

JAN 26 1994

Mr. Dwight E. Shelor, Associate Director
for Systems and Compliance
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Shelor:

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) STUDY PLAN "HYDROCHEMICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE UNSATURATED ZONE," REVISION 1

On September 17, 1993, DOE transmitted Revision 1 of the study plan, "Hydrochemical Characterization of the Unsaturated Zone" (Study Plan 8.3.1.2.2.7) to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for review and comment. NRC has completed its review of this document using the Review Plan for NRC Staff Review of DOE Study Plans, Revision 2 (March 10, 1993). The material submitted in the study plan was considered to be consistent, to the extent possible at this time, with the revised NRC-DOE "Level of Detail Agreement and Review Process for Study Plans" (Shelor to Holonich, March 22, 1993).

A major purpose of the review is to identify concerns with studies, tests, or analyses that, if started, could cause significant and irreparable adverse effects on the site, the site characterization program, or the eventual usability of the data for licensing. Such concerns would constitute objections, as that term has been used in earlier NRC staff reviews of DOE's documents related to site characterization (Consultation Draft Site Characterization Plan and the Site Characterization Plan for the Yucca Mountain site). It does not appear that the conduct of the activities described in the revised study plan will have adverse impacts on repository performance and the review of this study plan identified no objections with any of the activities proposed.

As part of its review of a study plan, the NRC staff may determine that detailed technical comments are warranted. In its review of Revision 0 of the study plan (letter from J. Holonich to J. Roberts, April 27, 1992), the staff decided not to proceed with detailed comments because the technical details required for such a review would not be available until the prototype studies described in the study plan were completed. This decision also applies to Revision 1. For this reason, the NRC staff does not plan to provide DOE with detailed technical comments related to the subject study plan at this time.

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Mr. Dwight E. Shelor

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If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Charlotte Abrams of my staff at (301) 504-3403.

Sincerely,

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Joseph J. Holonich, Director
Repository Licensing and Quality Assurance
Project Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc: R. Loux, State of Nevada
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* See previous concurrence

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