Human Development: A Framework for Analysis"

# We will see significant increase in electricity demand as the rest of the world moves up the economic ladder



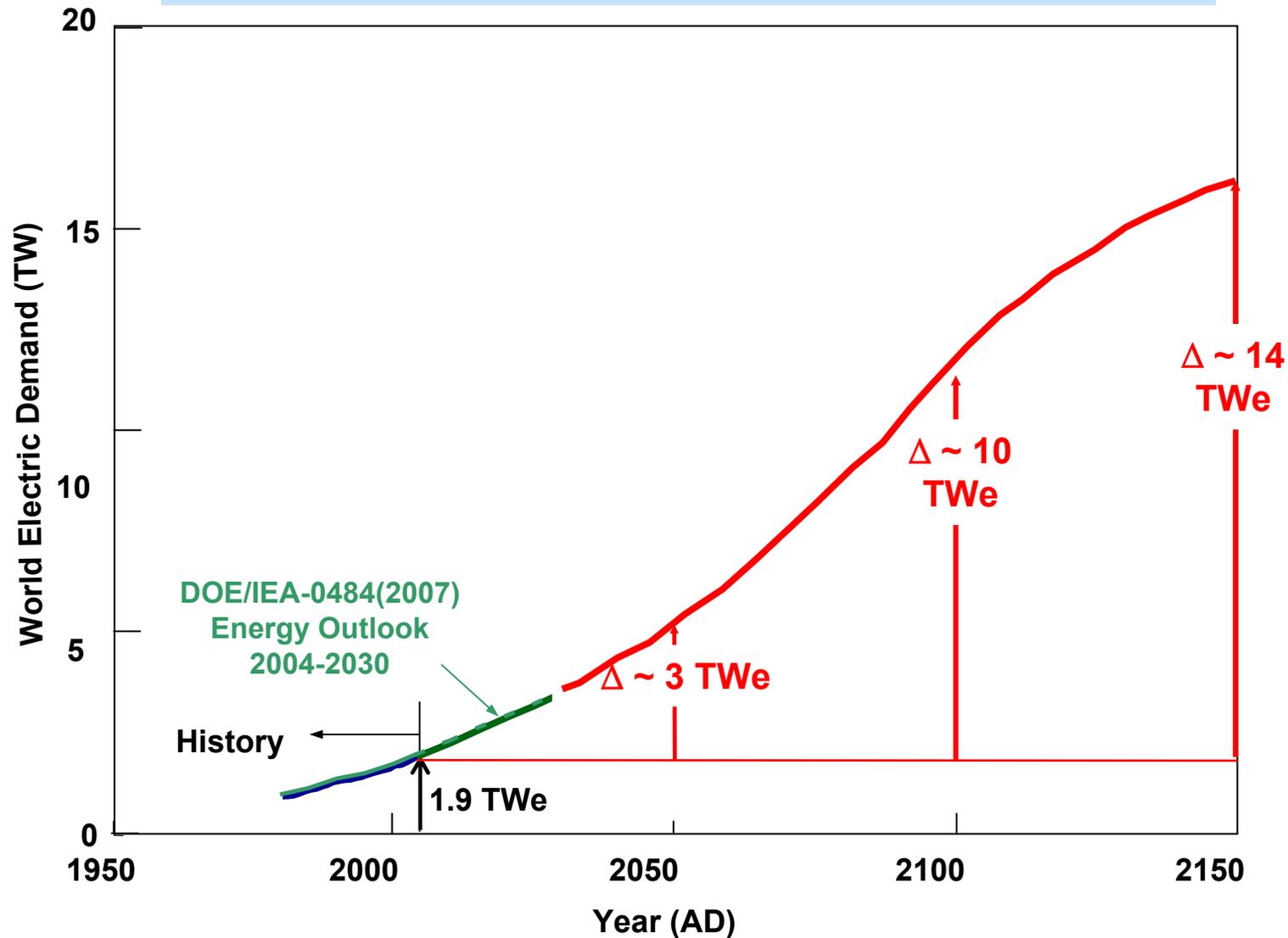
Source: Pasternak, "Global Energy Futures and Human Development: A Framework for Analysis"



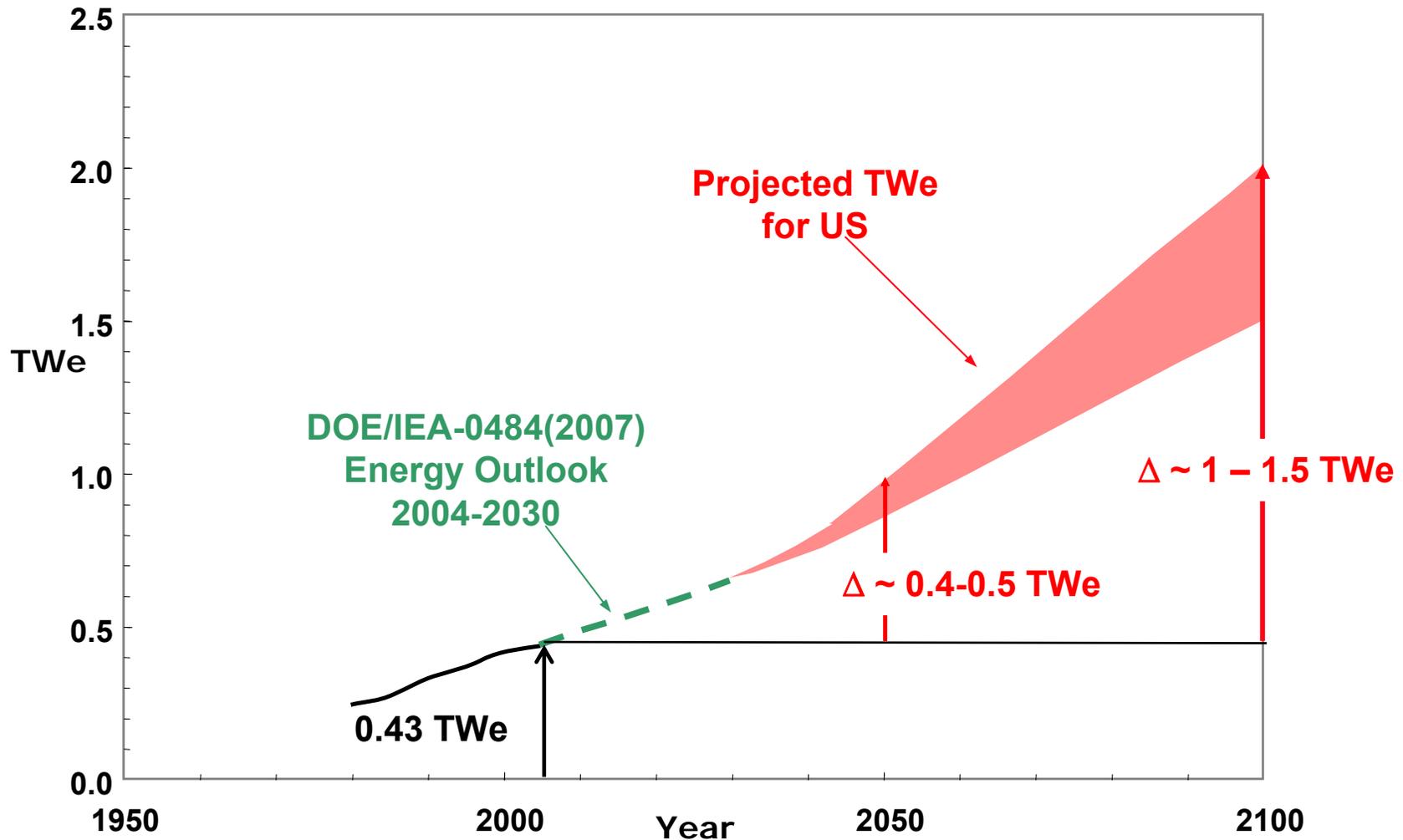
# The implications are rather serious

Even by ~ 2050, NEW capacity would be ~ 1.5 X existing

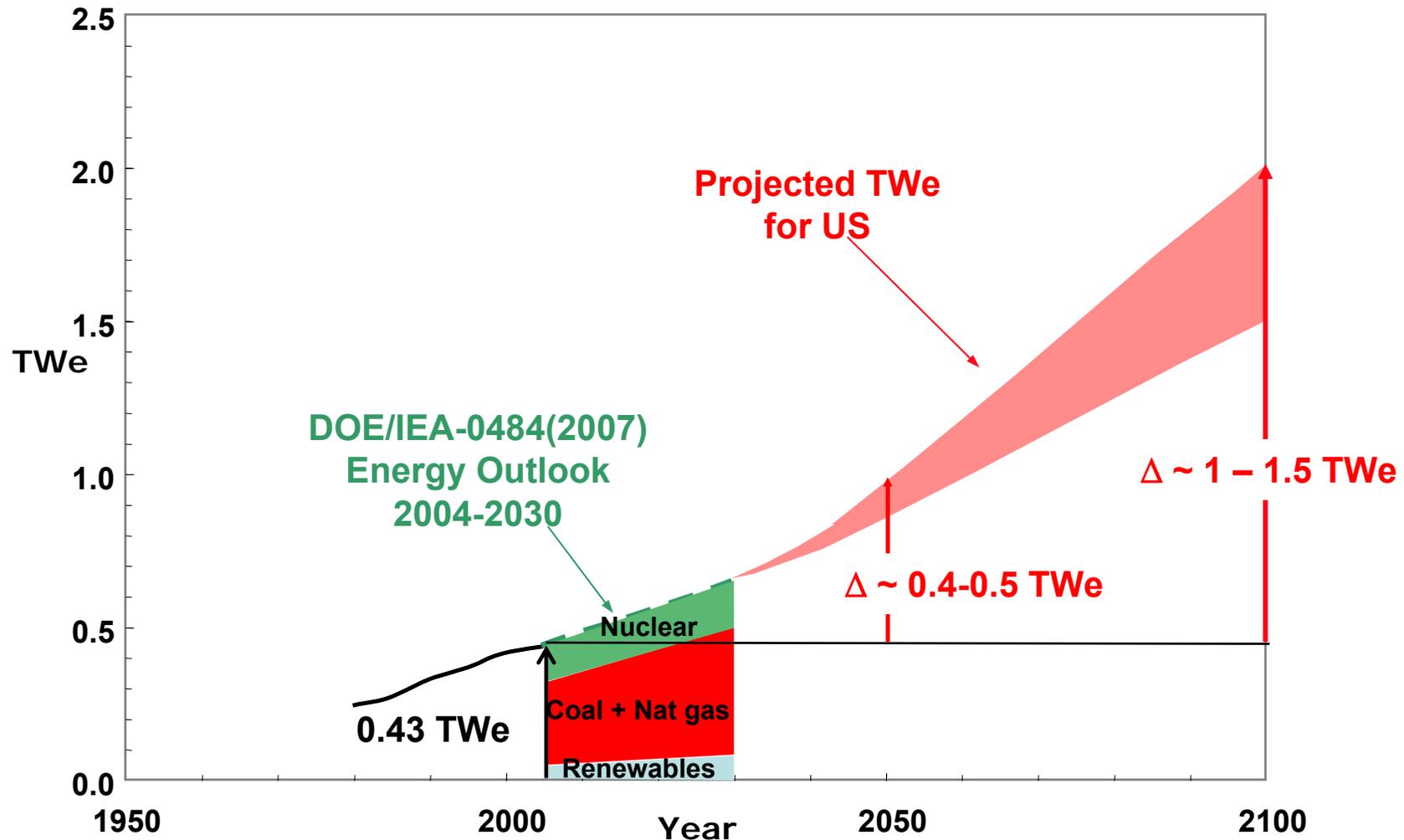
A Business as Usual approach is obviously not acceptable



# The situation in the US is equally serious: Demand could reach 1 TWe by 2050 and 2 TWe by 2100



# A business as usual approach is not acceptable



A significant increase in nuclear is a logical conclusion –  
But at 1 TWe, this would require 1 Yucca Mountain ~ every 3-4 years  
We need to close the nuclear fuel cycle

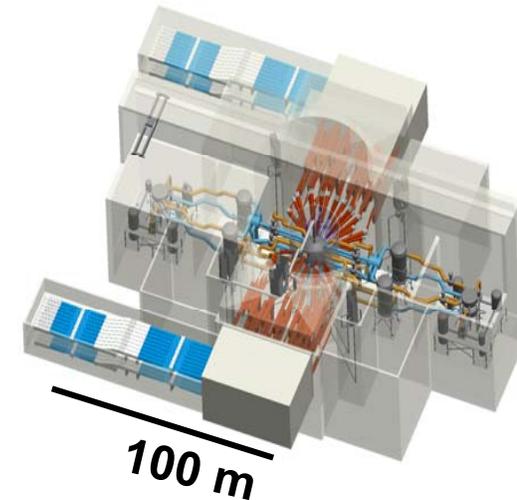
# LIFE – one of our goals is to provide an option to close the nuclear fuel cycle



## Requirements

- Front end** {
- No enrichment
  - Sustainable fuel supply

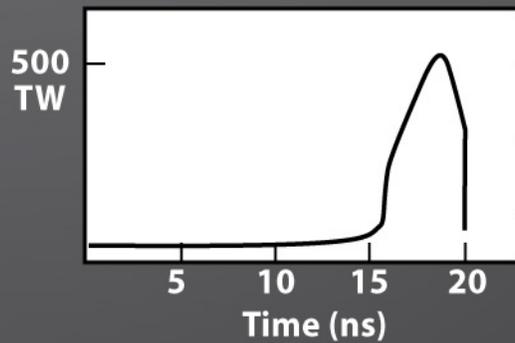
- Back end** {
- No reprocessing
  - No weapons attractive quantities of actinides in the spent fuel
  - Minimize requirements for geologic disposition



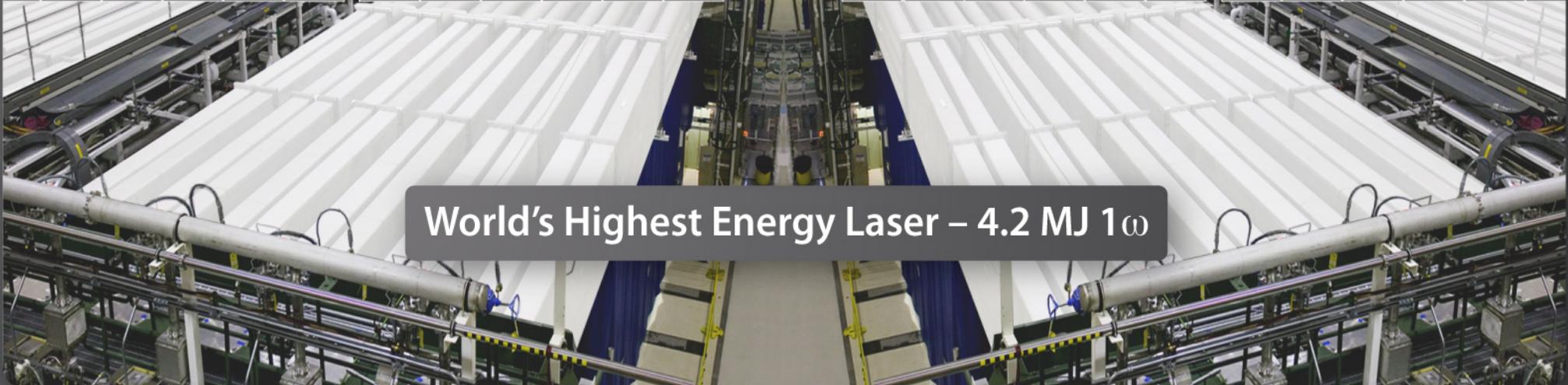
**The system must also be safe and economically competitive**

# NIF Laser System

- 192 Beams
- Frequency tripled Nd glass
- Energy 1.8 MJ
- Power 500 TW
- Wavelength 351 nm

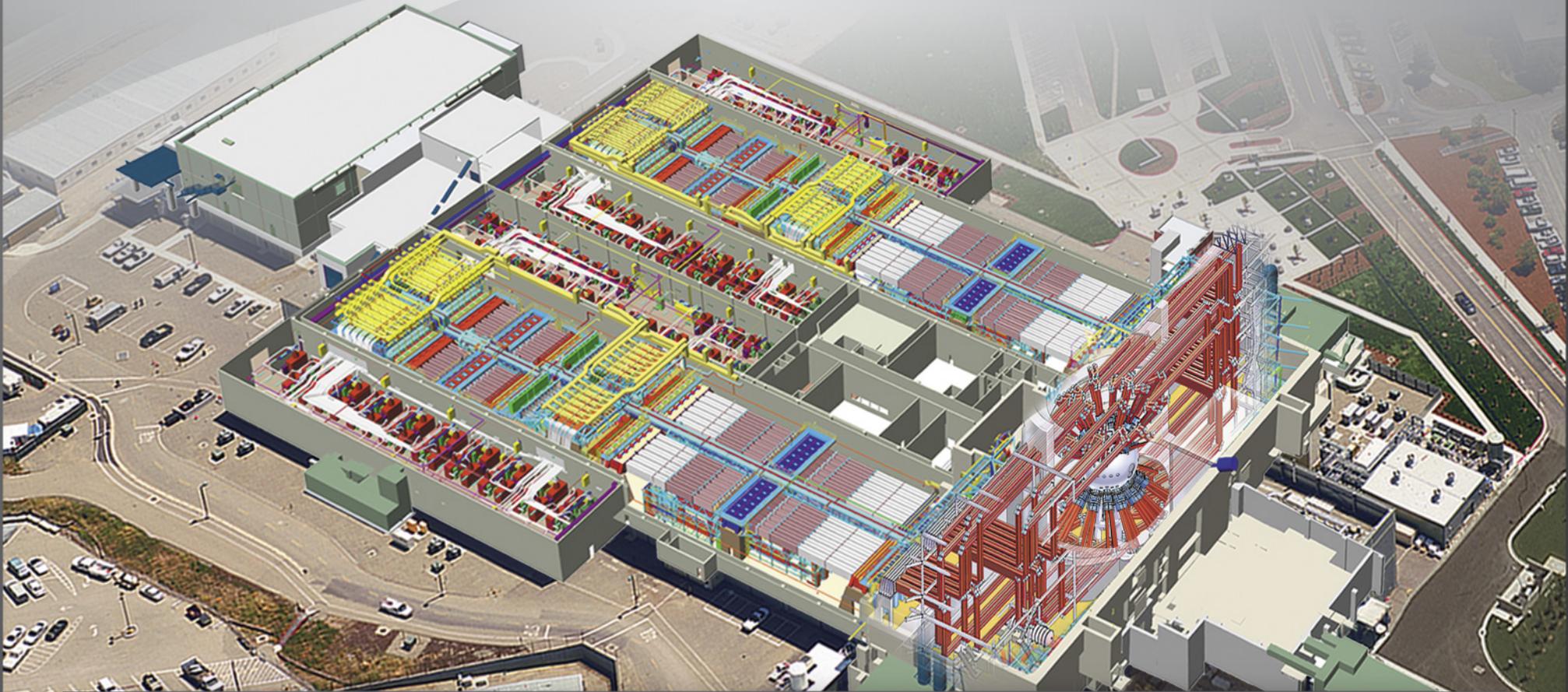


# 192 Main Laser Beams Operationally Qualified September 24, 2008



World's Highest Energy Laser – 4.2 MJ 1 $\omega$

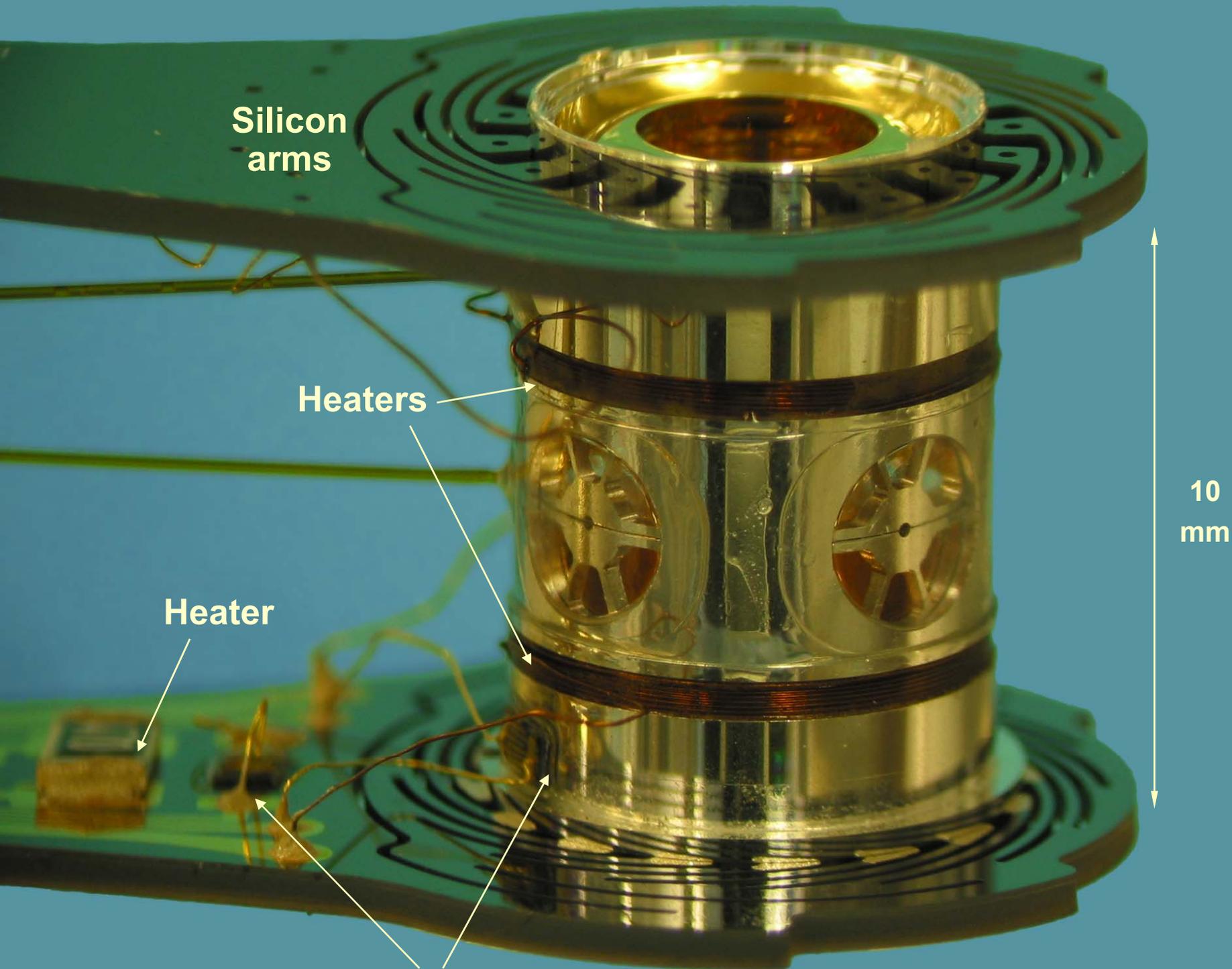
**NIF is not only complete  
NIF is operational**



**1.1 MJ/3w from 96 beams delivered to TTC 3:15 AM March 10, 2009**



**Target shots start in June, and the Ignition Campaign this fall**



**Silicon arms**

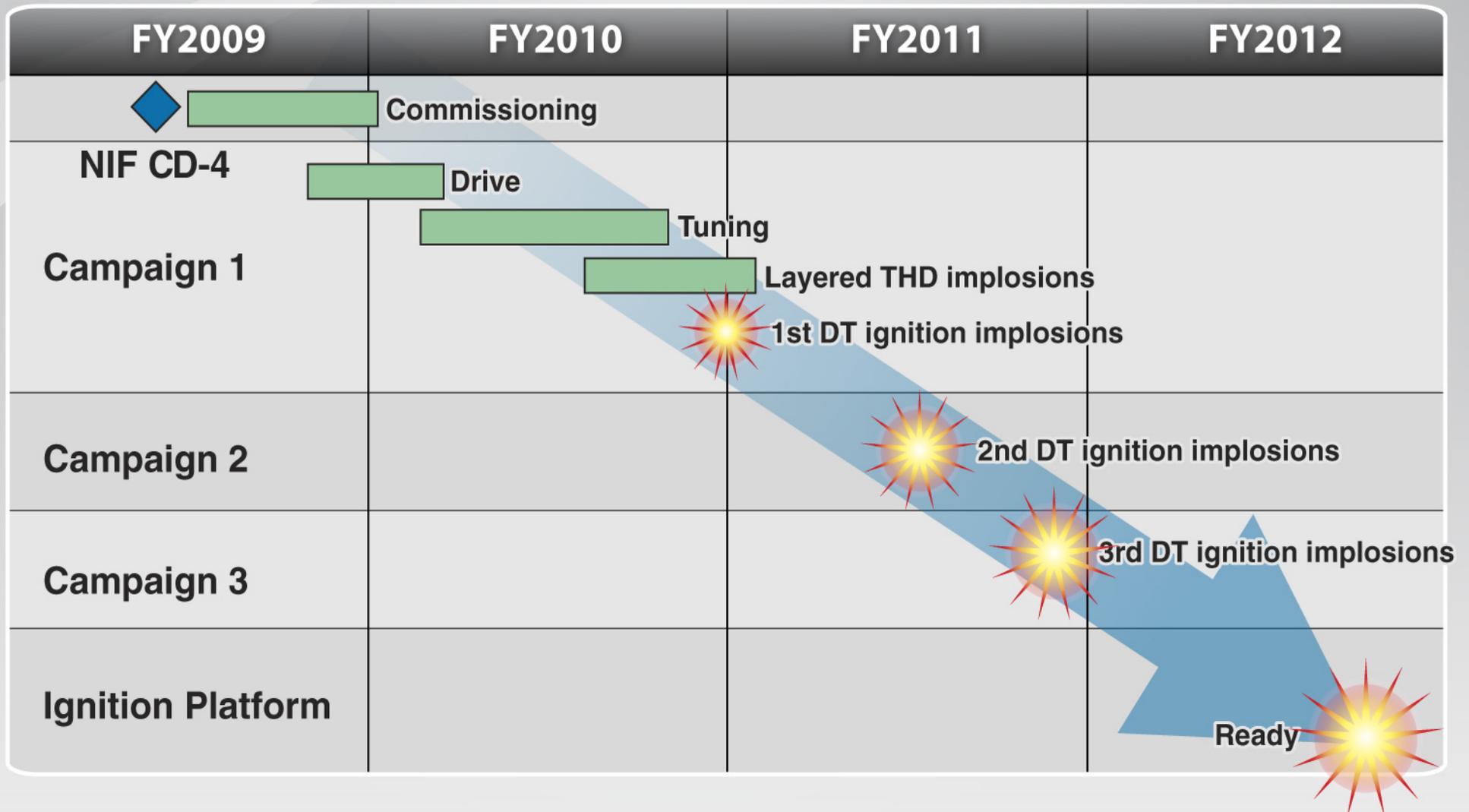
**Heaters**

**Heater**

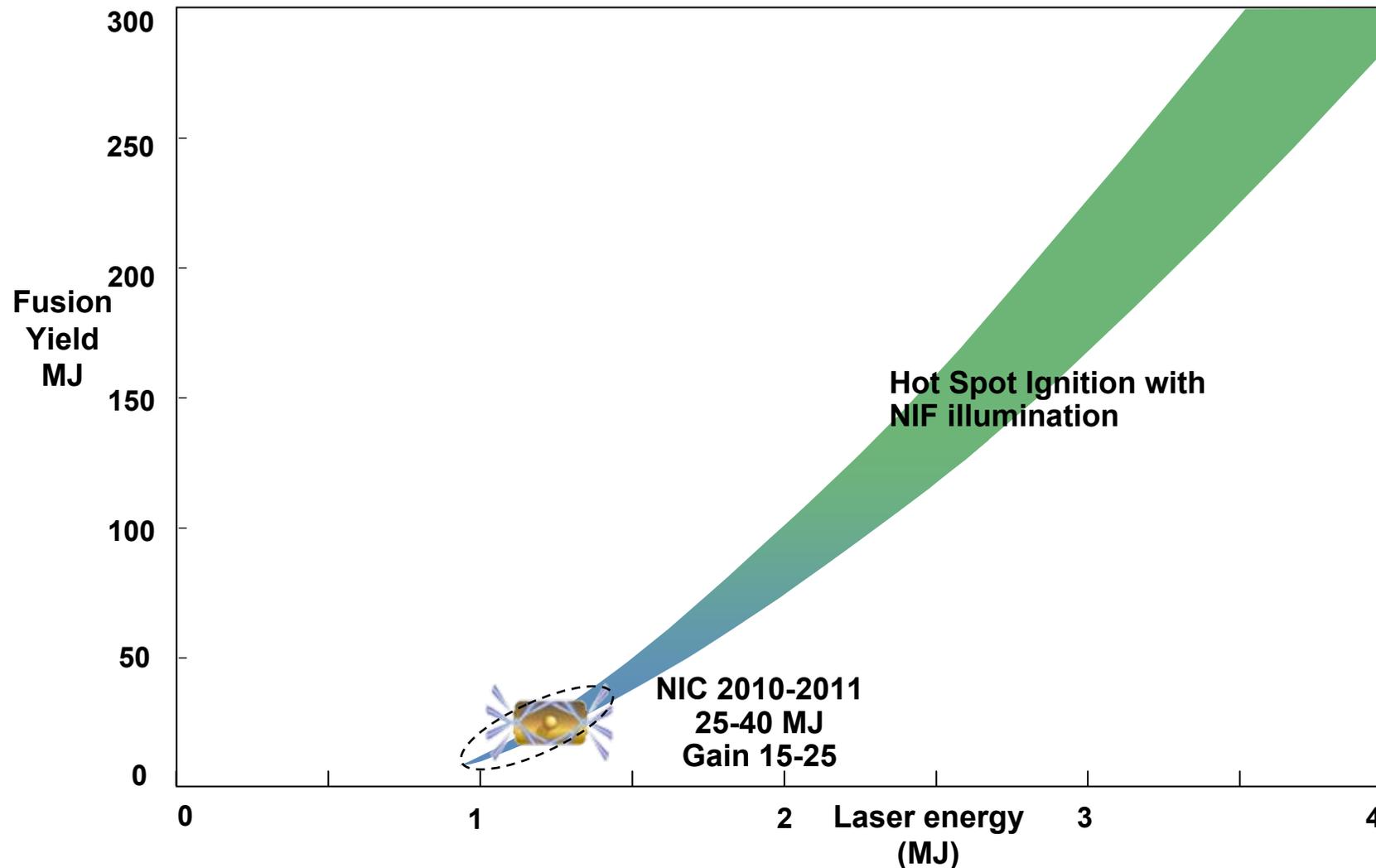
**Thermal sensors**

**10 mm**

# NIF will execute four major ignition campaigns in the next four years

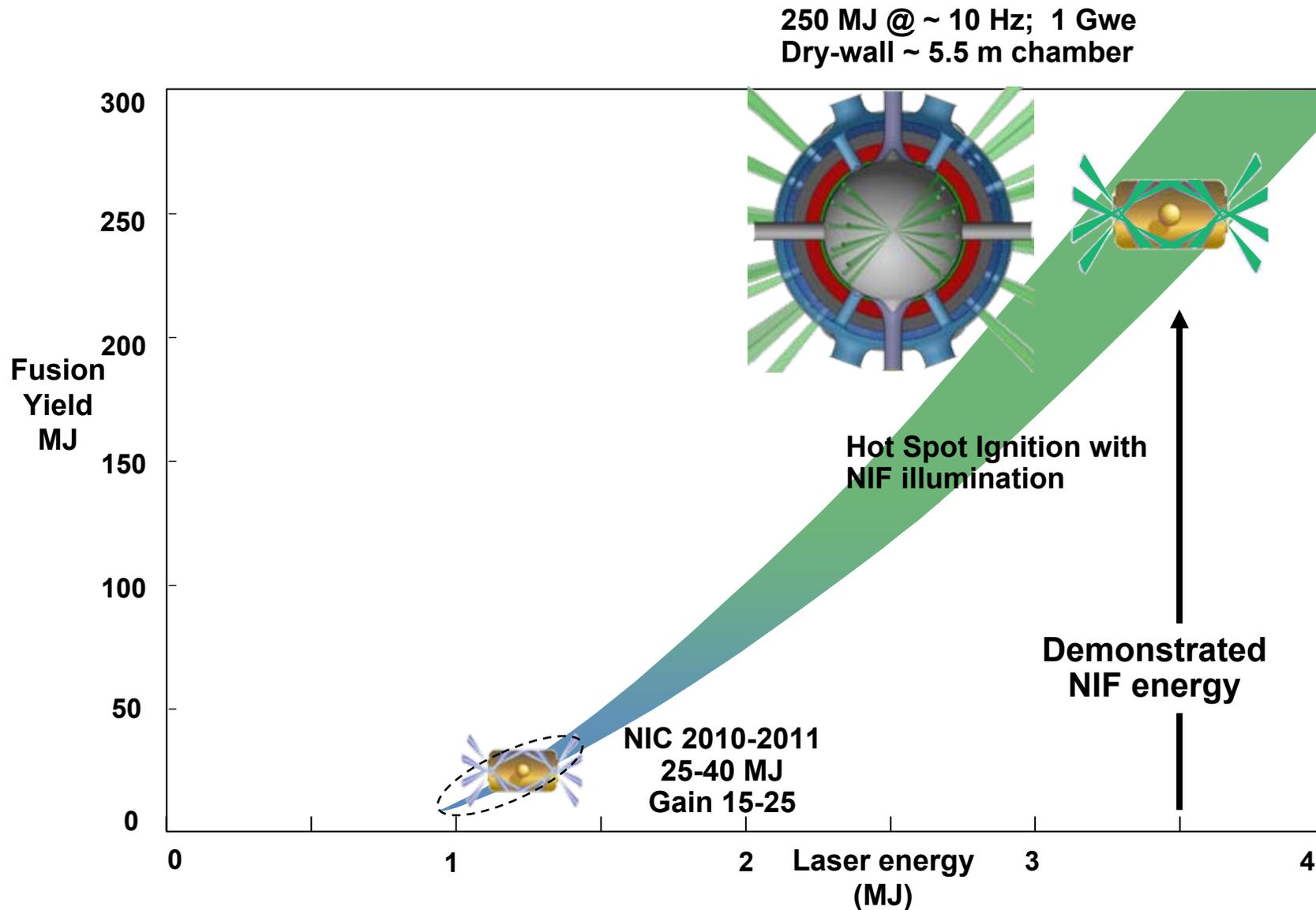


# Ignition and gain on NIF will be a transforming event, and will focus the world's attention on the possibility of an inertial fusion energy option



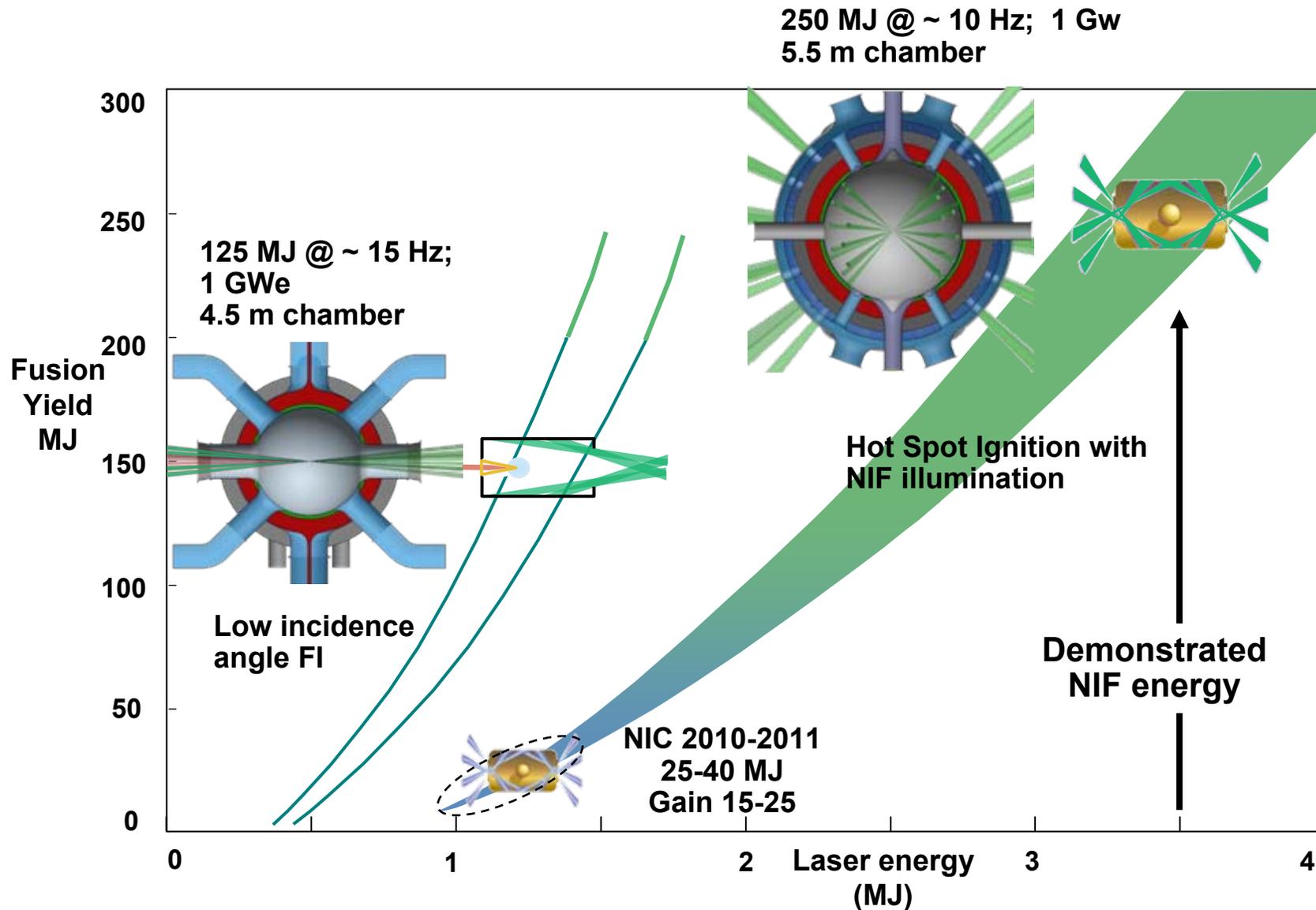
But NIF/NIC gains will not be adequate for an inertial fusion energy system

# Pure IFE could be realized with NIF-like lasers, NIF-like targets and chambers ~ 1/2 the size of NIF



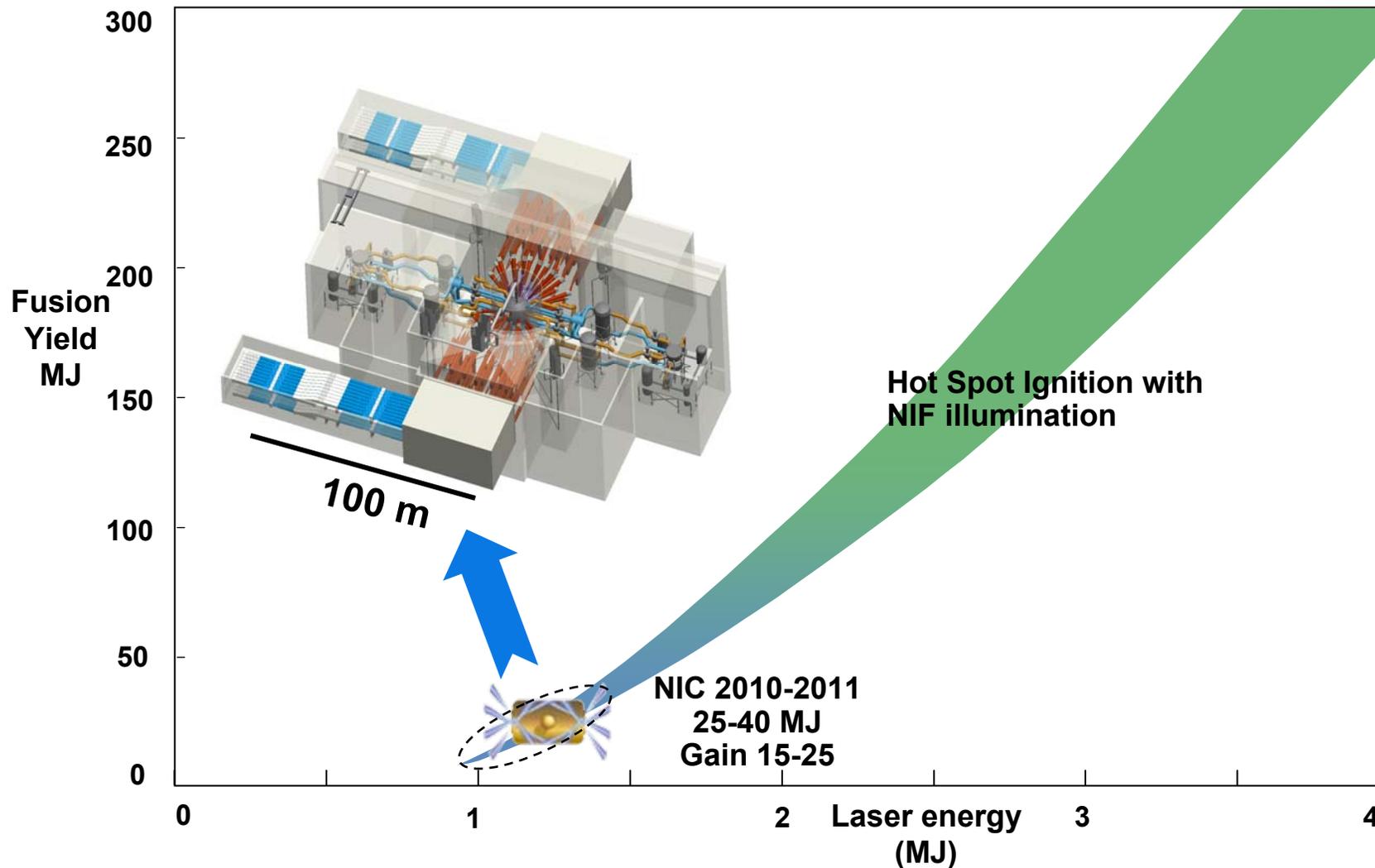
But IFE with 3-4 MJ lasers systems are unlikely to be economically attractive

# With Fast Ignition, more attractive IFE systems are possible



We will resolve the physics issues of FI by early 2012/2013

# The challenge is to find a fusion option that would work with NIF/NIC performance



**We believe LIFE is such an option**

# **LIFE goal: Provide a sustainable, once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle energy option**

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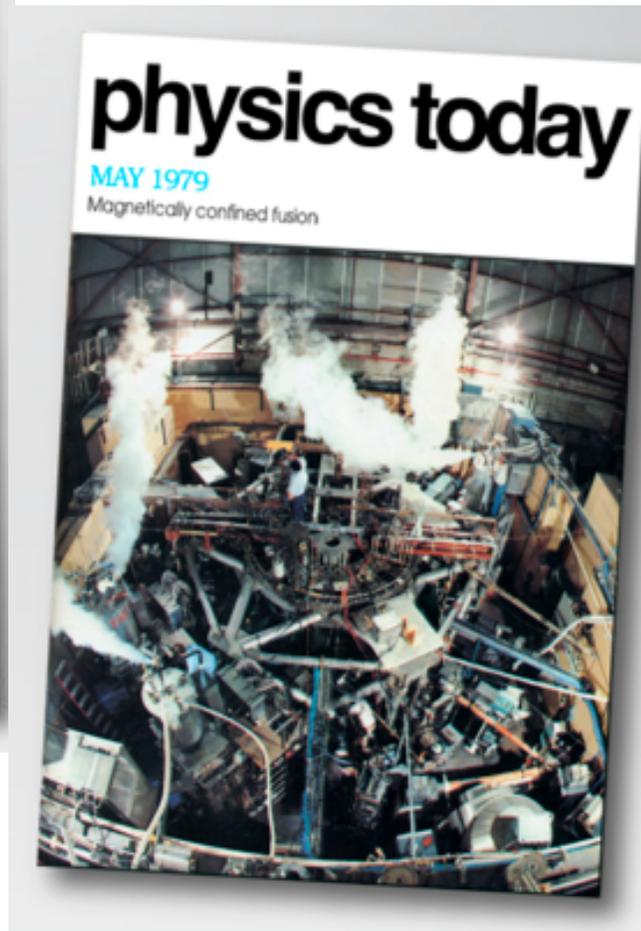
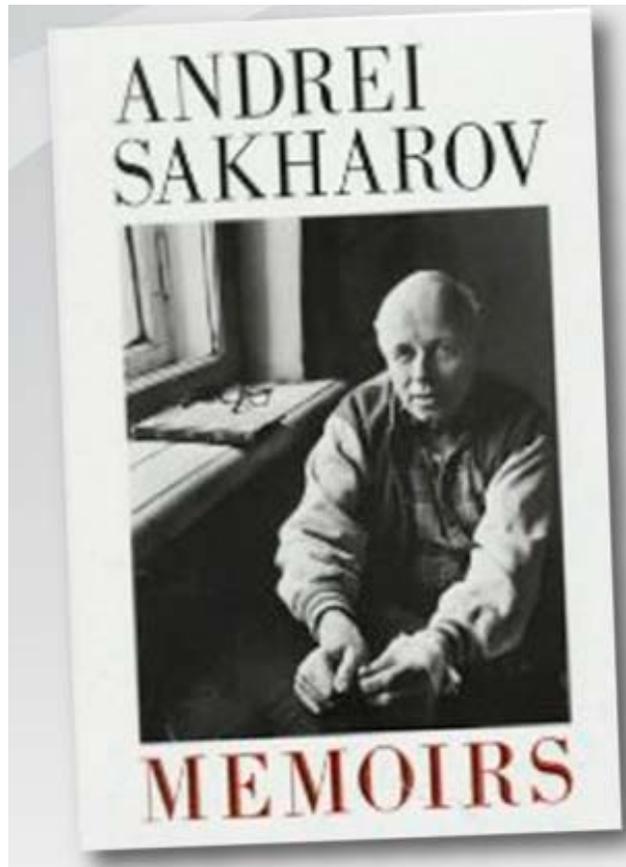


- **LIFE uses fusion neutrons to drive a subcritical fertile/fissile fuel blanket and provide a once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle**

- **The science and technology “building blocks” for a NIF-based LIFE system are logical and credible extensions of NIF, ignition on NIF and ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry**

- **The inherent separability of LIFE, would allow a NIF-based LIFE system to be piloted by 2020-2025**

The idea of a fusion-fission hybrid was first proposed more than 50 years ago



Proceedings  
**US—USSR  
SYMPOSIUM ON  
FUSION-FISSION  
REACTORS**  
July 13-16, 1976

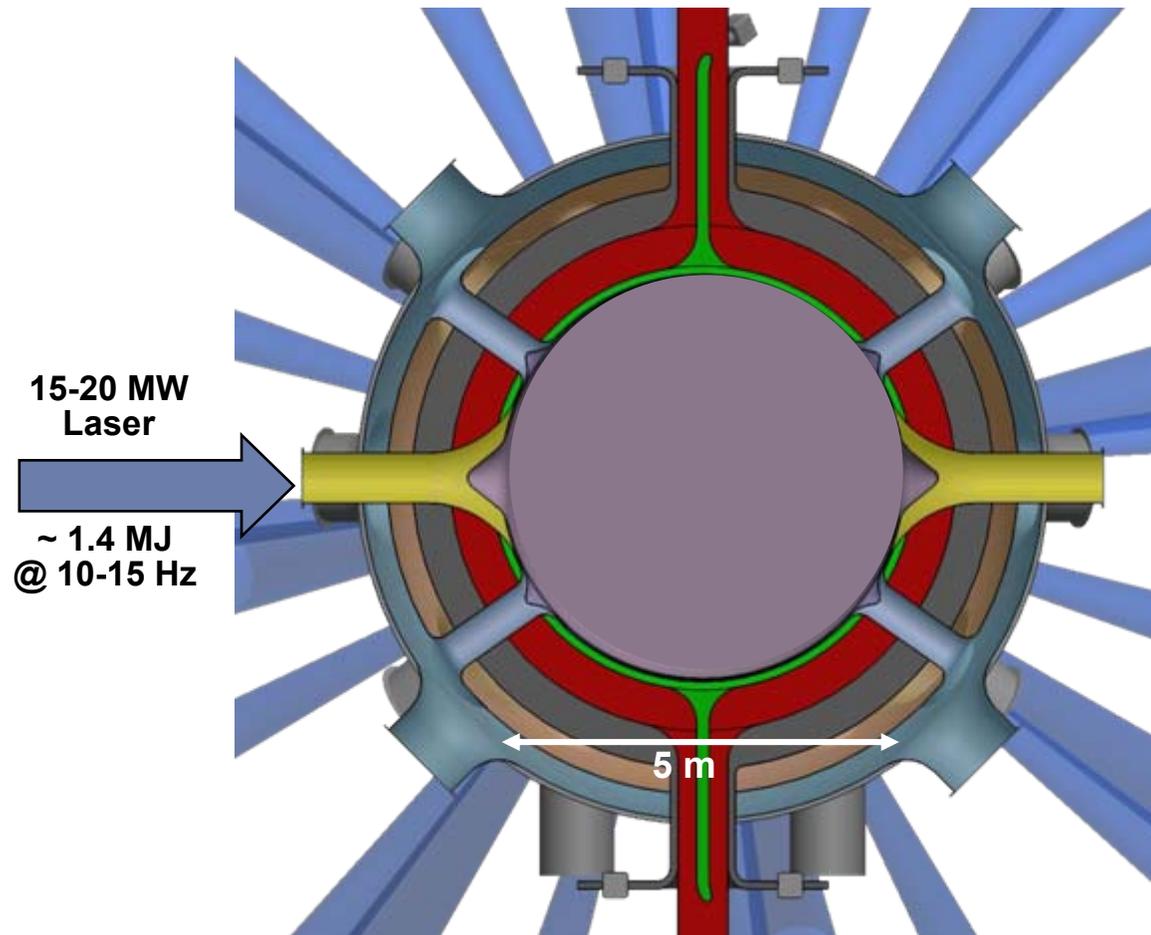


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University of California,  
Lawrence Livermore Laboratory  
Livermore, California  
Sponsored by LLL-ERDA

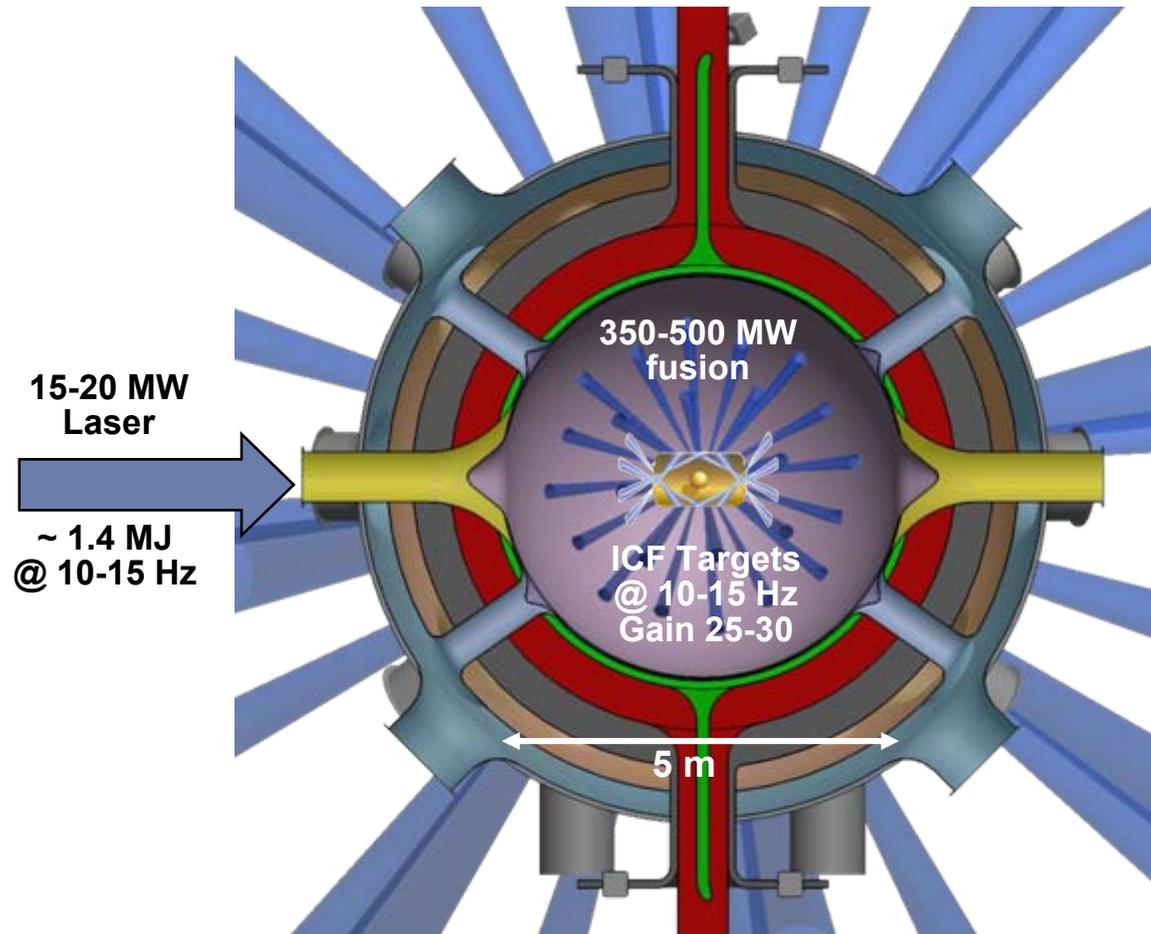


We believe LIFE is an idea whose time has come

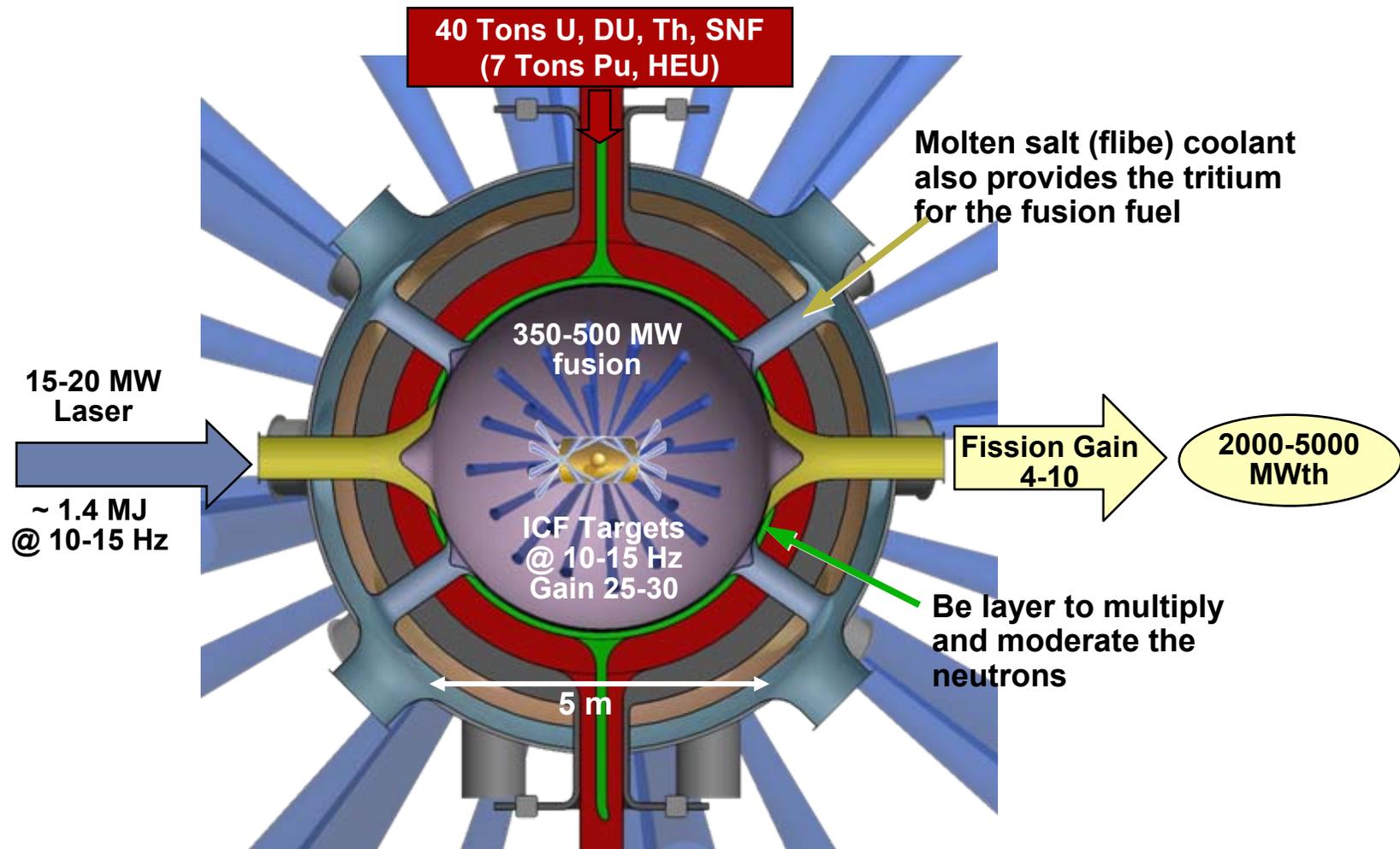
# LIFE starts with a 15-20 MW laser (NIF-like 1.4 MJ @ 10 - 15 Hz)



# NIF-like targets are injected at 10-15 Hz providing 350-500 MW of fusion

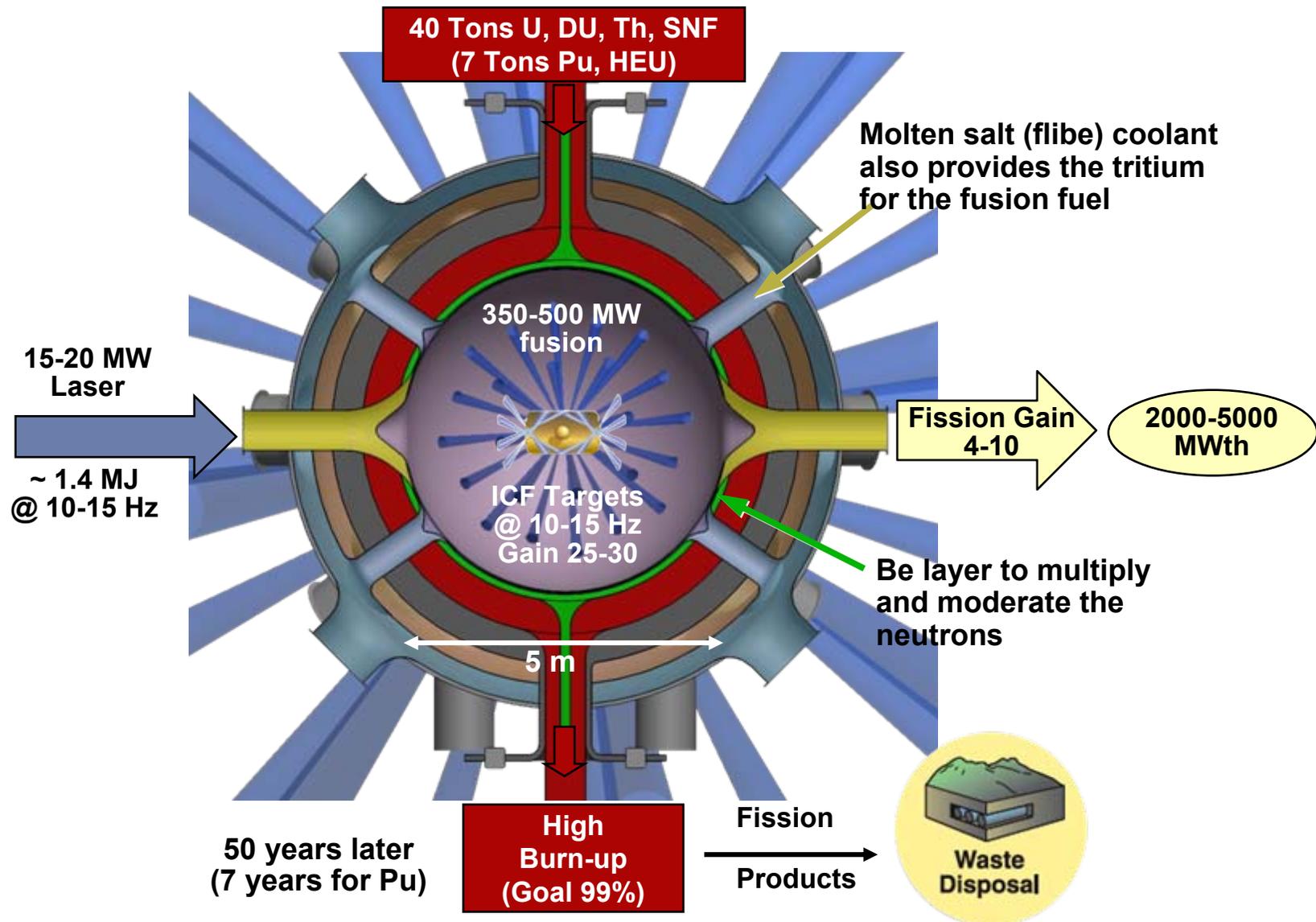


# Fertile or fissile fuel, flibe coolant and a Be blanket provide the fission gain and tritium for the fusion targets

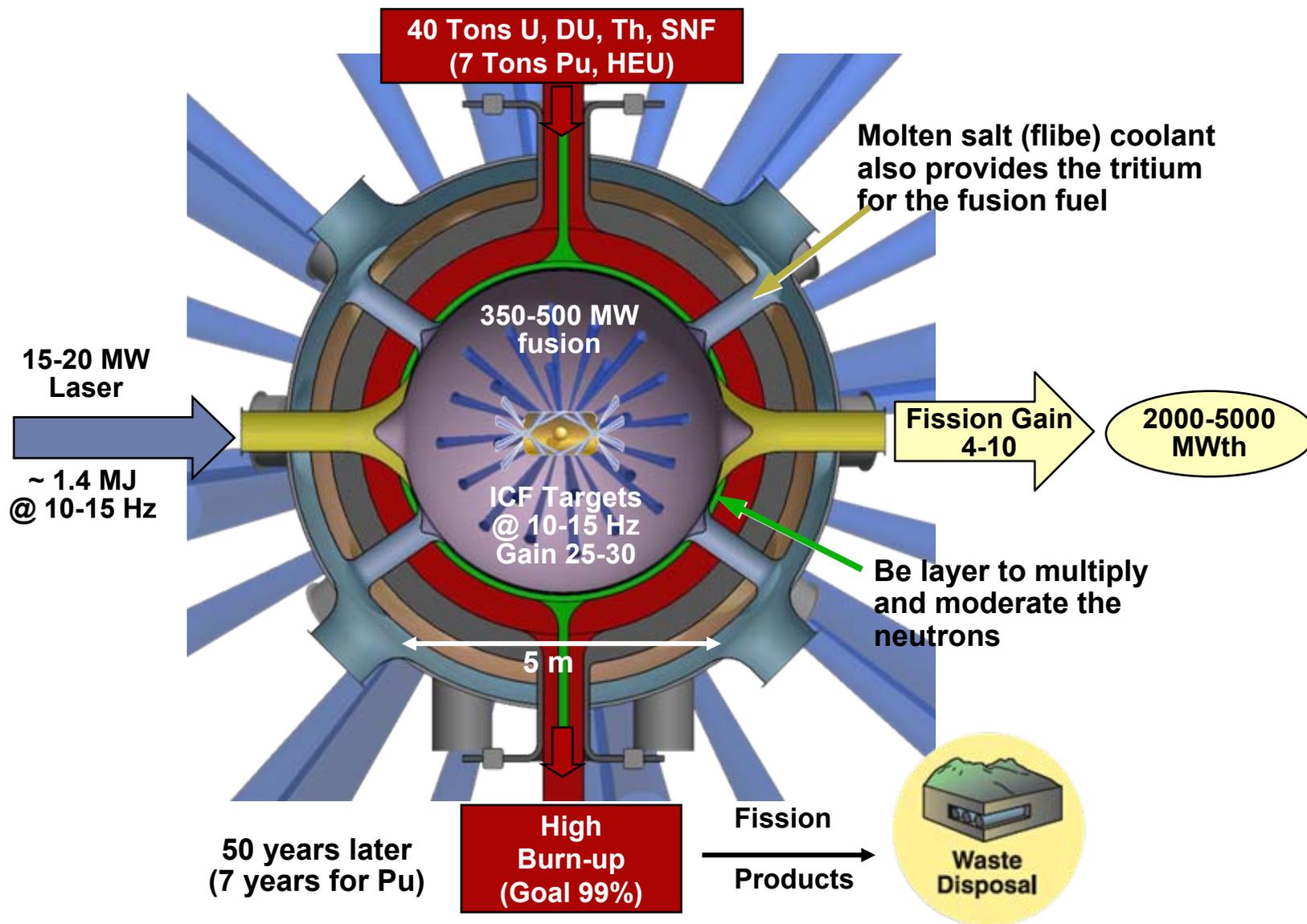


40 tons of fertile fuel could provide 2000-5000 MWth for 50 yrs  
(7 MT of fissile fuel for ~ 7 years)

# The external neutrons allows us to burn the fuel to very high FIMA (goal > 99%) in one step



# LIFE uses a point source of inertial fusion neutrons to drive a sub-critical fissile fuel blanket

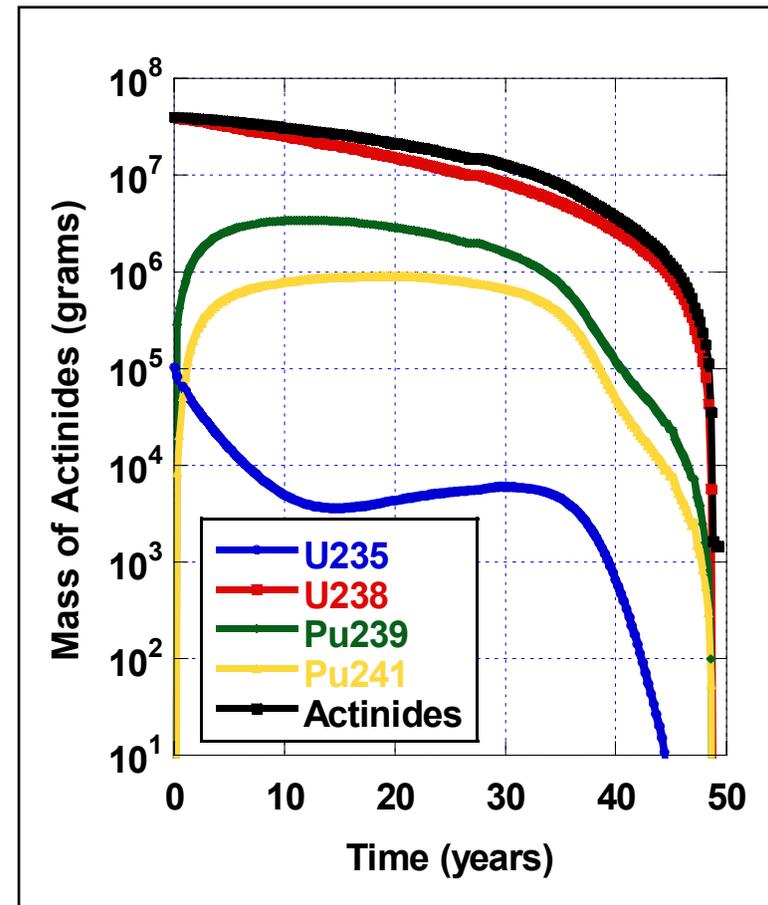
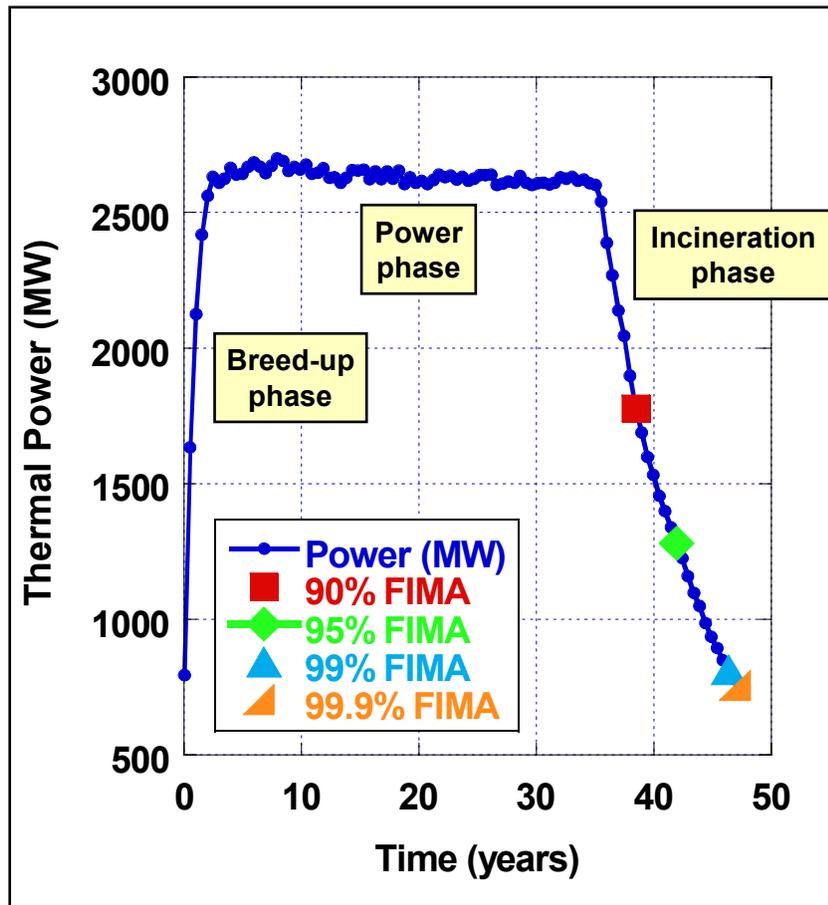


LIFE would provide a once-through, closed nuclear fuel cycle

# LIFE provides decades of steady-power from a depleted uranium fuel loading



Thermal power and content of fertile and fissile material as a function of time for an optimized LIFE engine loaded with 40 tons of DU, driven by 500 MW of fusion



Level of LIFE fuel burn-up (FIMA) will be a trade-off between economic and proliferation constraints



## **LIFE fuel burn-up can be adjusted as desired**

**Remaining quantities of actinides for an initial load of 40 tons of DU as a fraction of burn-up (FIMA)**

	<b>Burn-up</b>			
<b>Isotope</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>99.9%</b>
<b><sup>235</sup>U</b>	<b>1.6 kg</b>	<b>120 g</b>	<b>560 mg</b>	<b>36 mg</b>
<b><sup>238</sup>U</b>	<b>3300 kg</b>	<b>1800 kg</b>	<b>490 kg</b>	<b>150 kg</b>
<b><sup>237</sup>Np</b>	<b>5.4 kg</b>	<b>1.9 kg</b>	<b>290 g</b>	<b>69 g</b>
<b><sup>239</sup>Pu</b>	<b>210 kg</b>	<b>58 kg</b>	<b>11 kg</b>	<b>3.2 kg</b>
<b><sup>241</sup>Pu</b>	<b>10 kg</b>	<b>21 kg</b>	<b>3.6 kg</b>	<b>1.1 kg</b>
<b><sup>241</sup>Am</b>	<b>4.2 kg</b>	<b>270 g</b>	<b>13 g</b>	<b>1.9 g</b>
<b><sup>246</sup>Cm</b>	<b>150 kg</b>	<b>170 kg</b>	<b>120 kg</b>	<b>79 kg</b>

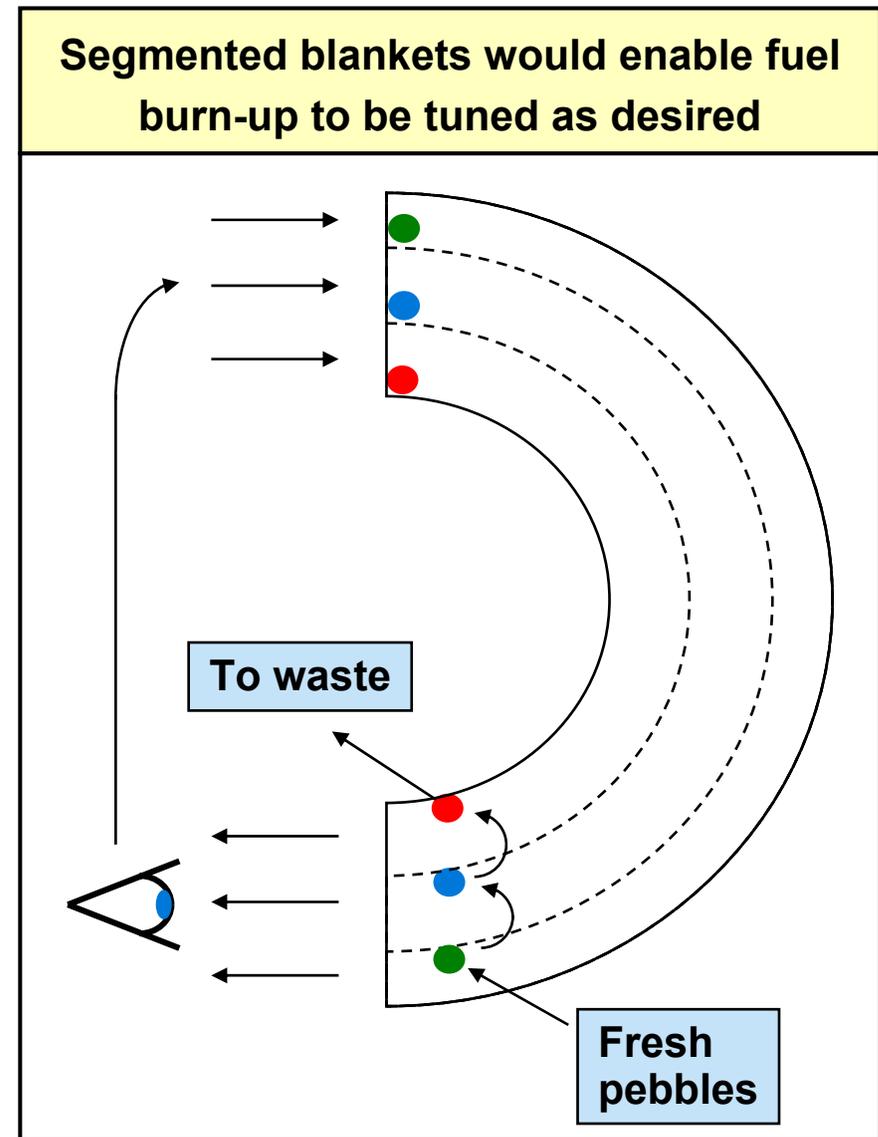
- **40 tons of depleted uranium can become nearly 40 tons of fission products**

**With > 99% burn-up, LIFE produces up to 20 X less high level waste per GWe than once-through LWRs and has insignificant quantities of actinides at end of operation**

# Improved performance is realized by segmenting the blanket and extending the lifetime



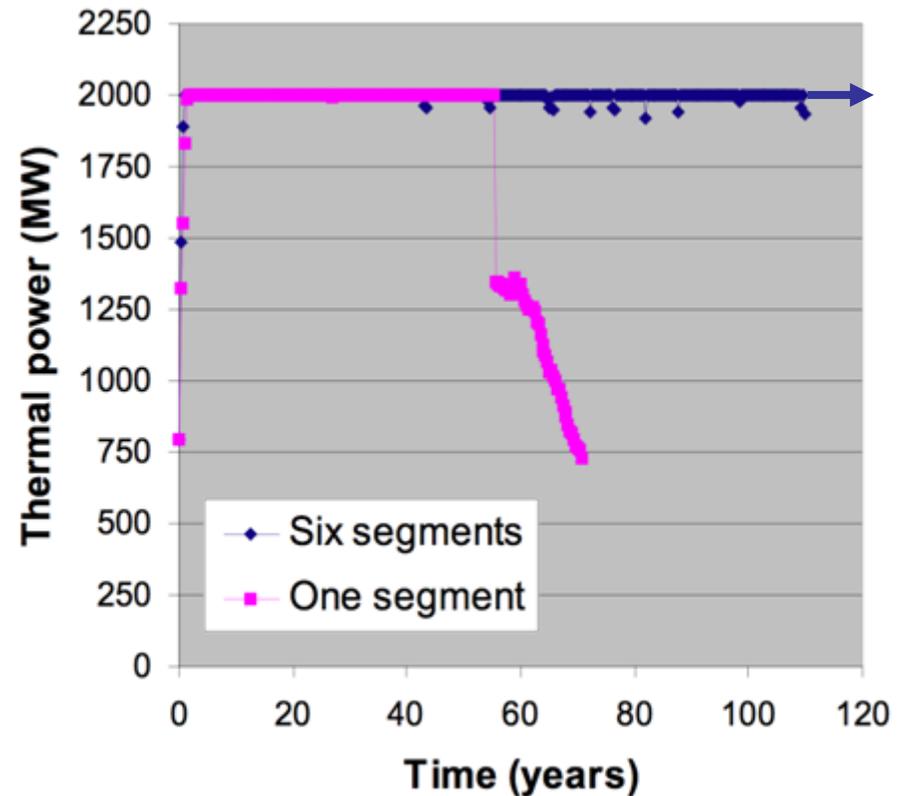
- Different blanket regions (e.g., front, middle, back) experience different neutron fluxes
- When the front region is fully burned, successive layers are promoted, and new fuel is added to the back



# Segmented blankets can be operated as long as desired



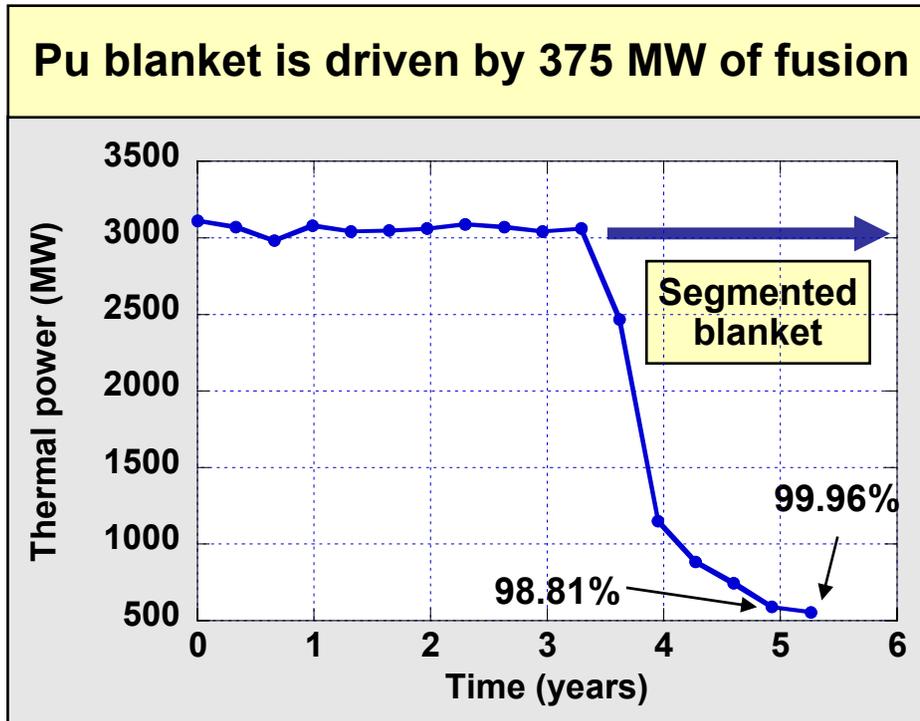
- Different blanket regions (e.g., front, middle, back) experience different neutron fluxes
- When the front region is fully burned, successive layers are promoted, and new fuel is added to the back
- Full power mode can be extended indefinitely



# LIFE can burn excess plutonium in a high-gain blanket



- System fueled with 7 MT of weapons grade plutonium (WG-Pu)
  - Or 7 MT of PuMA from processed spent nuclear fuel
- Fuel (whether in “TRISO”-like loaded or Solid Hollow Core Pebbles) blended 80% ZrC + 20% Pu
  - Also loaded with 400 wppm boron as burnable poison
- Fusion power is 375 MW (25 MJ @ 15 Hz) Flat top thermal power is 3000 MW --- Blanket gain of 8



Isotope	Initial mass	Final mass
$^{239}\text{Pu}$	6.56 tons	1.3 mg
$^{240}\text{Pu}$	406 kg	<1 $\mu\text{g}$
$^{241}\text{Pu}$	9.1 kg	1.2 mg
$^{242}\text{Pu}$	1.4 kg	<1 $\mu\text{g}$
$^{241}\text{Am}$	15.4 kg	<1 $\mu\text{g}$
<b>Total actinides</b>	<b>6.99 tons</b>	<b>2.83 kg</b> (2.04 kg $^{246}\text{Cm}$ )

# LIFE offers key benefits relative to other nuclear systems

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- **LIFE would be a unique fusion-fission system:**
  - Operates with a variety of different fuels
    - Depleted or Natural uranium, SNF, Excess weapons material, Thorium
  - No enrichment and no reprocessing
  - No weapons attractive materials at start or end of operation minimizes proliferation concerns
  - Deeply sub-critical at all times and passive removal of decay heat makes it inherently safe
- **Simple technological solutions**
  - Low-yield
  - Dry wall
  - Fast development path
  - Makes its own fuel (fusion & fission)
  - Incinerates its own actinide waste

**We believe the S&T for a NIF-based LIFE system are logical and credible extensions of NIF, NIC and ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry**

# **LIFE goal: Provide a sustainable, once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle energy option**

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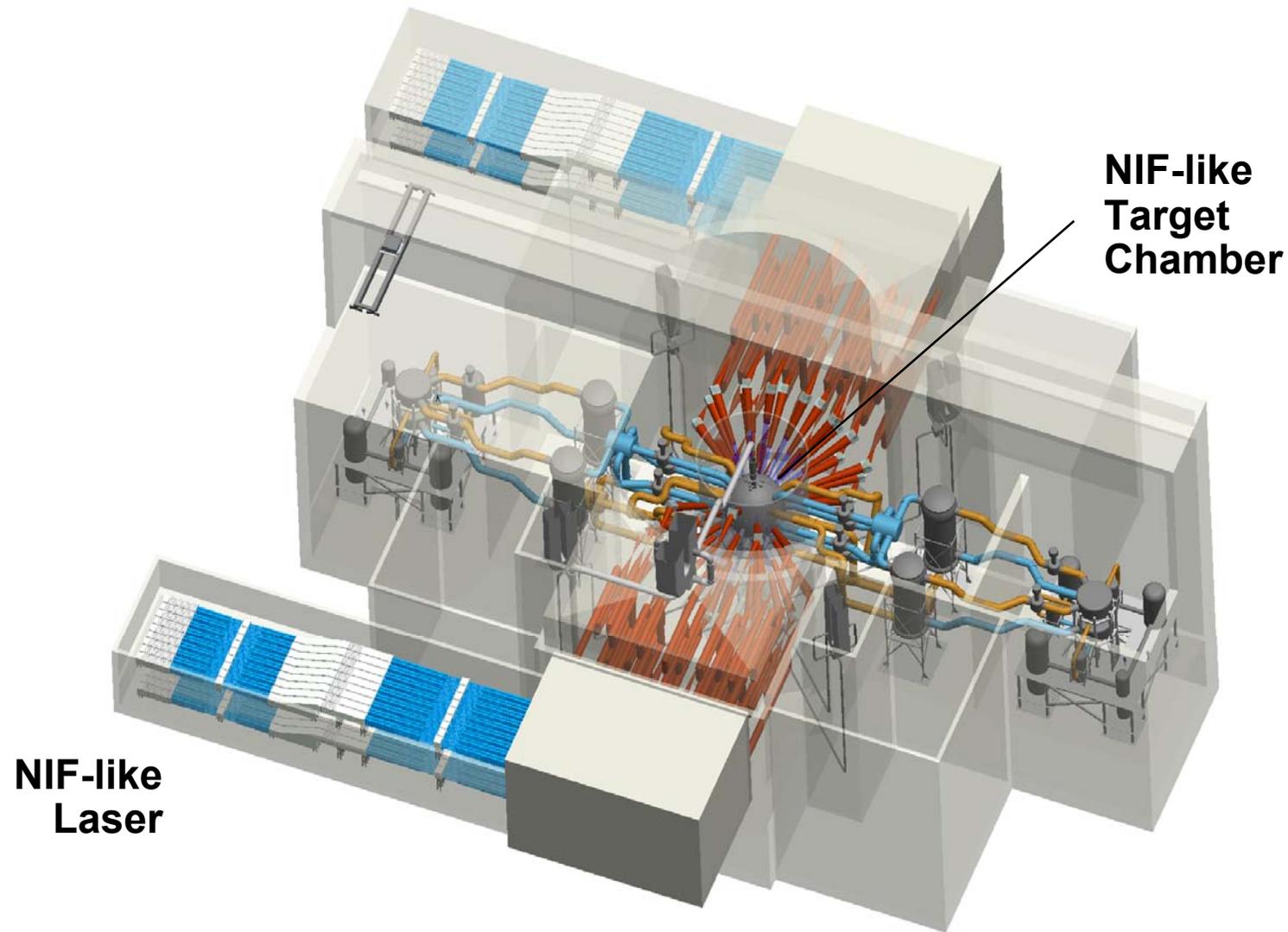


- **LIFE uses fusion neutrons to drive a subcritical fertile/fissile fuel blanket and provide a once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle**

- **The science and technology “building blocks” for a NIF-based LIFE system are logical and credible extensions of NIF, ignition on NIF and ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry**

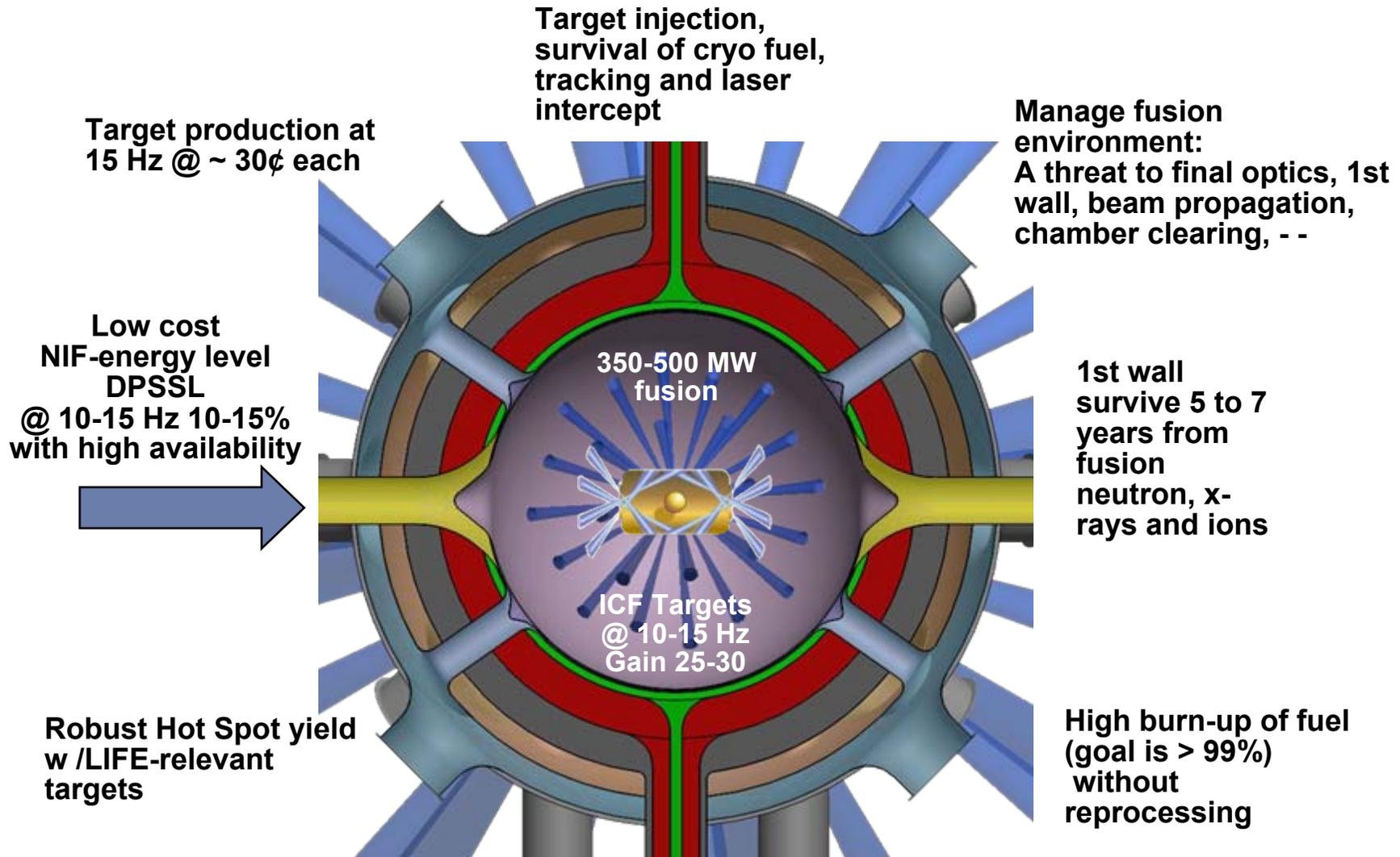
- **The inherent separability of LIFE, would allow a NIF-based LIFE system to be piloted by 2020-2025**

**A NIF-based LIFE engine comprises a NIF-like laser system, a NIF-level point source of neutrons and a subcritical fission blanket**

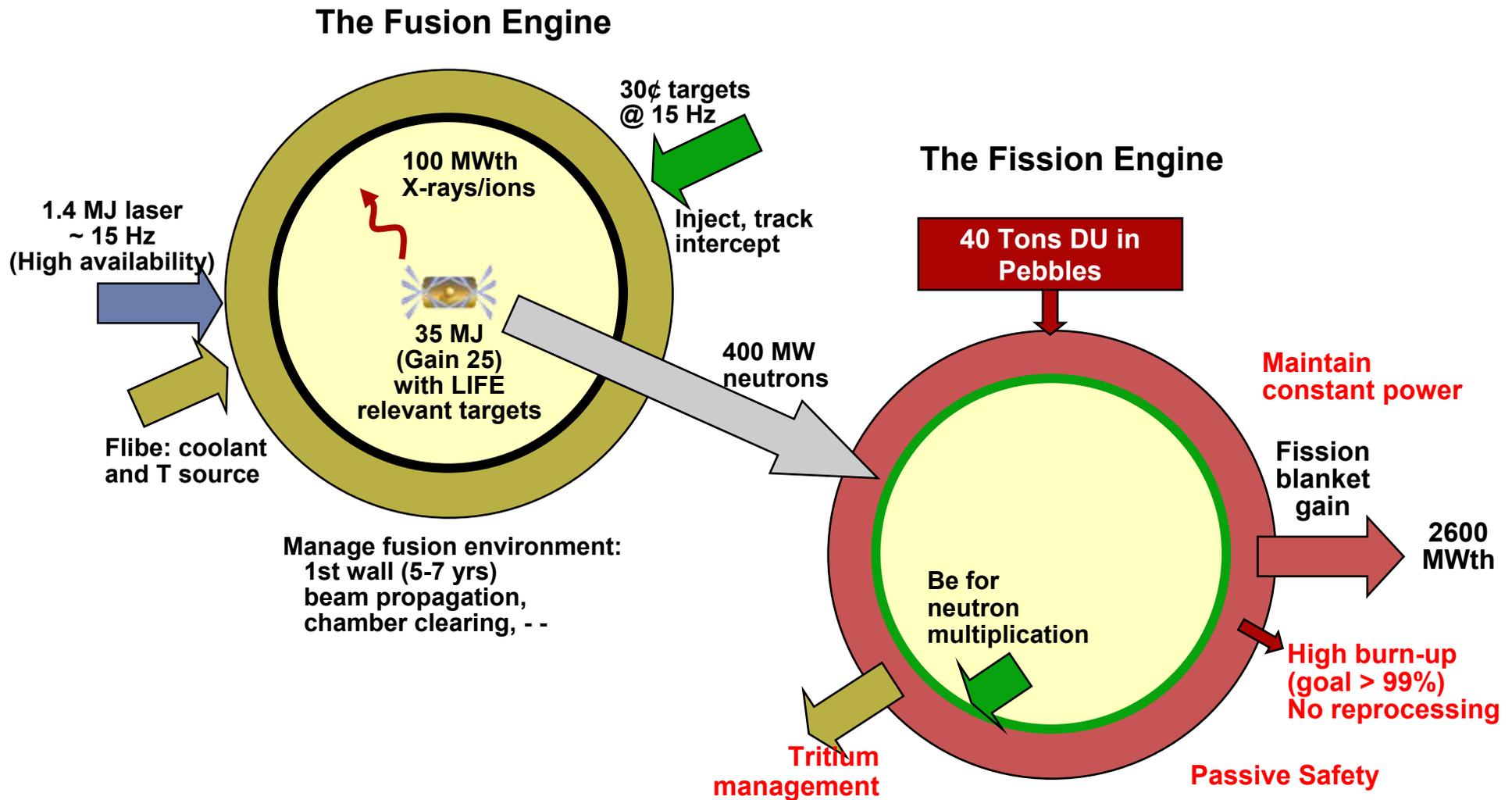


**and builds on ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry**

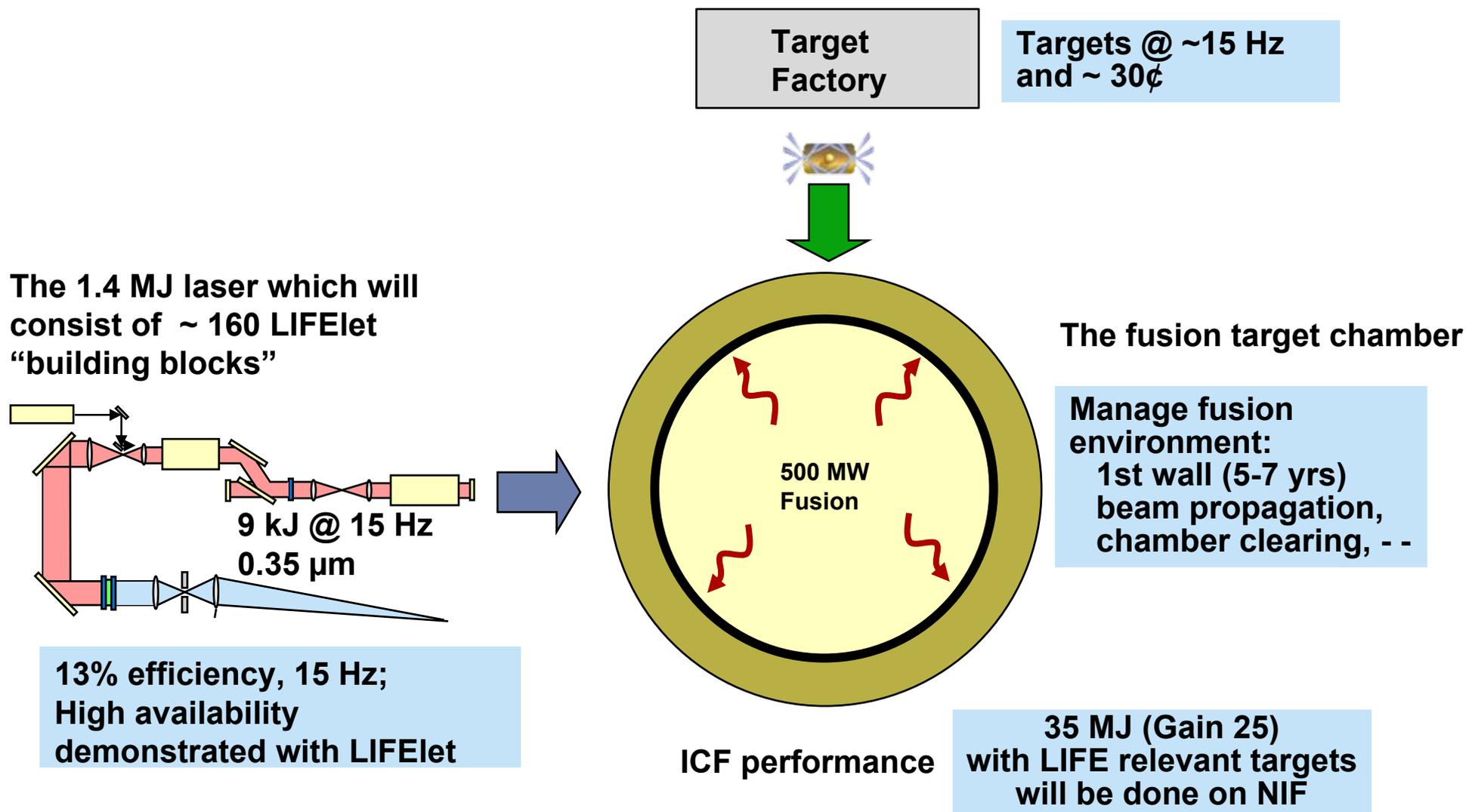
# The Baseline, NIF-based LIFE faces technical and scientific challenges



# LIFE divides naturally into a Fusion and Fission engine with different and distinct challenges



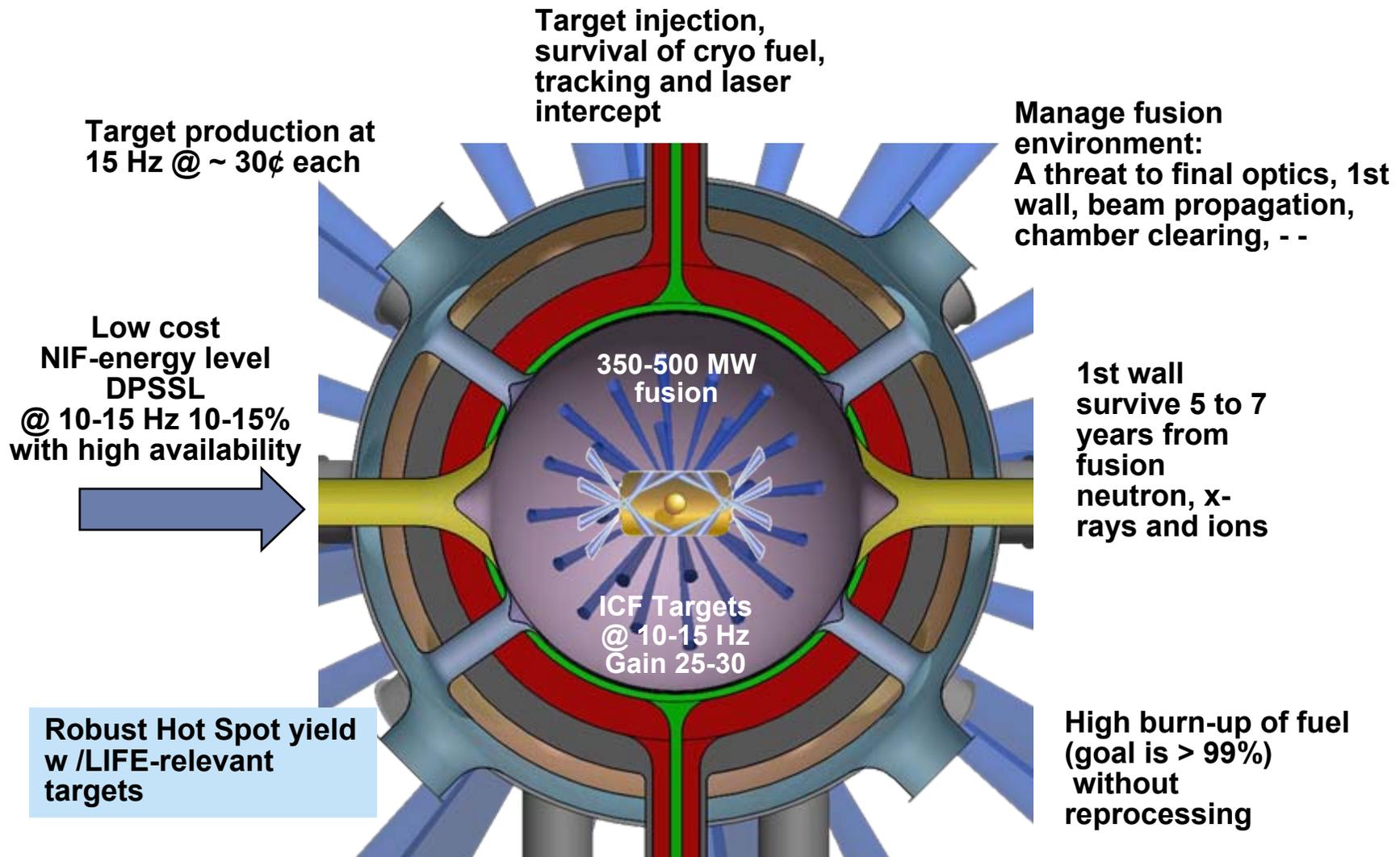
# The fusion engine further divides into four separate and distinct subsystems



We believe the S&T building blocks for NIF-based LIFE are credible extensions of NIF/NIC and ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry

# We have identified S&T development paths:

## Fusion yield

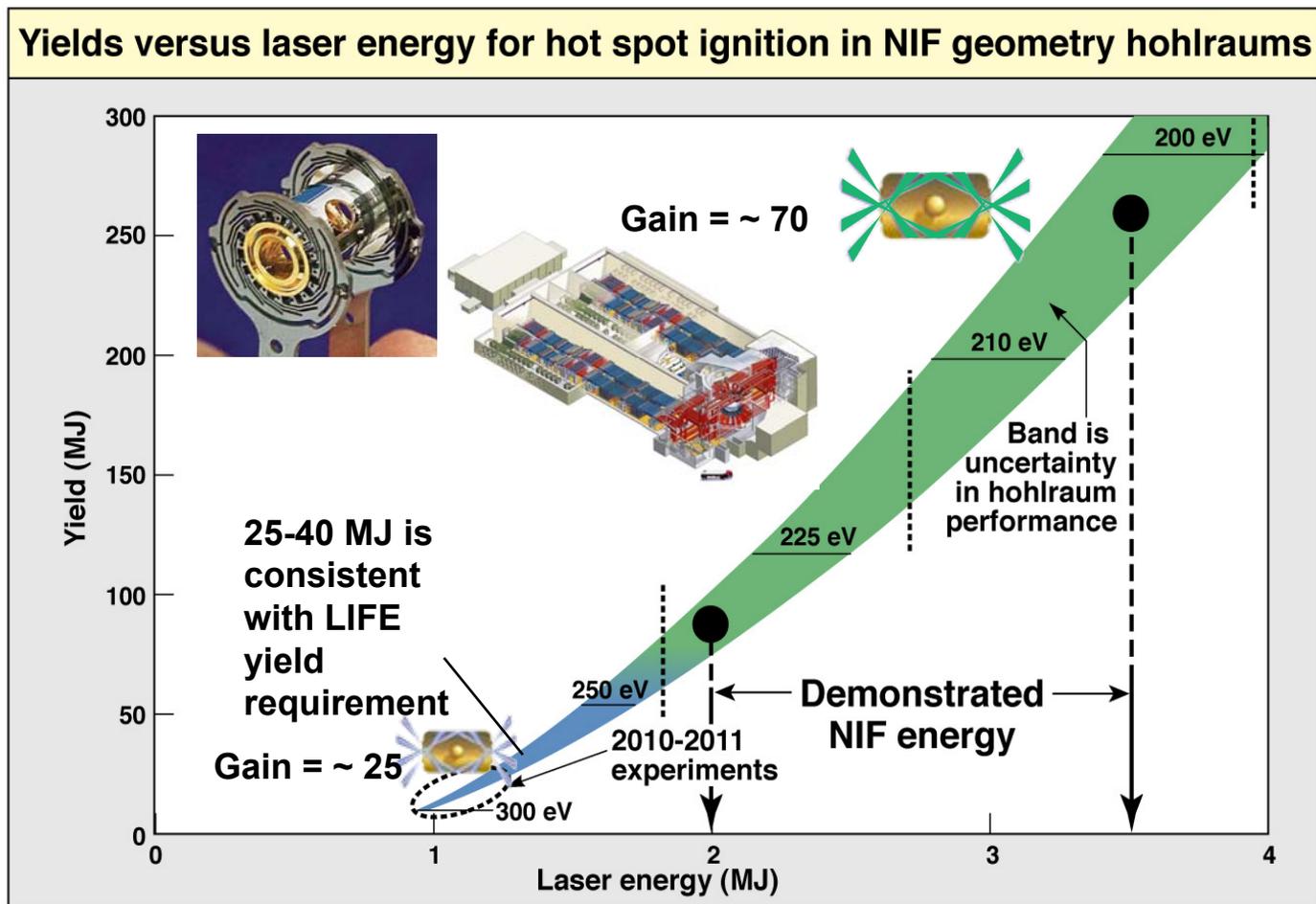


# NIF target yields are enabling for LIFE and will be demonstrated with NIC



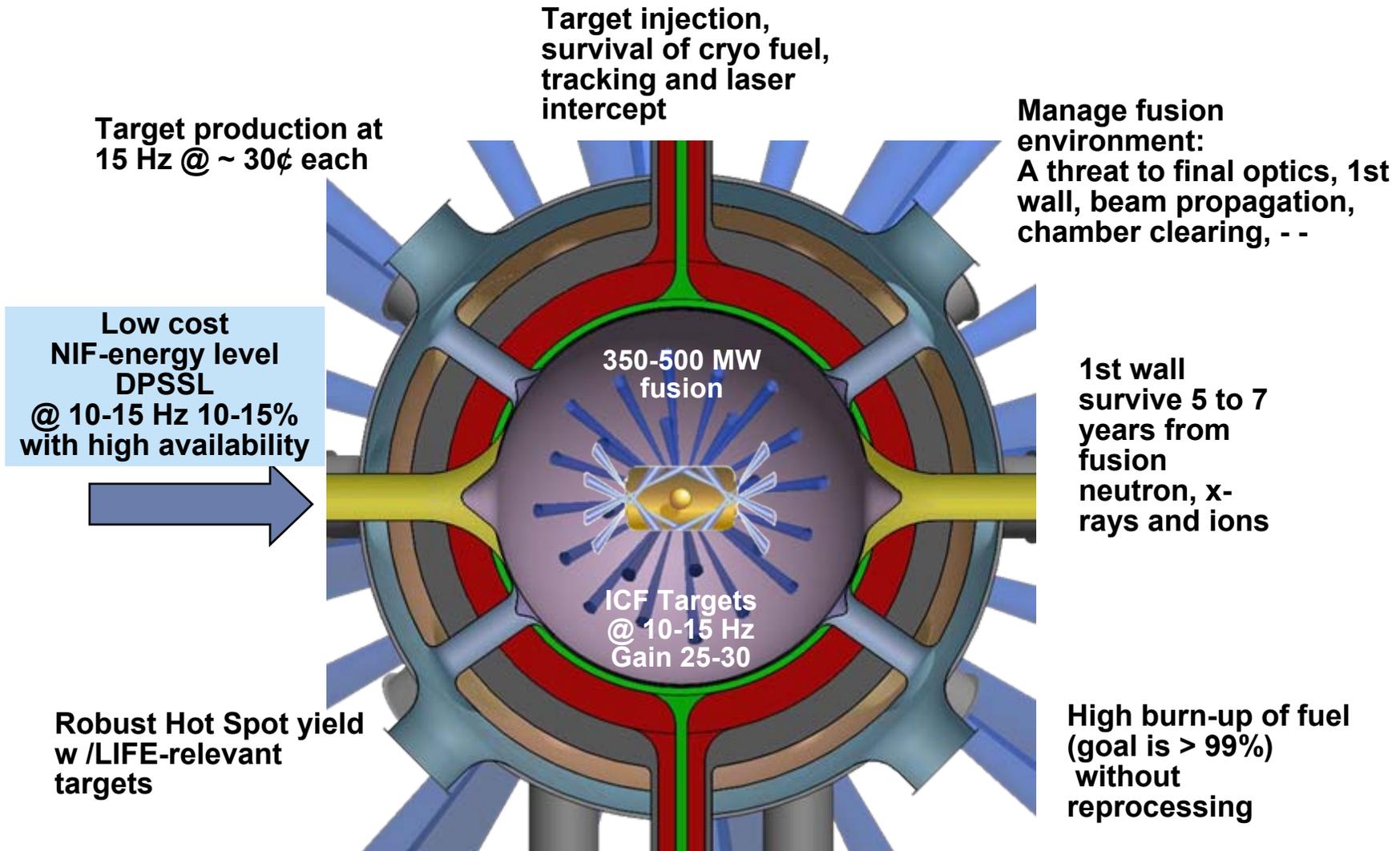
## NIF Hot-spot Ignition Campaign will start in 2010

- Target, cryo technologies and diagnostics have been developed
- The scientific basis for HIS targets has been extensively developed

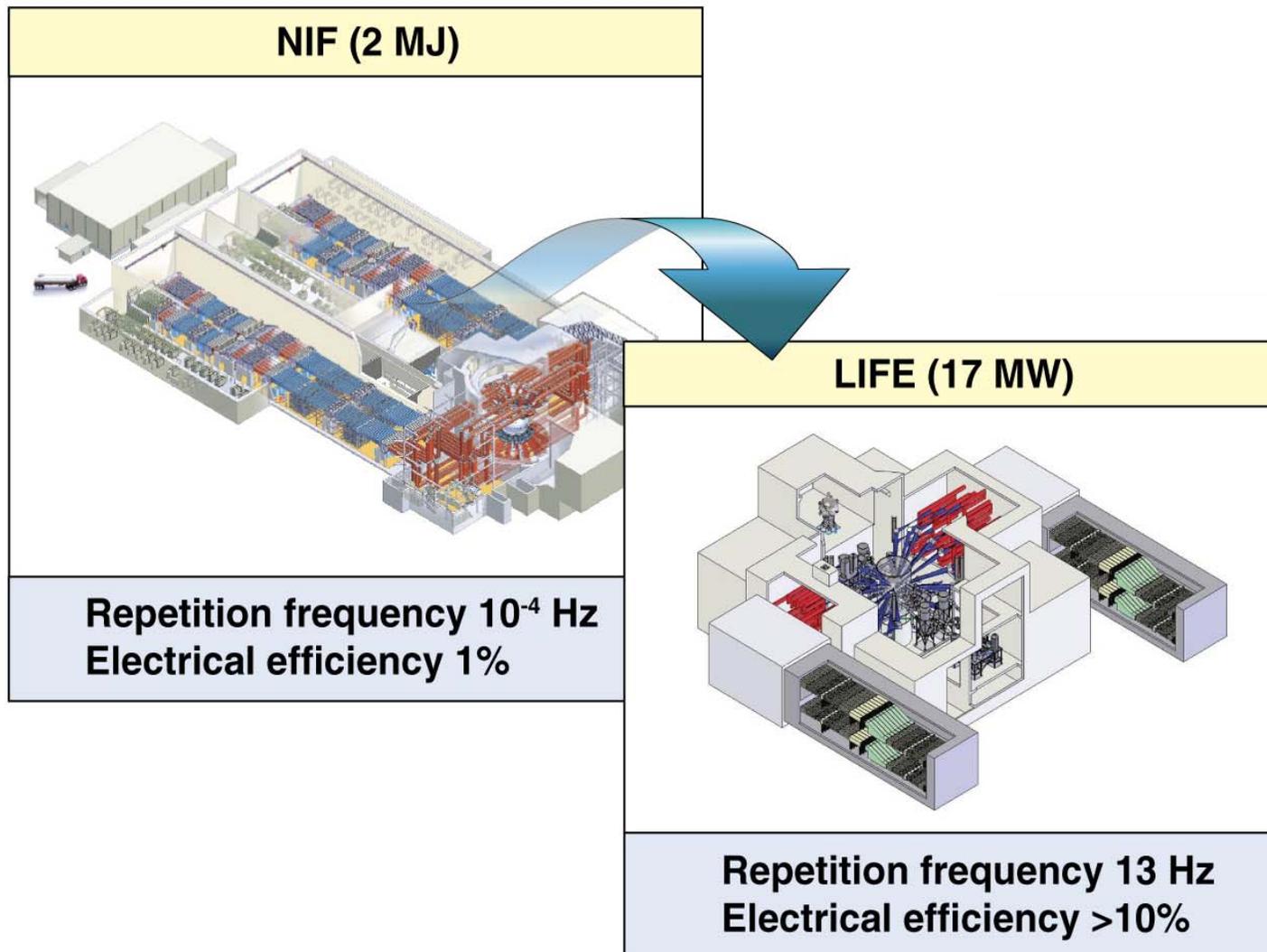


We anticipate LIFE-level yields by 2012 and with LIFE type targets by 2013

# We have identified S&T development paths: Fusion laser

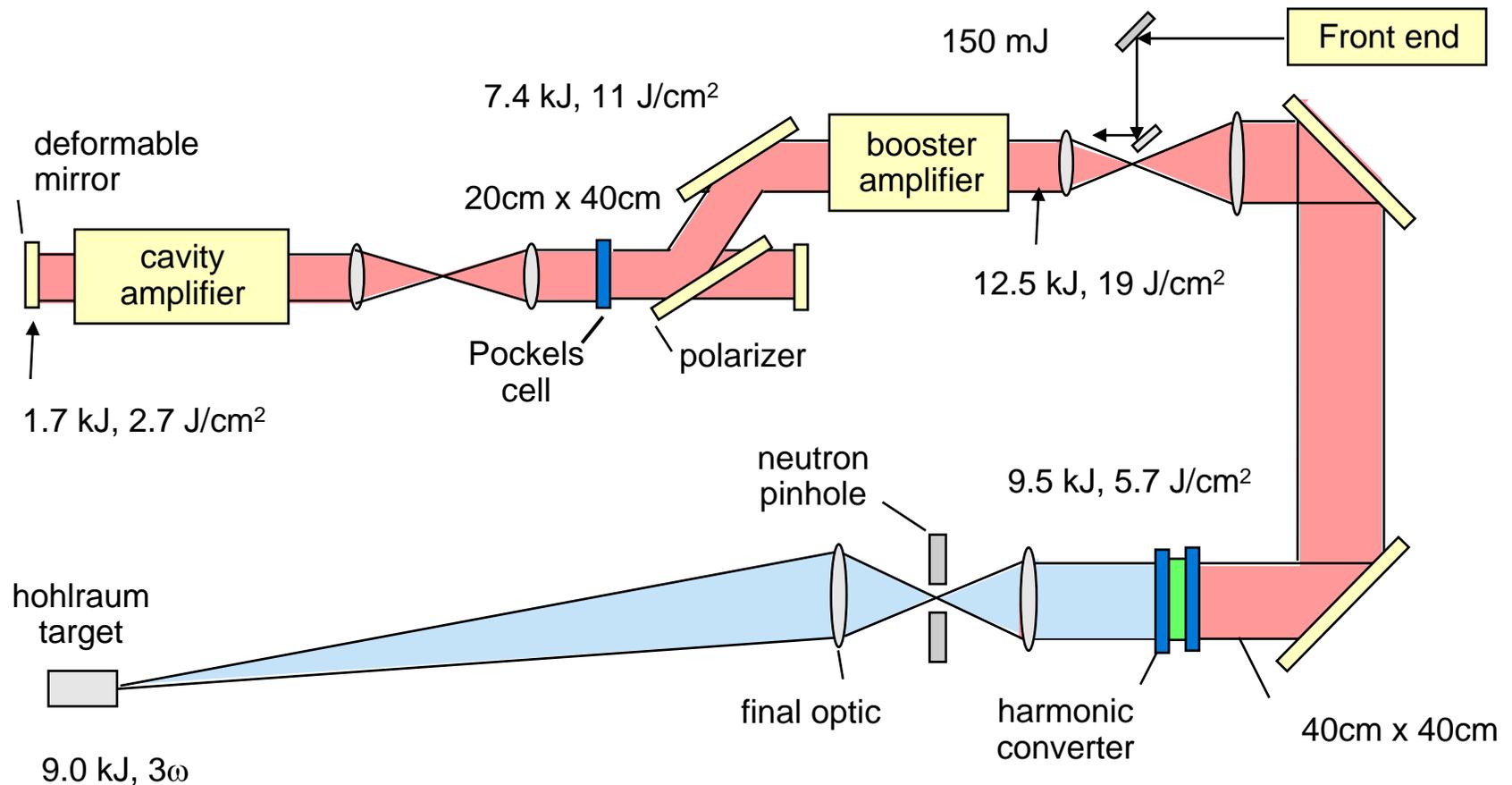


# The LIFE laser is a logical extension of the NIF laser



- Fluence is identical
- He cooling enables average power
- Diode pumping enable efficiency

# The LIFE laser 100 KW “building block” is a NIF-like beamline producing 7 kJ at ~ 15 Hz



**Efficient high power laser diodes and high flow rate He cooling allows this NIF-like beamlet to operate at 15 Hz**

# Laser diodes and He gas cooling enable a NIF-like architecture to meet LIFE high rep rate high efficiency requirements

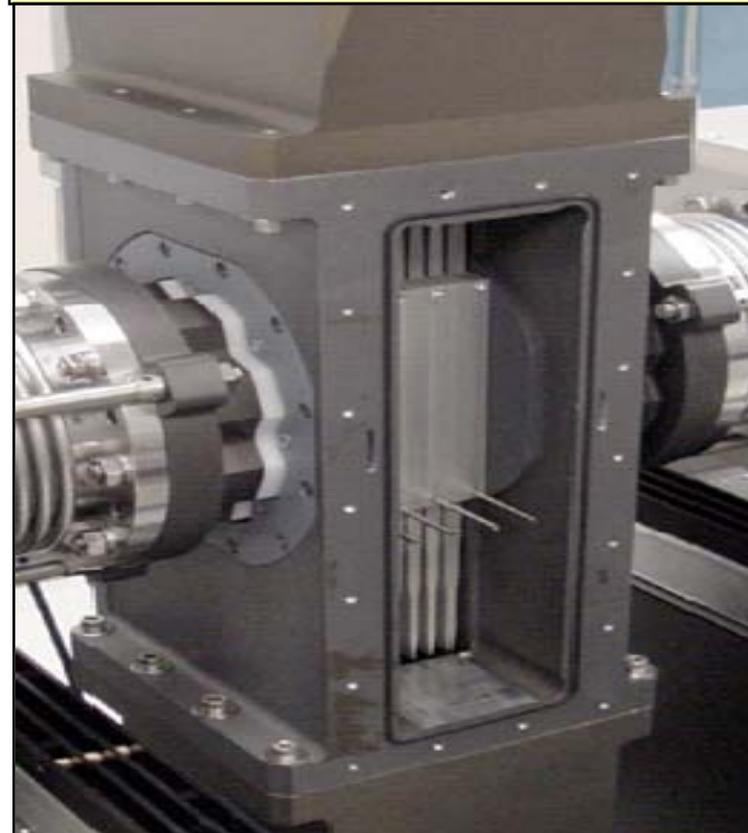


**High Power Diode Arrays**



**100 kW peak power**

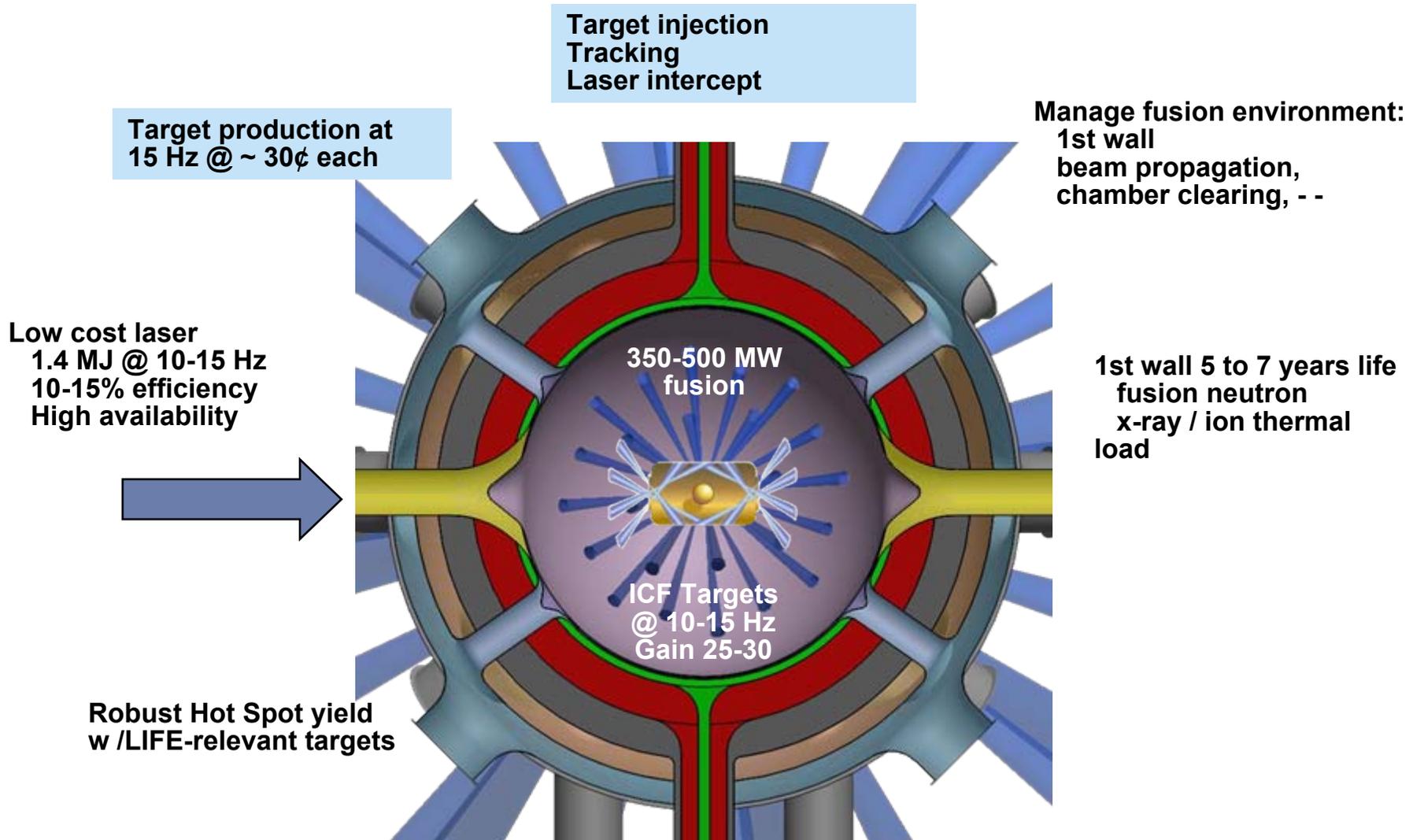
**High Speed Gas Cooling**



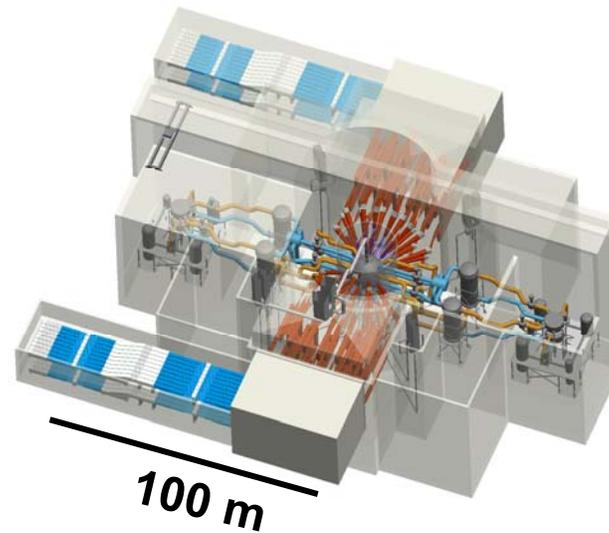
**3 W/cm<sup>2</sup> cooling (average)**

**These technologies have been developed as part of the Mercury Project**

# We have identified S&T development paths: Fusion targets



# System and economic criteria for LIFE targets are more stringent than NIF



	NIF	LIFE
Rep-rate	$<10^{-5}$ Hz	10 - 15 Hz
Cost	~\$100,000	~\$0.2 - \$0.4
Waste stream	$< 1$ gm	$10^6$ gm/year
Chamber placement	$\sim 10 \mu\text{m}^3$ ,	$\sim 1 - 5 \text{ mm}^3$
Chamber impact- mass/ shot	gm	100 mg
Number/year	100	$6 \times 10^8$



## The material costs are low

Item	Material	Cost (\$)	Process
Hohlraum/cone	Pb	< \$0.01	Deep-draw
Capsule			
Ablator	CH	\$0.000003	Micro-encapsulation
Foam	CH	\$0.00007	CO <sub>2</sub> extraction
DT		\$0.00001 (D)	Permeation
<b>Total costs</b>		<b>\$0.01</b>	

Total estimated target material cost = \$0.01

Target cost will be in production processes



## **Costs are in mass-production at high precision**

Estimated production costs based on typical factory

<b>Item</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Cost/year (\$M)</b>
<b>Operating personnel</b>	<b>69 people at \$300K/yr</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Capital depreciation</b>	<b>\$200,000,000 typical factory/5 years</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>5% cost of equipment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Electricity</b>	<b>Factory typical</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Total factory cost/yr</b>		<b>79</b>
<b>Production cost per target</b>	<b>631 million/year (20 Hz operation)</b>	<b>\$0.13</b>
<b>Target material cost (Pb)</b>		<b>\$0.01</b>
<b>Target material recycle costs</b>		<b>\$0.10</b>
<b>Total target cost</b>		<b>\$0.24</b>

**Together with GA we are developing a research plan for target fabrication to meet cost/precision objectives**

# There are examples of mass produced components that are comparable to LIFE requirements in volume, precision and cost



	LIFE	Mil Spec Bullet
Number/year	3.1-6.3 x 10 <sup>8</sup>	9 x 10 <sup>9</sup>
Dimensional tolerance	± 50 μm	± 40 μm
Cost	\$0.20-0.30	\$0.21

**Bullets are an interesting comparison, as they are multi-component, multi materials, that tolerate high acceleration and high velocity**

**However**

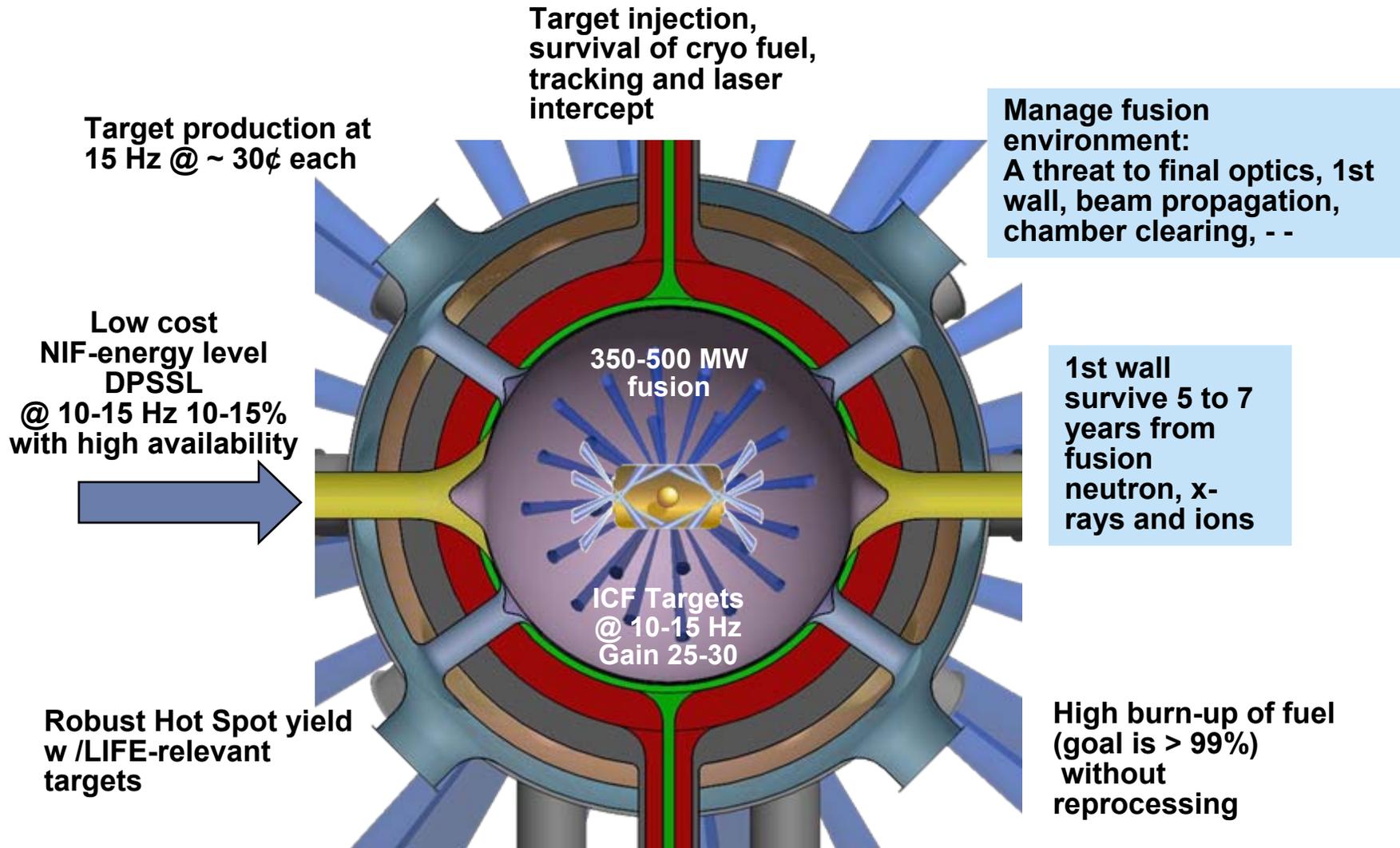
**LIFE targets with ~ 2 mg/cc foam filled Pb hohlraums, Cryo-DT in ~2 mg/cc carbon foams CH shells and μm precision assembly will clearly require significant development**

# Injection demonstration at GA to simulate the full length of a LIFE fueling system have demonstrated many objectives



- Injection at 6 Hz (burst mode) 400 m/sec to 200  $\mu\text{m}$  demonstrated
- Additional R&D needed for Cryogenic targets and  $>10$  Hz

# We have identified S&T development paths: Managing fusion environment and 1st Wall

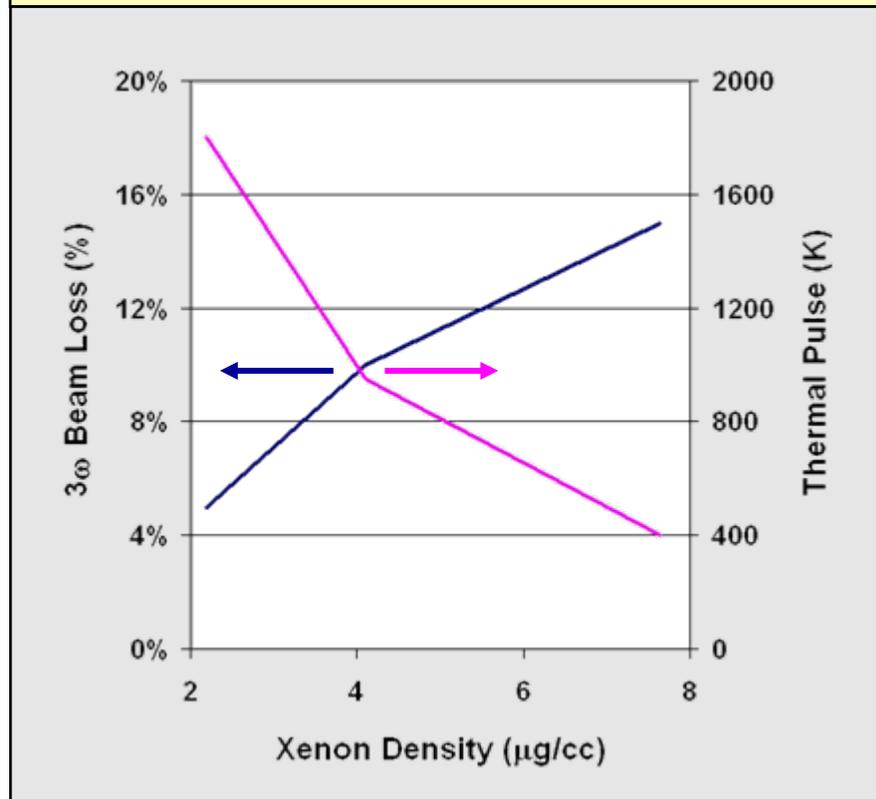


# Thermal robustness of indirect-drive targets allow use of chamber fill gas and compact chambers

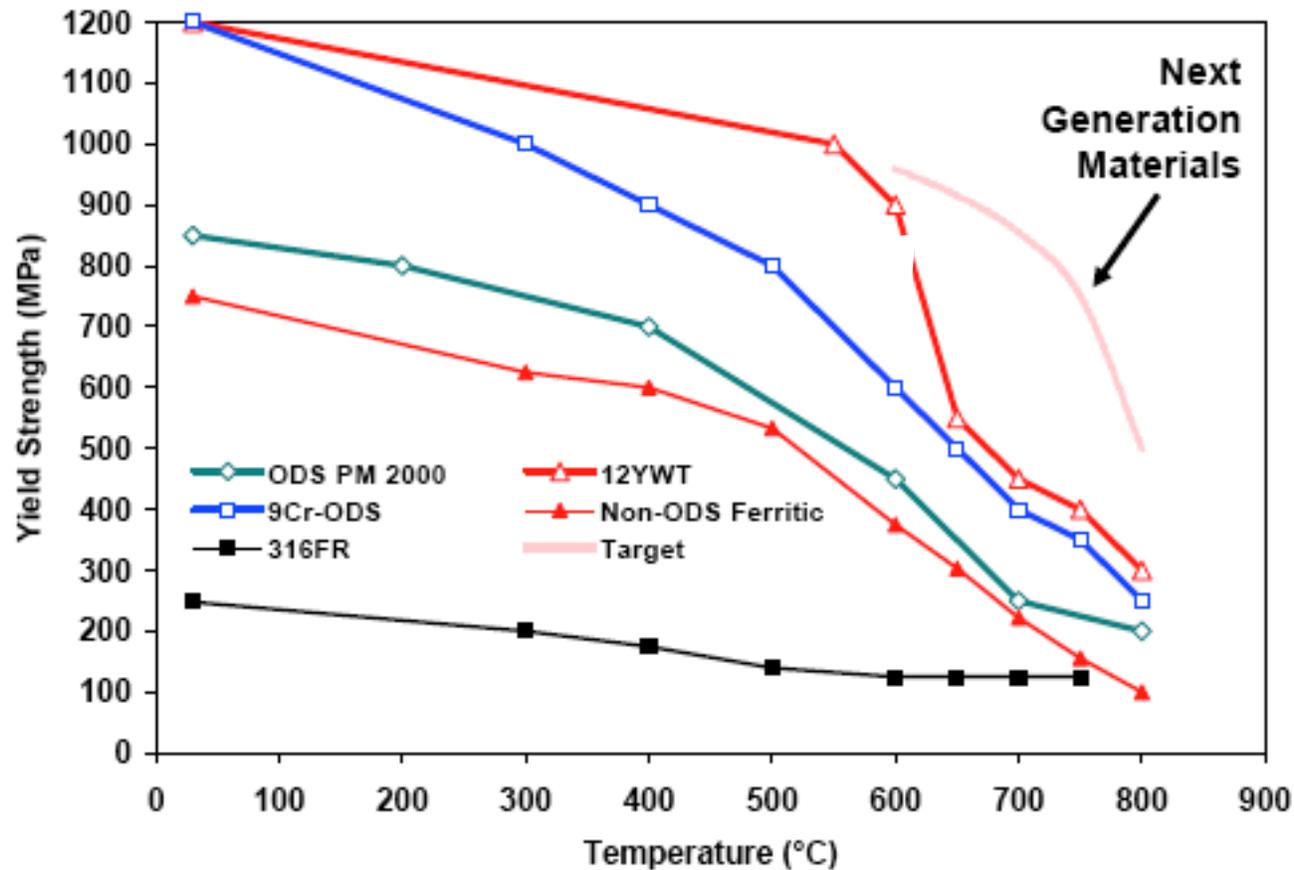


- First wall is oxide dispersion strengthened ferritic steel over-coated with 500  $\mu\text{m}$  W
- X-rays from target pre-ionize gas near target and causes partial laser absorption by inverse bremsstrahlung
- Gas stops all ions ( $\sim 4\text{MJ}$ ) and  $\sim 90\%$  of 4.5 MJ of x-rays
- Absorbed energy is re-radiated over 100's  $\mu\text{sec}$
- Experiments and modeling at LLNL, UCSD and UW for  $\sim 1800$  K pulses

Xenon densities of  $\sim 4 \mu\text{g/cc}$  reduce the thermal pulse to  $<1000$  K



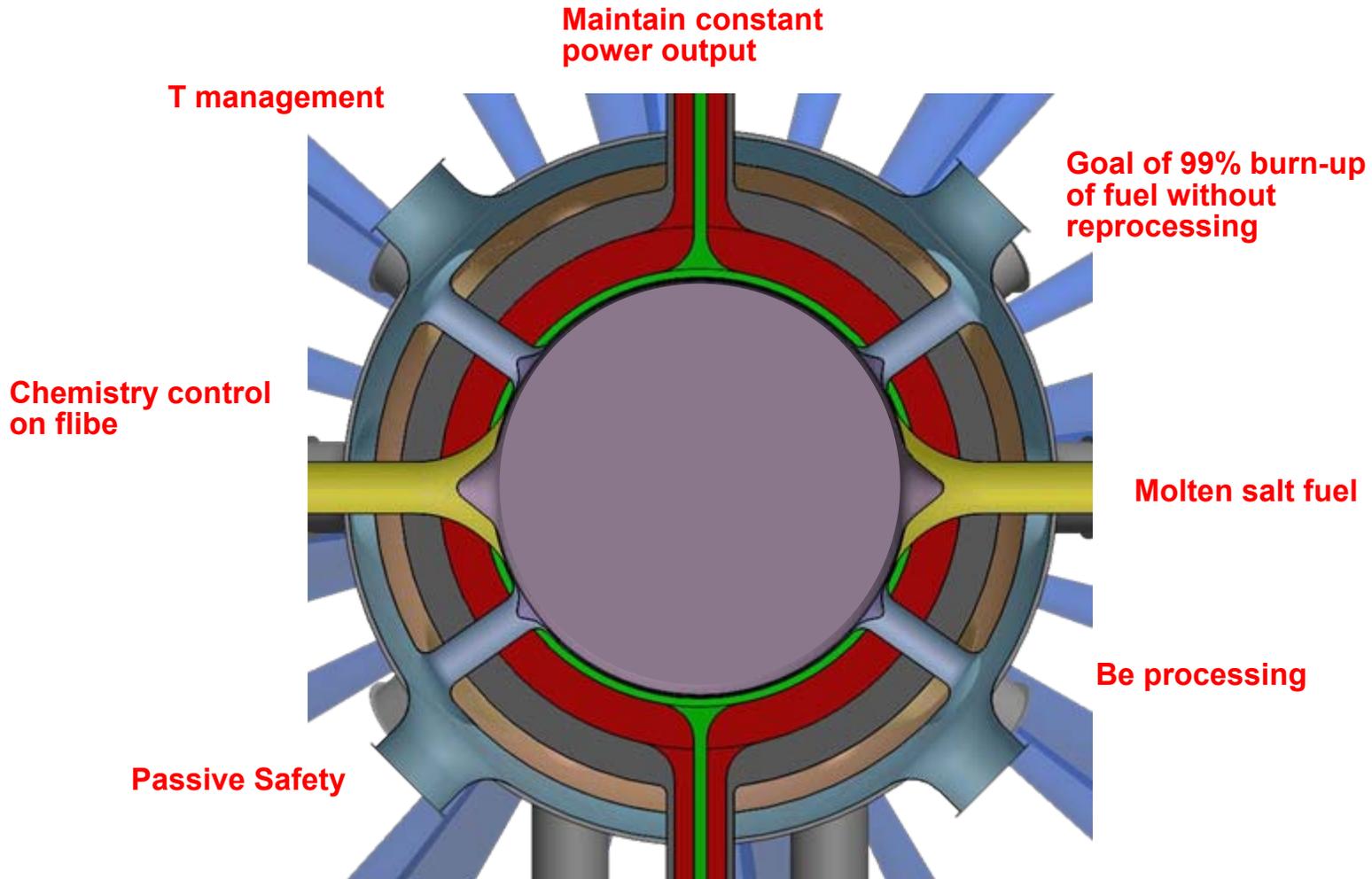
# ODS-Ferritic Steel is a good baseline material for LIFE 1st wall



ODS steel tested in BOR-60 sodium-cooled fast flux reactor (> 85 dpa)

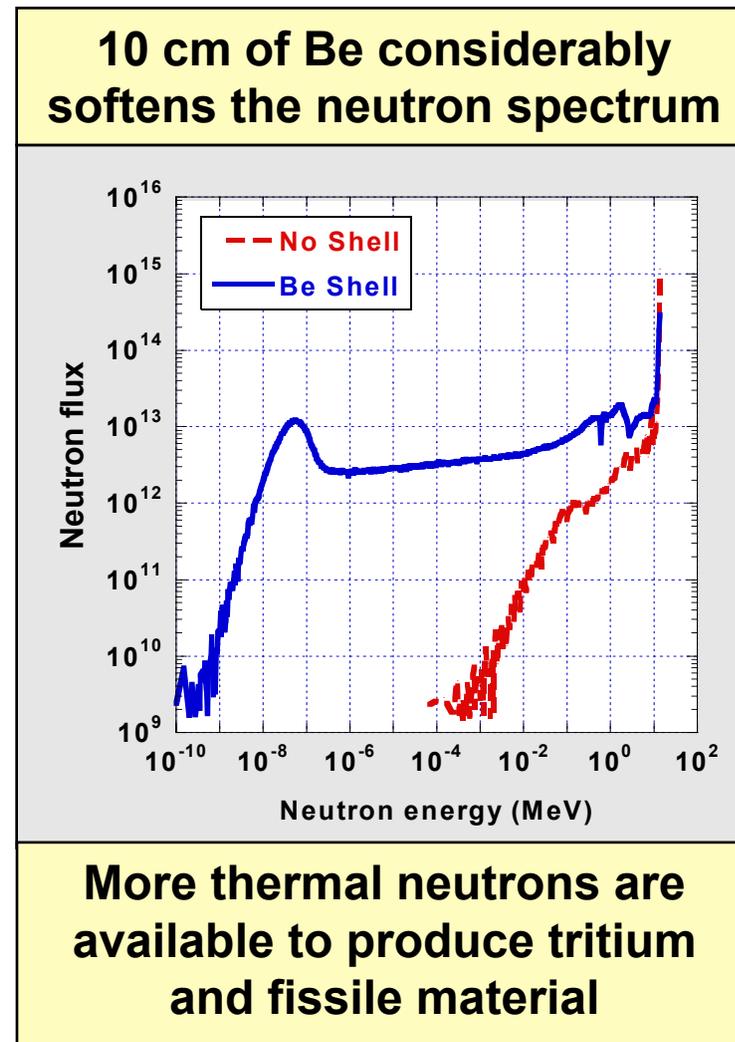
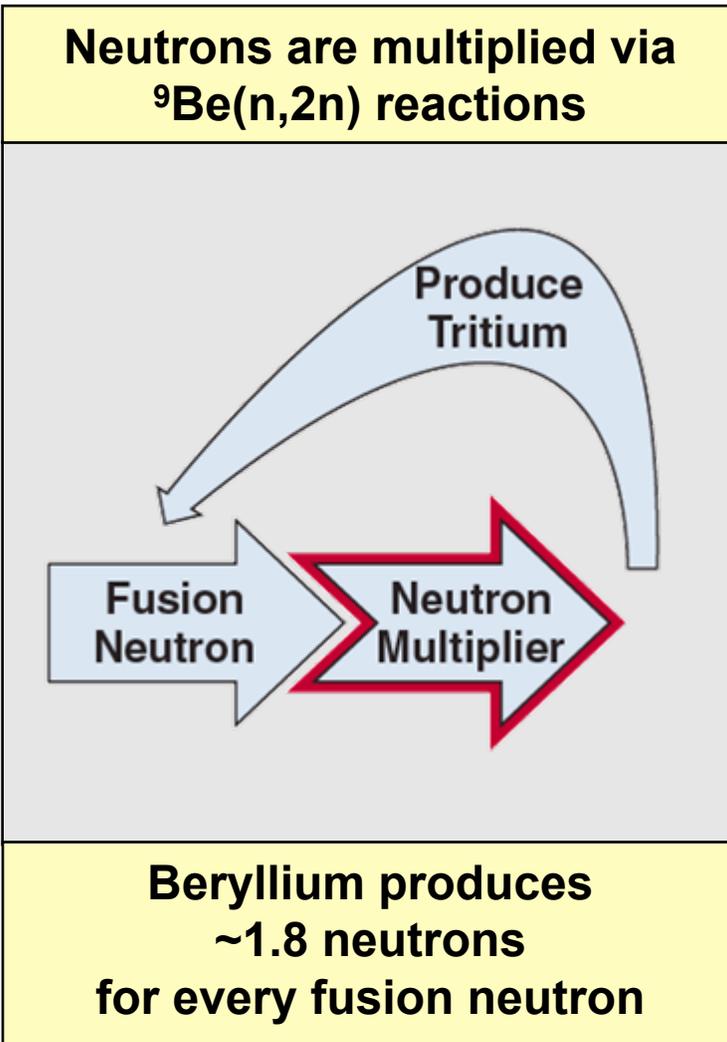
Ion beam irradiation at 500 °C project to 150 dpa, ( 1st wall lifetime of ~ 5 years)

# We have identified S&T development paths: **Fuels and fission engine systems optimization**

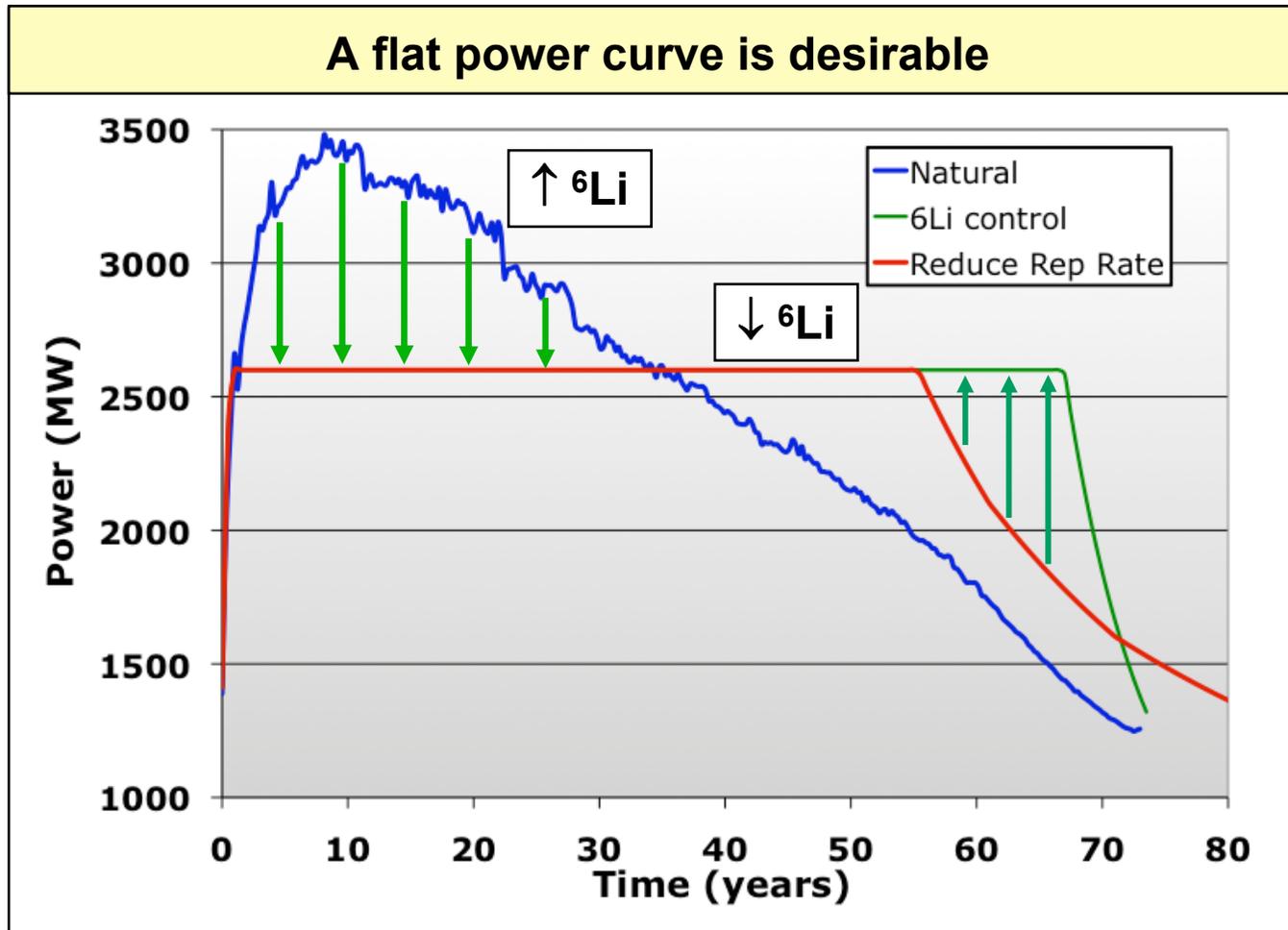


Ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry give us confidence that these challenges are tractable

# Beryllium multiplication and moderation enables rapid production of fissile material

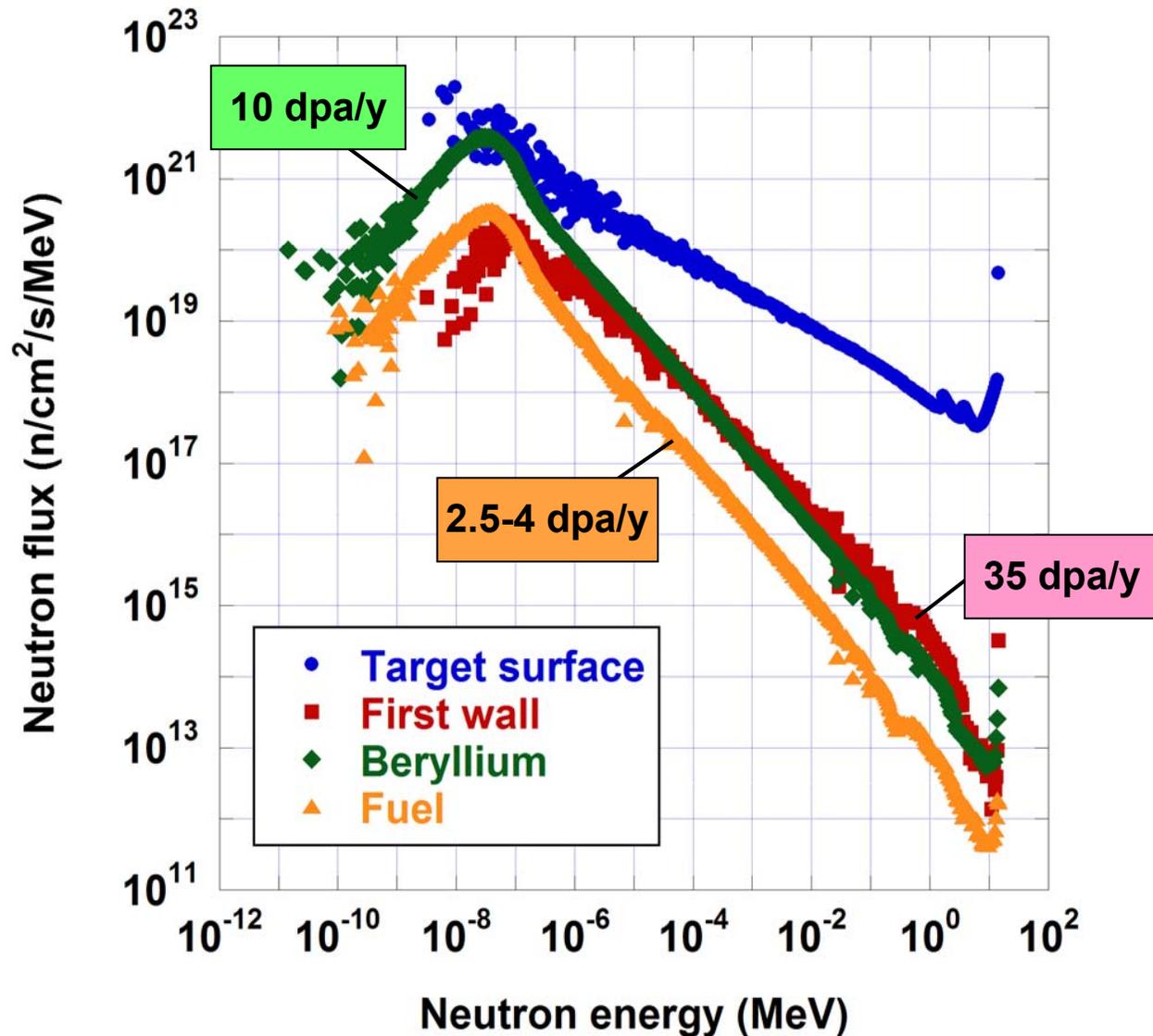


# LIFE uses $^6\text{Li}$ as a burnable poison to control the thermal power and produce tritium



**Systems achieving 90%+ balance of plant utilization may be possible through tritium management**

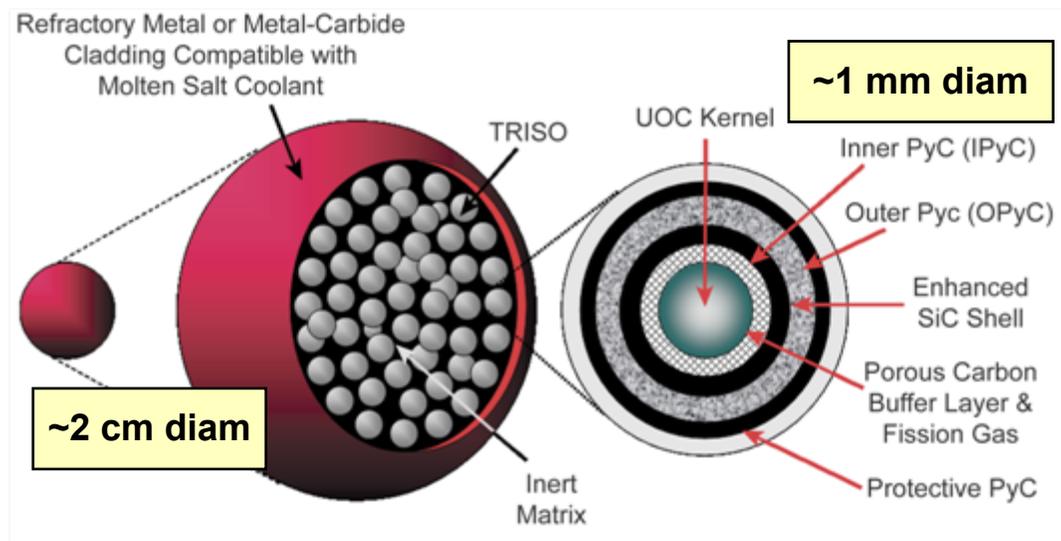
# The neutron spectrum varies considerably in the different regions of a LIFE engine



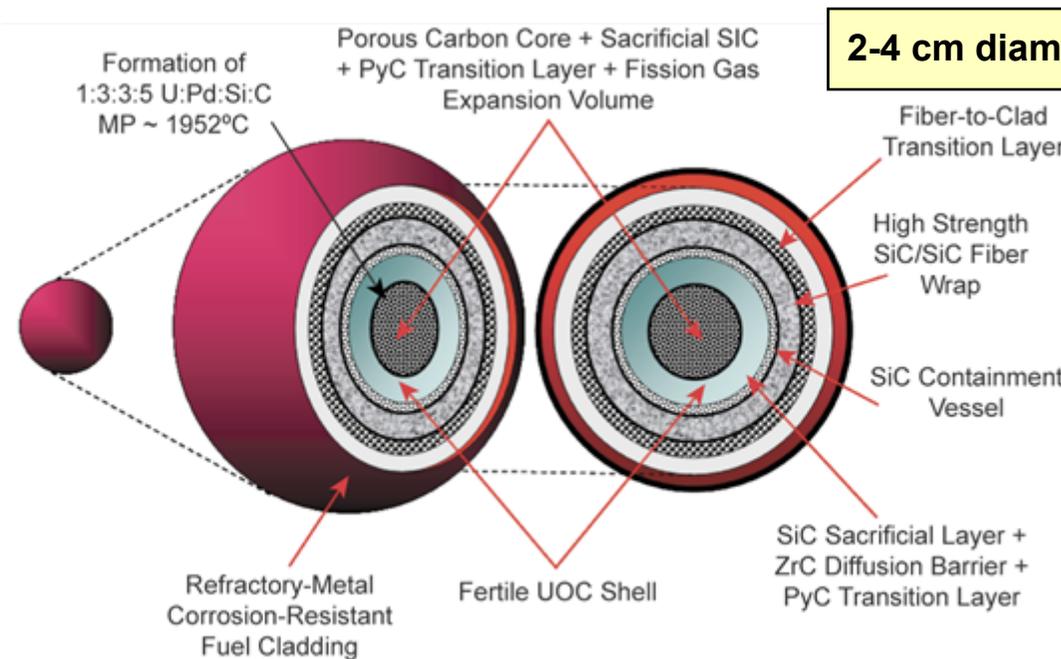


# LIFE could potentially use a variety of fuels

- **Enhanced TRISO for WG-Pu and HEU**



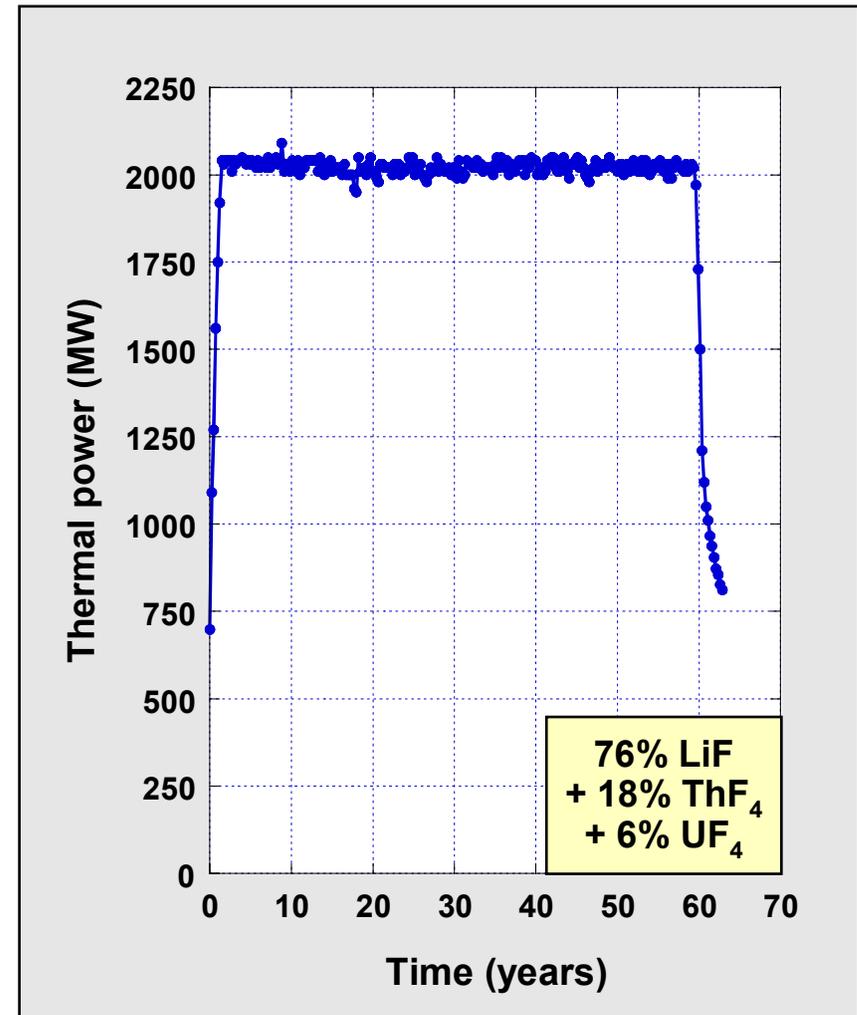
- **Solid hollow core and Encapsulated powder pebbles for fertile fuels (DU, Nat U, Th and SNF)**



# Molten salt fuel is an attractive option for burning fertile fuels



- Radiation damage to fuel is a non-issue
- Rare earth elements removed to avoid precipitation (on-line processing)
- Plutonium maintained below solubility limit  $\rightarrow$  can adjust Th/U ratio to control  $[\text{Pu}]_{\text{max}}$
- Blanket gain of 6-10 $\times$  possible with on-line refueling



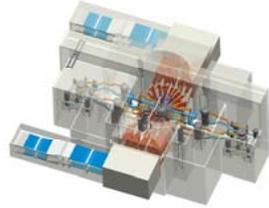
# **LIFE goal: Provide a sustainable, once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle energy option**

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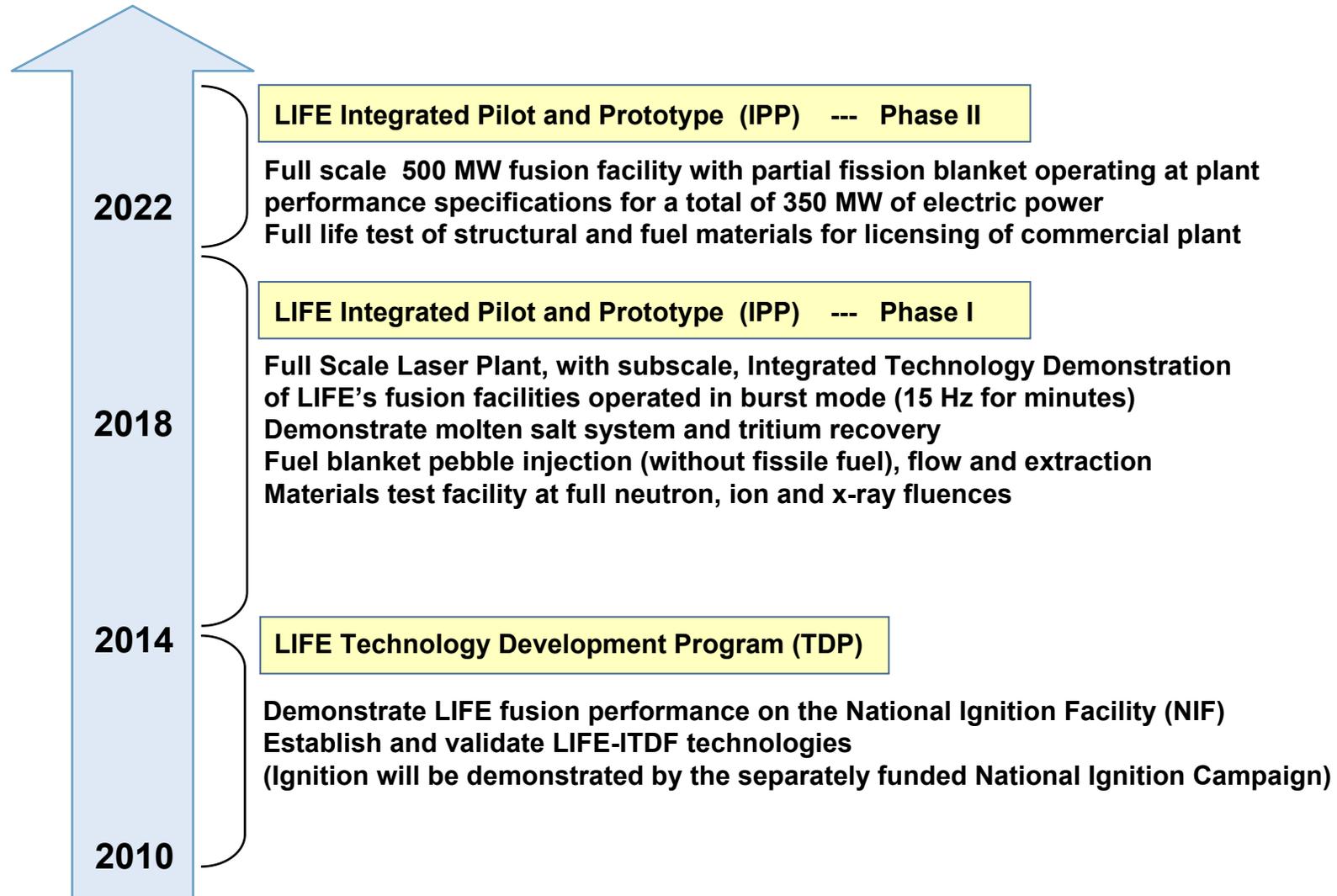


- **LIFE uses fusion neutrons to drive a subcritical fertile/fissile fuel blanket and provide a once-through closed nuclear fuel cycle**
- **The science and technology “building blocks” for a NIF-based LIFE system are logical and credible extensions of NIF, ignition on NIF and ongoing developments in the world nuclear power industry**
- **The inherent separability of LIFE, would allow a NIF-based LIFE system to be piloted by 2020-2025**

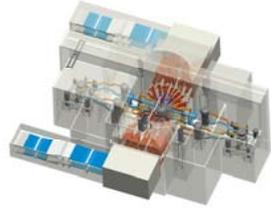
# There are three phases that lead to commercial power from the NIF-based LIFE



**2030-2035 Commercial power on the grid**

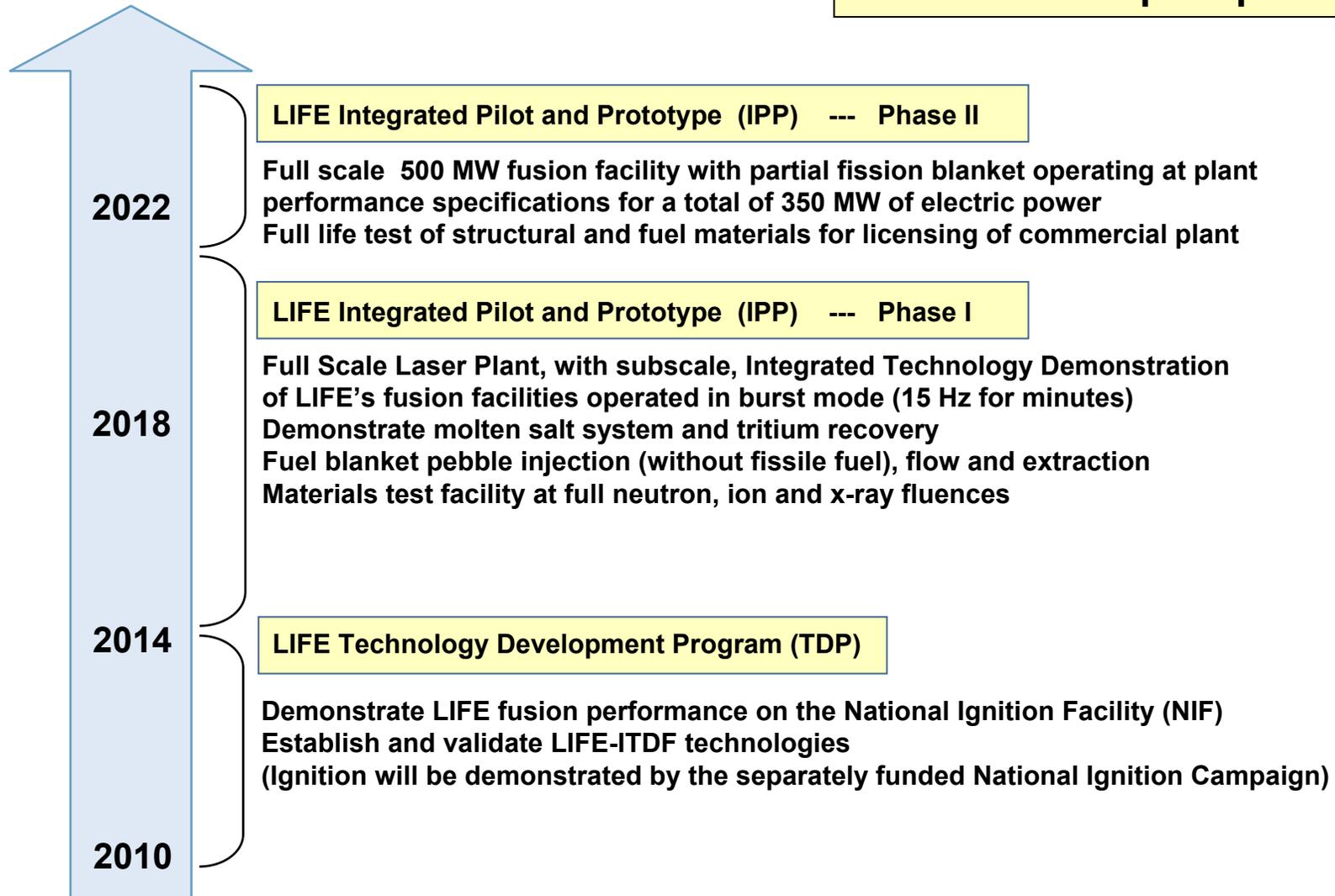


# There are three phases that lead to commercial power from the NIF-based LIFE



**2030-2035 Commercial power on the grid**

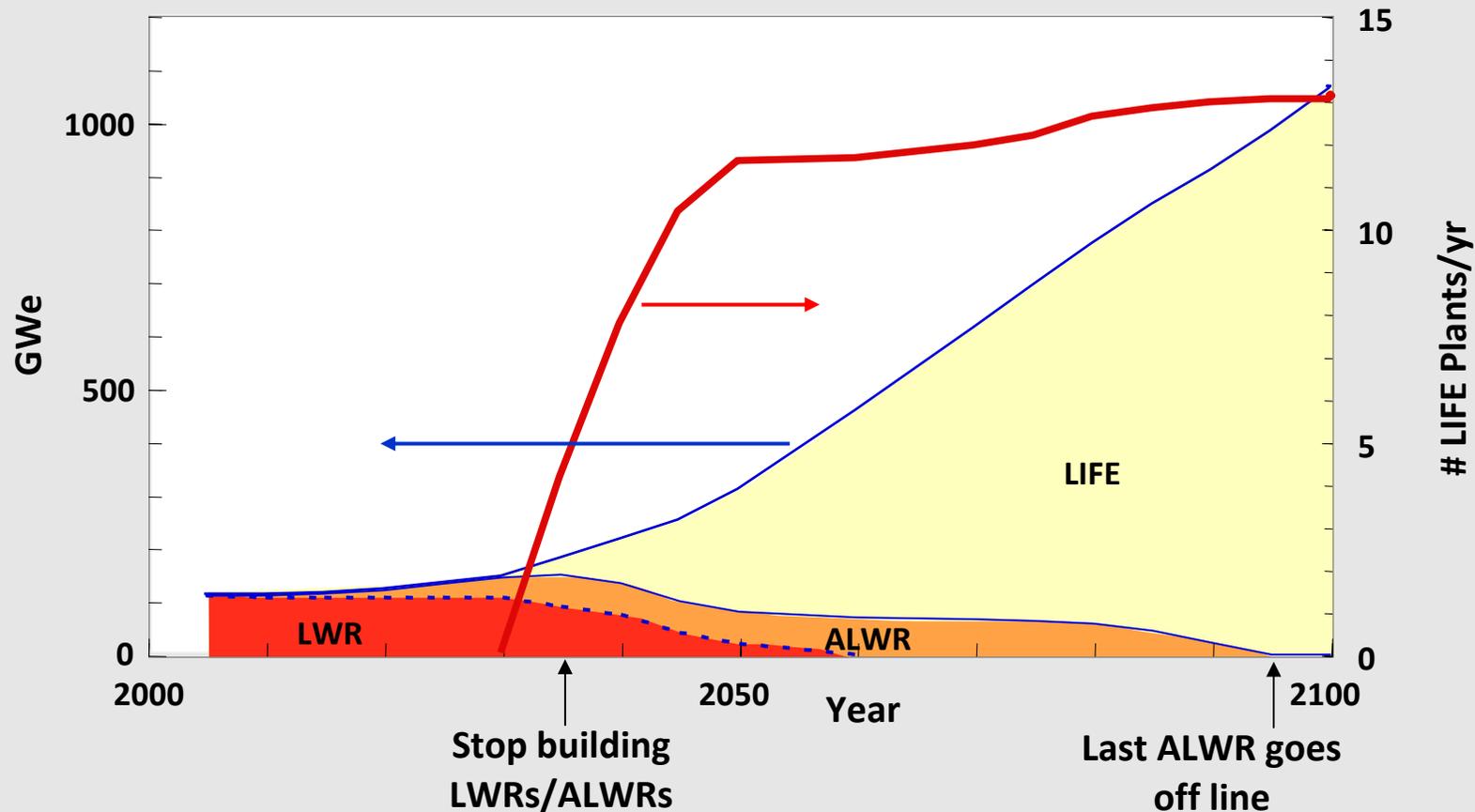
**The separability of ICF and LIFE makes such a rapid demonstration path possible**



# LIFE could begin to provide electricity by the mid 2030's and one-half of expected U.S. baseload demand by ~ 2100



Scenario for 1 Twe from LIFE engines burning DU and/or SNF  
(50% of projected U.S. electricity demand in 2100)



# **We believe that a NIF-based LIFE with “today’s technology” is credible and meets LIFE goals**

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- **NIF-like lasers**
  - APG-1 glass; He cooling; high power edge emitting diodes
- **NIC-like targets**
  - Hot spot ignition; 25-40 MJ @ 1-1.4 MJ
- **Target production, injection and engagement**
  - Studies and scaled experiments at GA
- **Fusion environment, 1<sup>st</sup> wall and final optics**
  - Xe-filled, compact chambers; ODS-FS 1<sup>st</sup> wall
  - Thin Fresnel fused silica lens – self annealing color centers
- **High burn-up Fuels**
  - SHC pebbles provide options for high burn-up
  - Molten salt – radiation damage not an issue

# And LIFE can only get better: By the time of a LIFE Pilot/Integrated Test Facility

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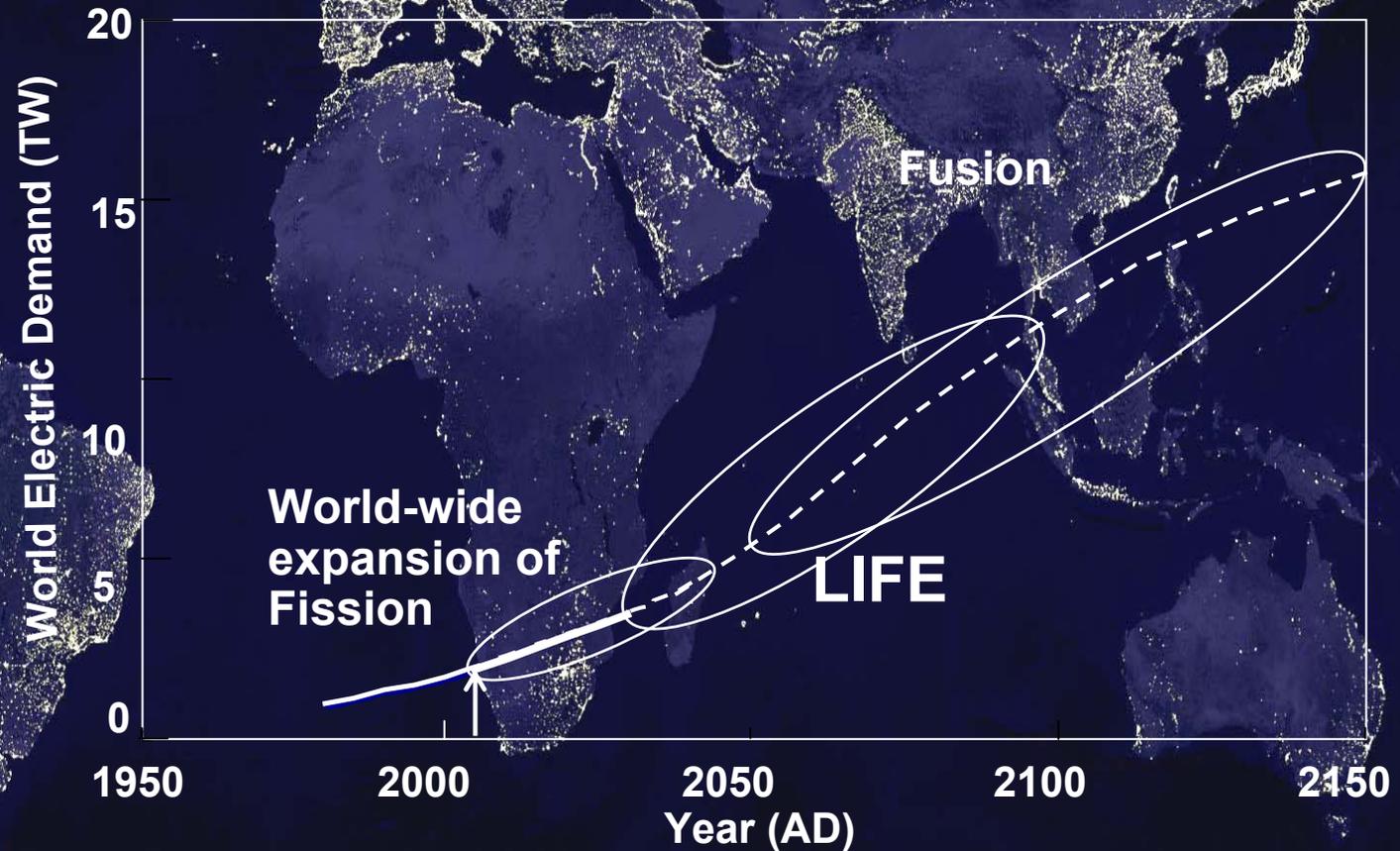


- **Next generation NIF-like lasers**
  - Y-SFAP; He cooling; VCSEL diodes
  - ➔ 3x fewer diodes; lower cost
- **Fast Ignition targets**
  - Fast Ignition; 25-40 MJ @ 0.5-0.6 MJ and 0.53  $\mu\text{m}$
  - ➔ Lower cost lasers, lower operating costs
- **Target production, injection and engagement**
  - Studies and scaled experiments at GA
- **Fusion environment, 1<sup>st</sup> wall with improved materials**
  - Radiation resistant materials; Higher temp 800 vs 700 C
  - ➔ 1<sup>st</sup> wall last 10 yrs; Thermal to electric eff 43% - 52 %
- **High burn-up Fuels**
  - Radiation resistant materials
  - ➔ Improved blanket gain and > 99.9% FIMA for all fuel forms in solid pebbles

# We believe that LIFE could provide the bridge to the future

## Global Factors

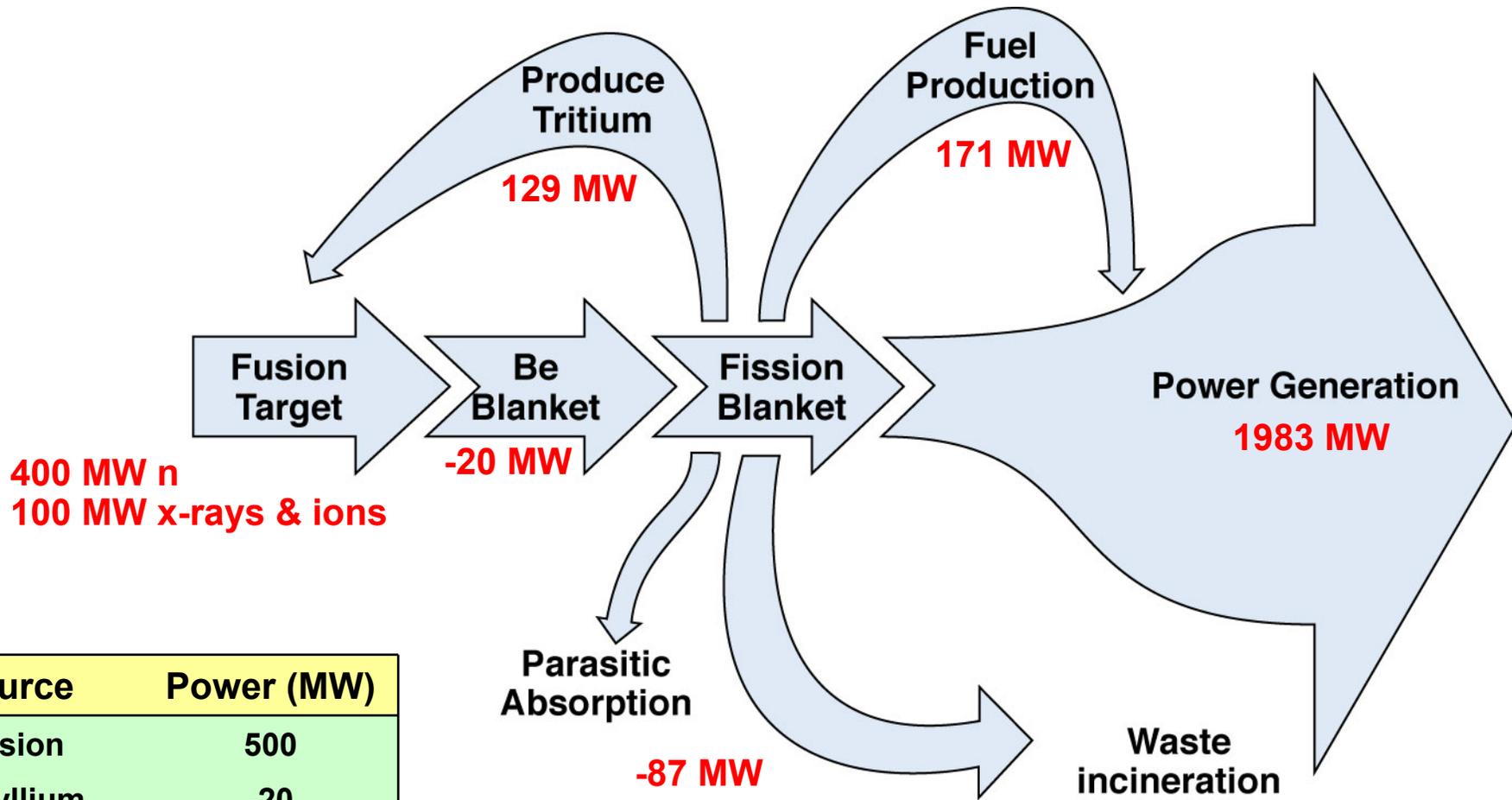
- Population increase
- Developing countries
- Resource depletion
- Climate change



This challenge must be met and solved in the next 10-15 years ...  
Not 50 years from now

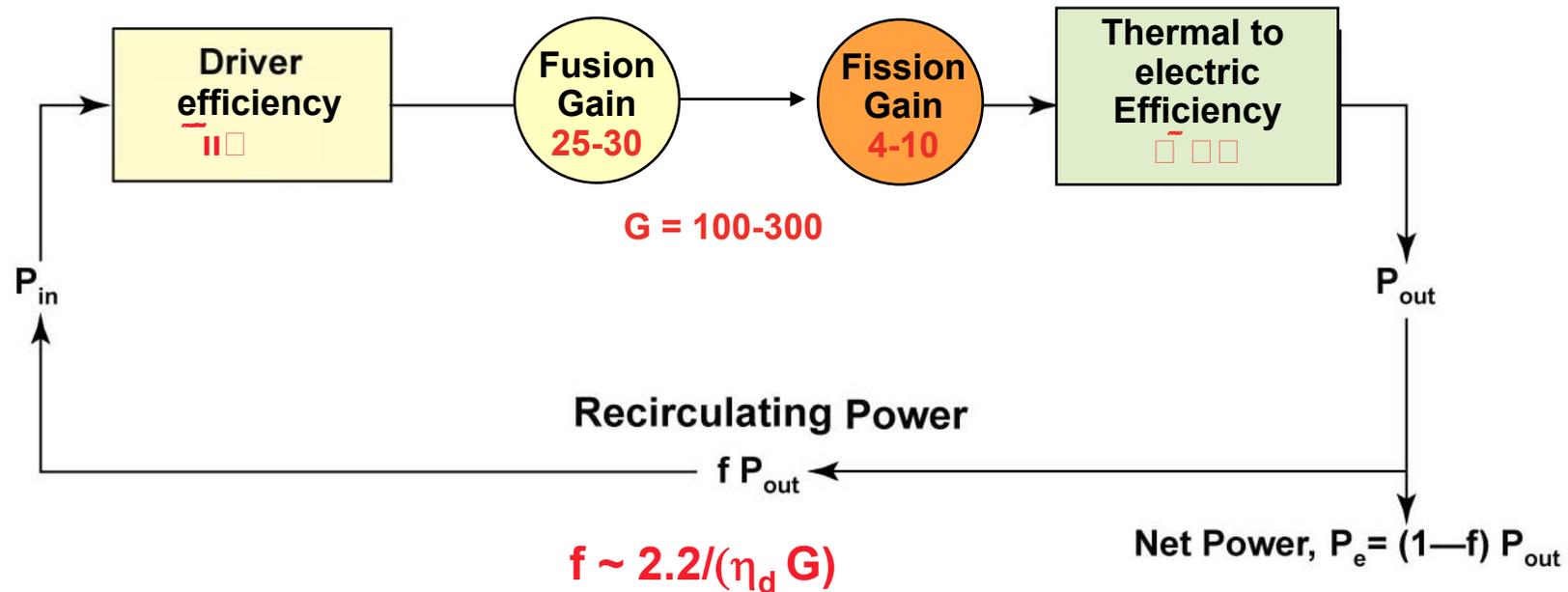


# Neutron power flow for DU case at time of peak $^{239}\text{Pu}$ (~10 years); TBR = 1.09



Source	Power (MW)
Fusion	500
Beryllium	-20
Tritium prod.	129
Fuel prod.	171
Fission	1983
Incineration	-87
<b>Total</b>	<b>2676</b>

# LIFE Engine basics – The extra fission gain makes low fusion gains viable

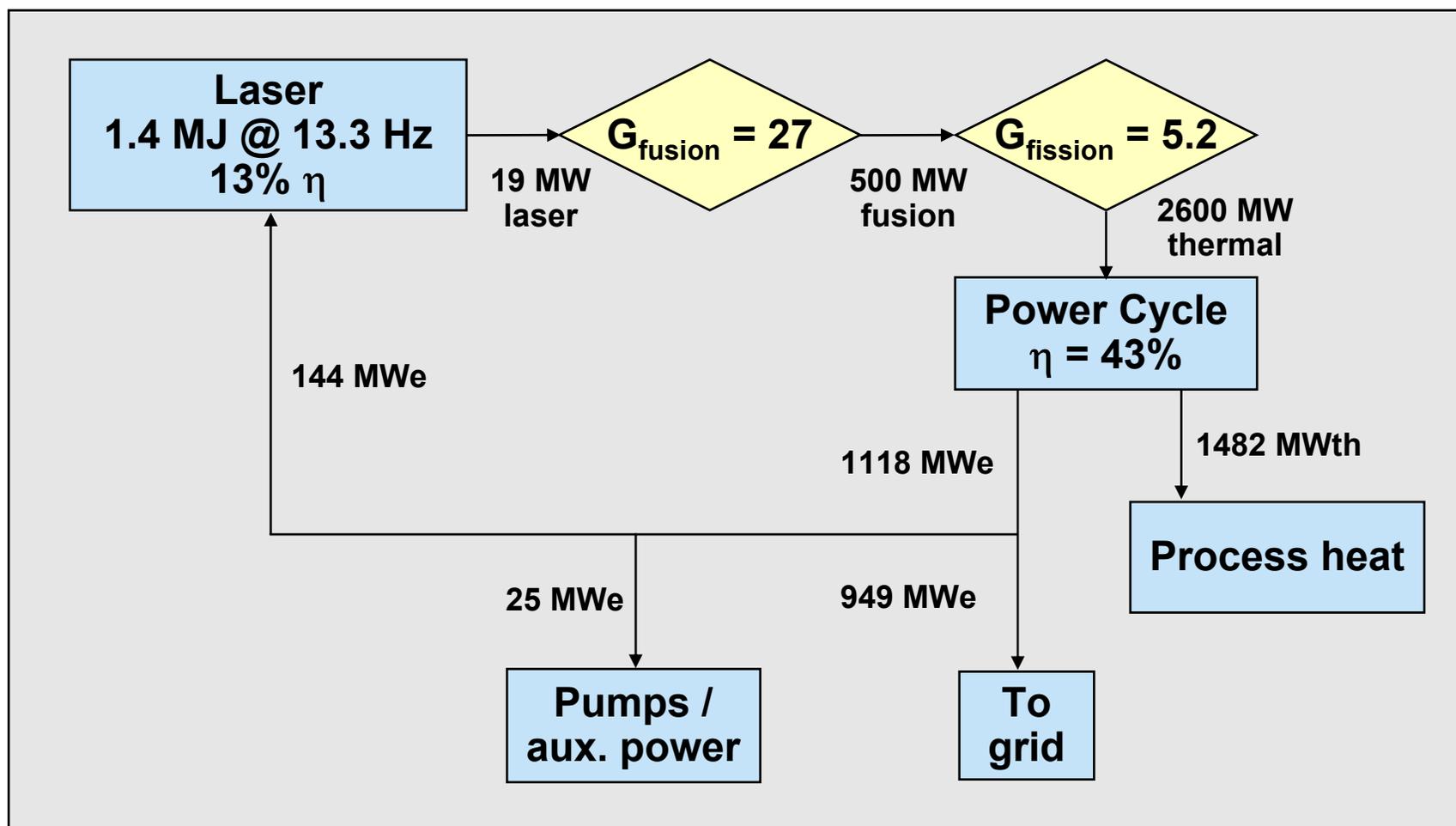


Recirculating fraction  $< 0.15$  even for modest fusion gains of 25

NIF fusion gains alone would require recirculating fractions  $\sim 60\%$

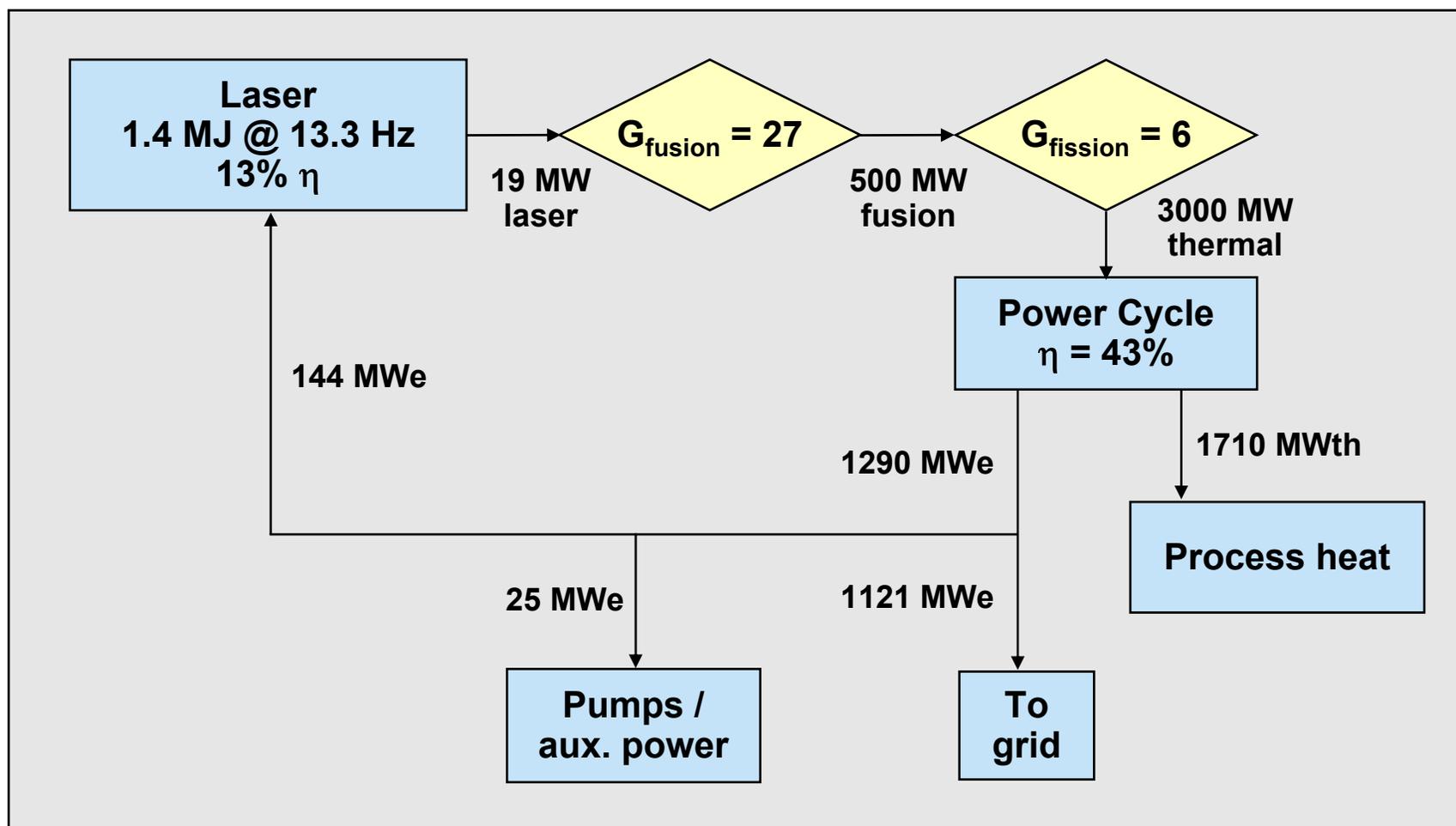


# LIFE power flow for DU blanket





# LIFE power flow for Pu blanket



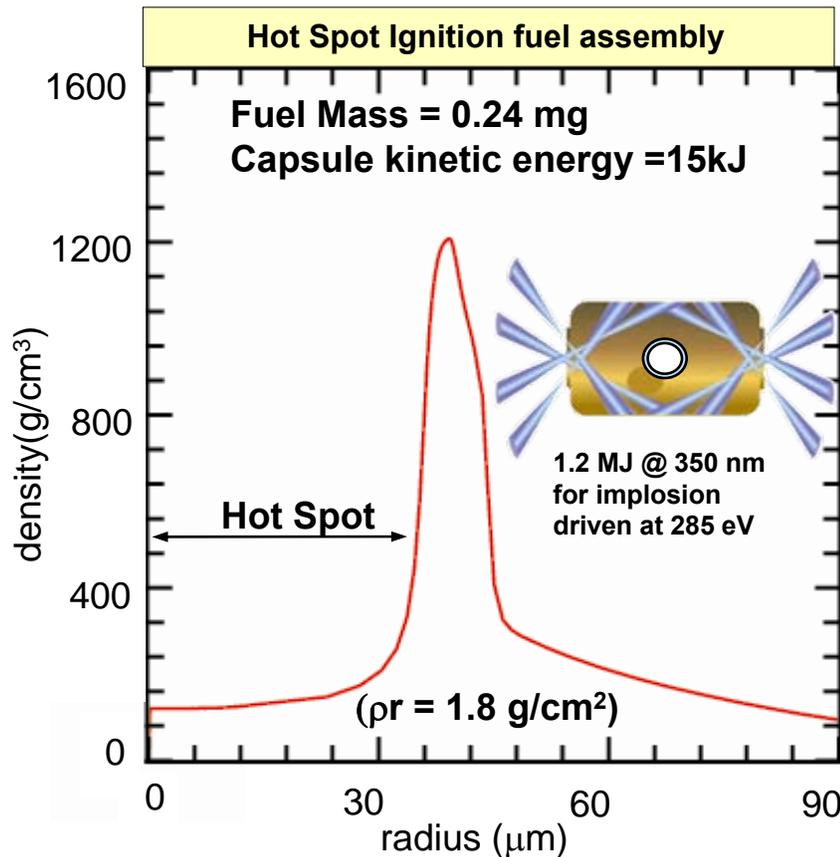
# The separability of ICF and LIFE makes a rapid demonstration path possible

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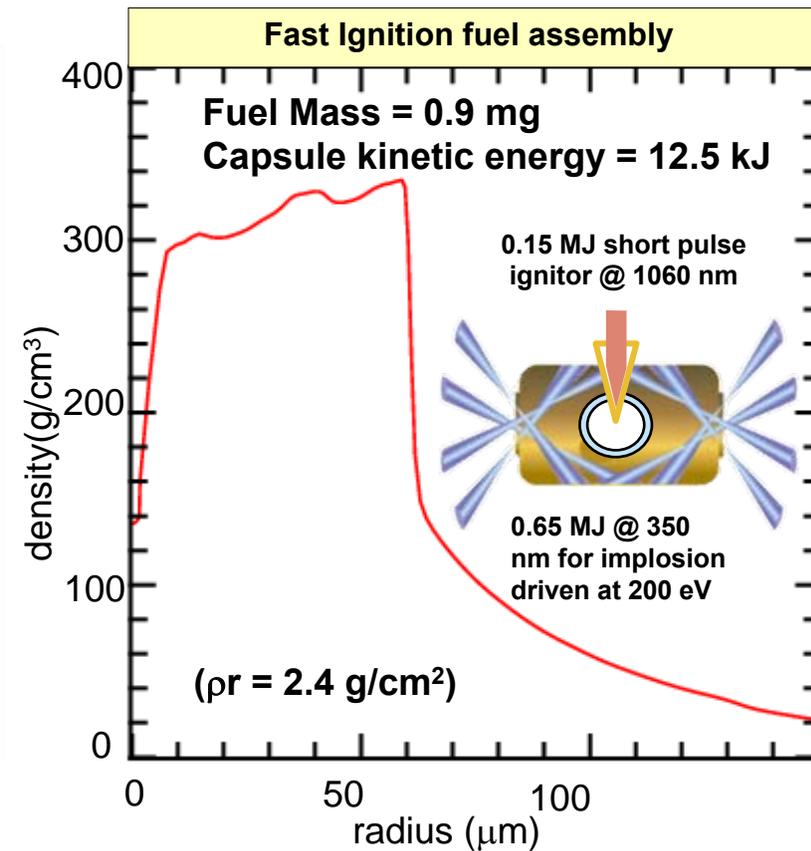


- **Demonstration of LIFE fusion yield with targets produced with low-cost fabrication technologies that scale to LIFE production quantities will be demonstrated on NIF**
- **Mass production technologies for the fusion targets at required precision will be done off line**
- **Target delivery, tracking and engagement and chamber clearing will be demonstrated with surrogate targets and low power lasers in a separate facility**
- **The technology for the 15-20 MW LIFE diode pumped solid state laser (DPSSL) will be prototyped at the modular level.**
  - **One LIFE-let ~100 kW is the “building block”**
- **Management of the fusion environment to demonstrate laser beam propagation, full life-cycle testing of thermal pulsing of 1st wall, and adequate lifetime of final optics will be performed in scaled experiments**
- **Ion beam-based accelerated testing coupled with multi-scaled modeling will be used to design and validate fuels and structural materials**

# We are also exploring advanced LIFE concepts The most promising is Fast Ignition



20 MJ of fusion yield for a Gain of 17



90 MJ of fusion yield for a Gain of 112

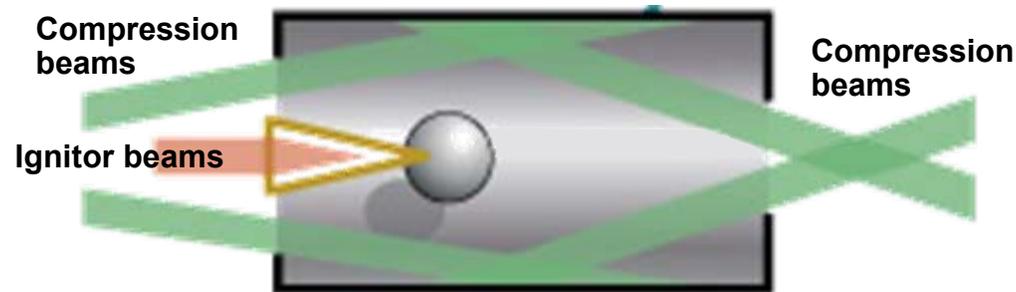
Fast ignition targets compress more fuel to ignition conditions with less laser energy, providing higher gain

# Indirect drive Fast Ignition has the potential of being compatible with low incidence angle illumination

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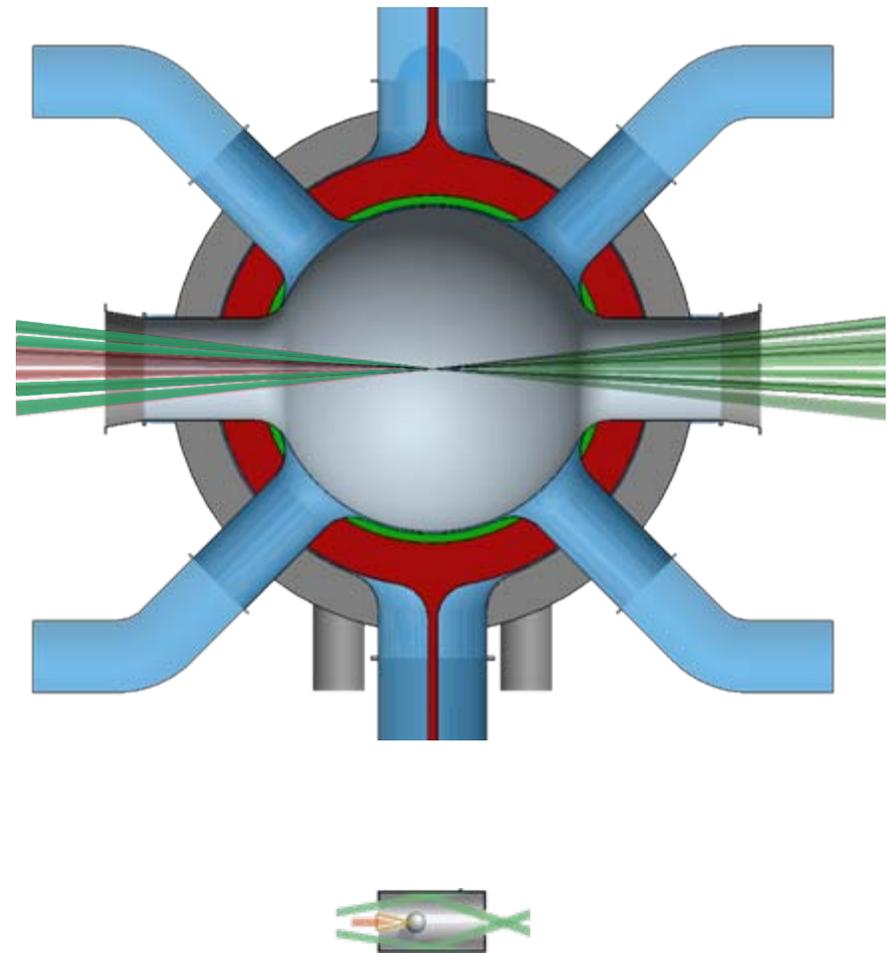
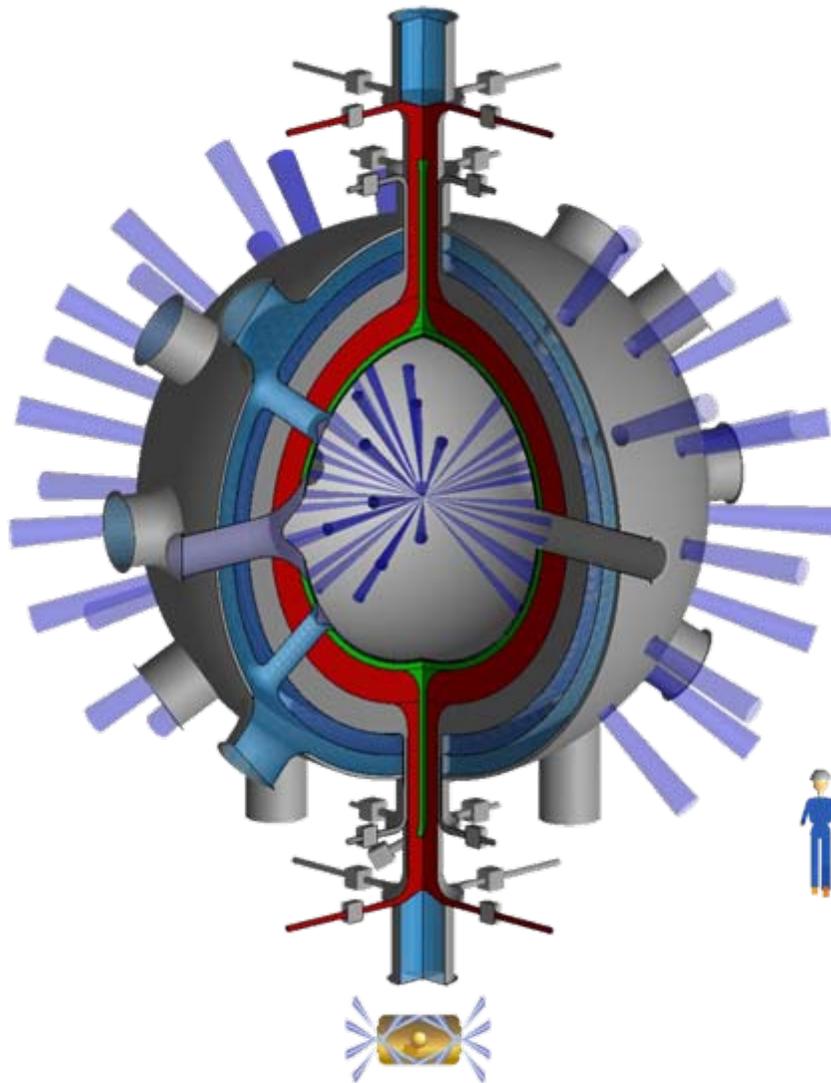


## Possible Low Incidence Angle Indirect Drive Fast Ignition Target



- Symmetry requirements relaxed, allows low incidence angle illumination
- Lower drive pressures/Tr, i.e. LPI issues relaxed, allows longer wavelength driver ( $2\omega$ )

# Fast ignition thus offers the possibility of more attractive chamber options and 530 nm compression lasers



# Different targets result in different chamber sizes and plant electric output

