

June 24, 2002

Tom Johnson, Executive Director
Northern Lakes Economic Alliance
1313 Boyne Avenue
P. O. Box 8
Boyne City, MI 49712

SUBJECT: NORTHERN LAKES ECONOMIC ALLIANCE RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF
ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT REPOSITORY FOR HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR
WASTE AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN, NEVADA

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I appreciate being informed of the interest and concerns expressed by the Board of Director's resolution regarding the national program for establishing a permanent geologic repository for high-level nuclear waste, and the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) role in the process. As I am sure you are aware, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) lays out the process for developing a high-level waste repository.

As required by the NWPA, the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) formally recommended to the President of the United States that the Yucca Mountain site be developed as a long-term geologic repository for high-level waste in February 2002. Subsequently, the President approved DOE recommendation and submitted his approval to Congress in February 2002. In April 2002, the State of Nevada formally issued to Congress a notice of disapproval as allowed by the NWPA. Congress must decide whether to support the President's recommendation that DOE submit a license application to NRC for the Yucca Mountain site.

Ultimately, the permanent disposal of any high-level waste will require an NRC license. In preparation, NRC issued its proposed regulations (10 CFR Part 63, "Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes In A Geologic Repository At Yucca Mountain, Nevada") for public comment in February 1999, and issued its final regulations in November 2001. In addition, NRC issued its draft Yucca Mountain Review Plan for public comment in March 2002. Also, staff have public technical exchanges with DOE to discuss information requirements for a potential license application. If Congress supports the recommendation that DOE prepare and submit a license application to NRC, staff will be prepared to review the application in the three-year time frame established in the NWPA. Currently, DOE has stated that it intends to submit a license application to NRC in December 2004.

More information on NRC's program applicable to Yucca Mountain can be obtained on the Internet at <http://www.nrc.gov/waste/hlw-disposal.html>. If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-7264 (or JRS1@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,
/RA/

Janet R. Schlueter, Chief
High-Level Waste Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

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