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FINAL REPLY:

Lake H. Barrett, DOE

TO:

Chairman Meserve

FOR SIGNATURE OF : ** GRN **

CRC NO: 01-0249

Chairman

DESC:

ROUTING:

DOE's Process Regarding the Evaluation of the
Yucca Mountain Site and the Perspective of
Planned Activities as the Commission Prepares
Preliminary Comments Required by the Nuclear
Waste Policy Act

Travers
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DATE: 05/10/01

ASSIGNED TO: CONTACT:
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SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

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AUTHOR: LAKE BARRETT
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SUBJECT: DEPT OF ENERGY'S PROCESS REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF THE YUCCA
MOUNTAIN SITE AND THE PERSPECTIVE OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES AS THE COMM
PREPARES PRELIMINARY COMMENTS REQUIRED BY THE NUCLEAR WASTE
POLICY ACT....

ACTION: ~~Appropriate~~ Chairman Signature
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EDO --G20010191



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

May 7, 2001

The Honorable Richard A. Meserve
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to describe the process the Department expects to follow as it proceeds with its evaluation of the Yucca Mountain site and to ensure that you have a current perspective of our planned activities as the Commission prepares its preliminary comments required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as amended.

On May 4, 2001, the Department announced the availability of the Yucca Mountain Science and Engineering Report (YMS&ER) and the initiation of a public comment period on the Department's consideration of the Yucca Mountain site for possible recommendation to the President for development as a repository. To support the YMS&ER, the Department also released a Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to update information on repository design enhancements and operating modes. The YMS&ER and the Supplement have been published to facilitate the public review and comment process by providing a summary of the information and data collected to date by the Department in its multi-year study and characterization of the Yucca Mountain site as a potential repository.

The Department will continue to advance its scientific knowledge by collecting and refining its analysis and information base. Within the next few months, the Department plans to issue additional information that the Secretary will use in considering a possible recommendation of the Yucca Mountain site. This information will include the results of ongoing sensitivity studies and uncertainty analyses, expanded studies of potential thermal operating ranges for the repository, and will be published in the Supplemental Science and Performance Analysis Report. This additional supplemental information is planned to be sufficient to support a preliminary evaluation of the Yucca Mountain site against the Department's proposed site suitability guidelines and incorporated in the Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation. The Department will provide its expected schedule for production of these documents at a later date and forward them to the Commission as they are released. As customary, technical and scientific reports are directly forwarded to your staff as they are developed.



The Nuclear Waste Policy Act requires site recommendation by the Secretary to the President, if any such recommendation occurs, be accompanied by several items, including the Commission's preliminary views on the extent to which the at-depth site characterization analysis and waste form proposal seem to be sufficient for inclusion in a possible license application. The Department plans to determine whether or not to recommend the site in early fiscal year 2002. Based on our expected schedule, the Commission's requisite preliminary views would likely be needed by October 1, 2001.

The YMS&ER provides a summary and road map of the underlying technical information that has been the subject of the Department's interactions with the Commission staff over many years. It is based on the current Total System Performance Assessment (Revision 0, ICN1, December 2000) and its supporting Process Model Reports and Analysis Model Reports. It also reflects our understanding of the site as described in the latest revision of the Yucca Mountain Site Description (Revision 01, September 2000) and the design bases in 24 System Description Documents (provided to the staff by letters dated September 19, 2000, and December 13, 2000). These and hundreds of other detailed technical documents have been provided to your staff and have been the primary basis for our interactions.

We expect to continue our interactions with your staff in support of your reviews and request that we be informed of any additional information or Department actions that might be necessary to facilitate this review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lake H. Barrett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lake H. Barrett, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management

bcc:

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