

July 18, 2001

Mr. Robert Holden  
Director  
Nuclear Waste Program  
National Congress of American Indians  
1301 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

Subject: Invitation for a Discussion between Potentially Impacted Native American Tribes and the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission on a Possible High-Level Radioactive Waste Repository at Yucca Mountain

Dear Mr. Holden:

The staff of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is interested in understanding the views and concerns of Native American Tribes potentially impacted by the siting of a potential High-Level Radioactive Waste repository at Yucca Mountain. The NRC is an independent agency within the U.S. Federal Government responsible for protecting public health and safety through its licensing and regulatory oversight of repository activities of the U.S. Department of Energy at Yucca Mountain.

We are aware that Tribal Governments have an interest in the NRC's role and how it would fulfill its responsibilities to protect public health and safety. Further, we believe it is important for the NRC to actively seek the concerns and ideas of Tribes potentially impacted by the repository. The NRC plans to invite Tribal government representatives to join in a government-to-government discussion with representatives of the NRC staff. The focus of the meeting will be on those tribal governments with cultural and historical ties to Yucca Mountain. In addition to those Tribal governments, the NRC would also like to invite you to participate in the meeting as a representative of a national Native American organization concerned with nuclear waste issues. We also plan to invite a representative of the Intertribal Council of Nevada.

The objectives of the meeting are to: 1) provide information on NRC responsibilities for, and Tribal concerns about, High-Level Waste (HLW) repository licensing and regulation; and 2) form a foundation for continuing dialogue on future government-to-government communications between the NRC staff and the individual Tribes potentially impacted by the siting of a potential HLW repository.

Francis Cameron, NRC's Special Counsel for Public Liaison, will facilitate the discussion and will be contacting you by phone to discuss your interest in attending this meeting and your ideas on potential items for the agenda. The major areas to be addressed are:

NRC's role and responsibilities as the Federal Government's regulator of a potential repository at Yucca Mountain;

Tribal concerns and questions;

Tribal perspectives on sovereignty, values, and history in regard to Yucca Mountain.

The meeting will be held on September 26 and 27, 2001, at the Emerald Springs Holiday Inn, 325 E. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV. NRC will provide funding for travel from your residence to Las Vegas, NV, including two nights lodging and meals at the Emerald Springs Holiday Inn. We will convene the meeting for dinner and informal discussion on the evening of September 26th followed with a full day of meetings on September 27th.

We appreciate your consideration and favorable reply to this invitation. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Cameron at 301-415-1642. In addition, a member of the NRC technical staff (Tamara Bloomer, 301-415-6626) can also provide further information about the proposed discussion.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Martin J. Virgilio, Director  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

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