

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
ON-SITE LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

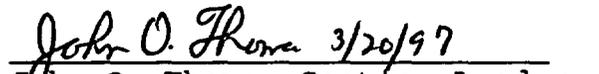
NUMBER OR-97-02

FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD OF FEBRUARY 1-28, 1997


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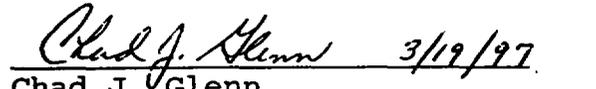
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REPORT DETAILS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The principal purpose of the On-Site Licensing Representative (OR) reports is to alert NRC staff, managers and contractors to information on the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) programs for site characterization, repository design, performance assessment, and environmental studies that maybe of use in fulfilling NRC's role during pre-licensing consultation. The principal focus of this and future OR reports will be on DOE's programs for the Exploratory Studies Facility (ESF), surface-based testing, performance assessment, data management systems and environmental studies. Relevant information includes new technical data, DOE's plans and schedules, and the status of activities to pursue site suitability and ESF development. In addition to communication of this information, any potential licensing concerns, or opinions raised in this report represent the views of the ORs and not that of NRC headquarters' staff. The reporting period for this report covers February 1-28, 1997.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The function of the OR mission is to principally serve as a point of prompt informational exchange and consultation and to preliminarily identify concerns about site investigations relating to potential licensing issues. The ORs accomplish this function by communicating, consulting and identifying concerns. Communication is accomplished by exchanging information on data, plans, schedules, documents, activities and pending actions, and resolution of issues. The ORs consult with the DOE scientists, engineers, or managers with input from NRC Headquarters management on NRC policy, philosophy, and regulations. The ORs focus on such issues as QA, design controls, data management systems, performance assessment, and key technical issue resolution. A principle OR role is to identify areas in site characterization and related studies, activities, or procedures that may be of interest or concern to the NRC staff.

3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The ORs continue to monitor ESF and surface-based testing activities. The Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) is expected to be daylighted on April 4, 1997. In the ESF, the excavation of the Heated Test Drift was completed. The Single Element Heater Test is ongoing in the Thermomechanical Alcove. The first phase of testing in the Northern Ghost Dance Fault Alcove was completed, and the Southern Ghost Dance Fault Alcove was excavated 134 meters to prepare for the start of

testing. Surface-based work conducted over this period includes the start-up of the Fran Ridge Heater Test and the continuation of tracer testing at the C-Hole Complex. The location of a new borehole was staked on Yucca Mountain crest.

This OR Report lists an Open Item resulting from an NRC observation of a DOE audit pertaining to the quality assurance controls applied to statistical analysis software programs. This report also describes an effort by DOE to document significant changes in its site characterization program since the 1988 issuance of its Site Characterization Plan.

4.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE, ENGINEERING, AND NRC KEY TECHNICAL ISSUES

- The OR office initiated a follow-up of the November 12, 1996, NRC audit observer QA inquiry generated from the NRC observation of the DOE audit of the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS), Audit No. USGS-ARP-97-03. During this audit, the application and use of statistical analysis for a quality-affecting activity was questioned. DOE initially responded that this application was acceptable since the application of this software program involved only straight-forward calculations. Therefore, it was believed that these programs do not perform an interpretive function, rather just a mathematical function. The NRC did not totally agree with this response since the programs used by USGS were used in such a way whereby they could give an erroneous result and therefore, should have a degree of applicable control. DOE performed an additional evaluation and the results from the Technical Specialist indicated that there were adequate controls in place as described in the scientific notebooks to allow a clear understanding for this application. At this point, the NRC agrees with the evaluation and rationale for this application and considers the matter closed for this audit.

However, there appears to be a generic problem and/or a degree of confusion associated with the implementation of Section I.1, Supplement I of the DOE Quality Assurance Requirements and Description document (QARD). This Supplement exempts statistical analysis programs from QA controls providing they do not involve the generation of data. Data as defined in the QARD Glossary is, "information developed as a result of scientific investigation activities." Therefore, this data could either be qualified or non-qualified, depending upon how and what controls were used when collecting such data. Qualified data must be used in the appropriate application for the licensing process. All other types

of acquired data is either unqualified or possibly used as corroborating data.

It appears that DOE is attempting to establish that for routine calculations, software programs need not be controlled, verified, or validated. For design and/or qualified type data, QA software controls should be used. However, it is not clear what the DOE intent is and this question will apparently resurface on subsequent audits, surveillances, and technical evaluations.

The OR recommends that DOE modify the QARD guidance and requirements in order to be readily understood and consistently implemented by all users and interested groups and individuals. This is planned to be carried as an Open item by NRC until sufficient clarification is obtained.

5.0 EXPLORATORY STUDIES FACILITY AND KEY TECHNICAL ISSUES

Exploratory Studies Facility (ESF) Testing:

As of February 28, 1997, the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) advanced to station 75+34 meters (24,719 feet). The current schedule for daylighting the TBM is April 4, 1997, however this date is contingent on ground conditions. Geologic mapping and photogrammetry progressed approximately to 74+55 meters. Geologic mapping was also conducted in Alcoves 5 and 6 over this reporting period. ESF construction and testing activities continue to be focused in Alcoves 5, 6, and 7. However, investigators continue to collect barometric pressure, temperature, and relative humidity data in Alcove 4 and monitor an evaporation test outside Alcove 3. Temperature and relative humidity data also continue to be collected at several locations in the ESF main drift. In addition, tensiometers and heat dissipation probes have been installed in tunnel walls in the South Ramp to measure rock dry-out. Seismographs in Alcoves 1 and 5 continue to monitor seismicity data. There was no new testing activity conducted in Alcoves 1 and 2. The location of alcoves and preliminary tunnel stratigraphy is summarized in Enclosure 1.

Alcove 5 (Thermal Testing Facility Access/Observation Drift, Connecting Drift, and Heated Drift)

The excavation of the floor (or invert) for the Heated Drift was completed over this reporting period. Air permeability testing continues in instrumented boreholes in the Access/Observation Drift to establish baseline conditions for the Heated Drift Test. Other planned instrumentation holes that will be used to monitor the Heater Drift Test continue to be surveyed and instrumented. The Heated Drift

test is designed to heat approximately 15,000 cubic meters of rock in the repository horizon to 100 degrees centigrade or greater to investigate coupled thermal-hydrologic-mechanical-chemical processes. This test is scheduled to begin in December 1997.

Alcove 5 (Thermomechanical Alcove)

The Single Heater Test started on August 26, 1996. All instrumentation, with the exception of some chemistry probes, are reported to be working properly and the collection of test data continues. On February 26, 1997, preliminary instrumentation measurements in the block indicated a rock mass temperature of approximately 75 degrees centigrade at a distance of 1.5 meters from the midpoint of the heater element. The heat-up of this block of rock continues to mobilize water as evidenced by the accumulation of condensate in one of the instrumentation boreholes. This test is designed to heat approximately 25 cubic meters of rock to 100 degrees centigrade or greater to investigate thermomechanical properties of rock in the potential repository horizon.

Alcove 6 (Northern Ghost Dance Fault Alcove)

Investigators have completed geothermal logging, gas sampling, and pneumatic monitoring across this fault from a horizontal radial borehole in this alcove. Air permeability testing in this borehole was completed over this reporting period. Investigators plan to excavate through the Ghost Dance Fault in the coming weeks to prepare for the next phase of testing in this alcove. Testing in Alcove 6 is designed to investigate the hydrochemical and pneumatic properties of the Ghost Dance Fault.

Alcove 7 (Southern Ghost Dance Fault)

Excavation of this alcove, using an Alpine Miner, was completed to a planned depth of 134 meters. In March 1997, investigators plan to drill a horizontal radial borehole from this location through the Ghost Dance Fault to prepare for the first phase of testing in this alcove. Testing in Alcove 7 is designed to investigate the hydrochemical and pneumatic properties of the Ghost Dance Fault.

Surface-Based Testing:

Fran Ridge Large Block Heater Test

The Fran Ridge Large Block Test (LBT) started on February 28, 1997. The duration of this test (heat-up and cool-down) is expected to be completed within a time frame of approximately 8 months. Expected rock mass temperatures are projected to be approximately 140 degrees centigrade (near heaters) and 60 degrees centigrade (away from heaters). Coupons of candidate waste package materials will be tested

and microorganism (cultured in laboratory) will be introduced into the block to evaluate the performance of these materials under this test. The purpose of this test is to gather data to evaluate thermal-hydrologic-mechanical-chemical processes in rock similar to potential repository horizon. This test will investigate: the development of a dry-out region around the heaters and a rewetting front after cessation of boiling; the development of heat pipes and the role of fractures in the reflux of condensed water; and the effects of changes in chemistry and mineralogy and their effect in hydrology. This test will also help to discriminate among alternate conceptual models.

New Borehole Planned

In FY97, DOE plans to drill a new borehole (SD-6) on the crest of Yucca Mountain that will penetrate the potential repository block. The borehole will be dry drilled with the LM-300 drill rig to a planned depth of 2500 feet extending 300 feet below the water table. A standard suite of geophysical logs will be run in this borehole. No conventional coring is planned for this borehole, however DOE is presently considering different strategies for sample collection. This borehole will provide information to support DOE's 3-dimensional geologic framework model, unsaturated zone model, and design work. This borehole will also be used to evaluate drilling cost and efficiency for DOE's performance confirmation program.

Borehole Testing:

The location of boreholes referenced in this section is provided in Enclosure 2.

C-Hole Complex

Tracer testing at the C-Hole Complex is conducted in the Bullfrog-Upper Tram interval of the Crater Flat Tuff for the purpose of determining hydrologic properties in the saturated zone. Conservative (non-sorbing) tracer testing continues at the C-Hole Complex. On January 9, 1997, investigators injected up to 4 kilograms of the tracer pyridone into borehole C#1 and up to 15 kilograms of the tracer 2,6 difluorobenzoic acid (DFBA) into borehole C#2. Breakthrough of DFBA occurred on January 16, 1997. Peak concentration of values of DFBA were measured on January 21, 1997. Over this reporting period, there was no breakthrough of the pyridone tracer. Sampling and analyses of water pumped at C#3 continues.

Pneumatic Testing

Pneumatic data recording continues at boreholes UZ-4, UZ-5, UZ-7a, SD-12, NRG-7a, SD-7 and NRG-5. Nye County continues to record pneumatic data in NRG-4 and ONC-1.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

ESF Percolation Testing

Reducing the uncertainty in the amount of percolation flux remains one of the highest priorities of the project. In 1997, DOE plans to initiate several tests in the ESF to supplement ongoing studies to reduce the uncertainty in percolation flux through a potential repository at Yucca Mountain. This testing is expected to provide additional data to enhance DOE's confidence in parameter values used in models contributing to the 1998 Viability Assessment.

DOE is planning to excavate two niches in the right rib of the ESF Main Drift between Alcoves 5 and 6. One location represents an area of potential fast flux and a second location represents an area of potential slow flux based on results of Chlorine-36 studies. Horizontal boreholes will be dry cored at each of these locations. In the potential slow flux niche location, two horizontal boreholes will be dry cored above the niche and an aqueous dye released into these boreholes and allowed to drain into the underlying rock. The niches will then be excavated approximately 5 meters with an Alpine Miner. Additional boreholes will be drilled and instrumented in each niche. Niche entrances will be sealed and allowed to equilibrate. Borehole instrumentation will allow investigators to monitor in-situ conditions from outside the niches.

In the South Ramp, approximately 40 shallow boreholes (approximately 2 meters deep) will be dry cored and instrumented to determine geochemical and hydrologic properties in the vicinity of faults in nonwelded and welded tuffs.

In the North Ramp, 20-30 shallow boreholes will be dry cored and instrumented between Alcoves 3 and 4 to investigate lateral diversion of water in this unit and its effect of infiltration. This study will provide rock property data and water potential measurements for a number of distinct lithologic units in the Paintbrush nonwelded tuff.

Documentation of Significant Changes in Site Characterization

DOE is documenting how its site characterization program has changed since the Site Characterization Plan (SCP) was issued in 1988. These changes will be documented in

narrative form with Site Characterization Progress Report No. 15. Appendix A of this Progress Report summarizes significant changes in the program up to the revised program strategy in FY97. This appendix is organized by individual characterization programs referenced in Chapter 8 of the

SCP. Changes in site investigations, repository design, waste package design and performance assessment are discussed. It outlines the background leading up to changes and provides a current status of investigations in each program area. Future SCP Progress Reports will provide additional information on the rationale and justification for changes to the program as performance and design information matures. Site Characterization Progress Report No. 15 is expected to be issued in April 1997. The ORs support DOE's effort to document significant changes in their program and their decision process.

6.0 GENERAL

1. Meetings/Interactions

- The regularly scheduled meeting with W. Barnes (Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office (YMSCO) Project Manager, YMSCO Deputy Project Manager, YMSCO Assistant Managers, YMSCO QA Representative, and various YMSCO staff was held on February 18, 1997 (See Enclosure 3 for the subject matter discussed at this meeting).

One of the agenda items discussed pertained to the OR attendance at the January 23, 1997, Public Hearing on the General Guidelines for the Recommendation of Sites for Nuclear Repositories (10 CFR 960). From the OR's observation at this hearing, it appeared that several of the commentors claimed that the public hearing was insufficiently publicized. At the February 18, 1997, meeting with W. Barnes, a list of over 100 pages with over 1000 individuals and groups that were notified of this hearing was provided to the ORs. In addition, six media publications in the Las Vegas/Nevada Test Site Locale also had advertisements noticing this Hearing. Therefore, it appears that the commentor's claims about insufficient notification to the affected individuals and groups is unfounded. DOE also notified the ORs at this meeting, that as a result of requests from interested members of the public, it was going to extend the public comment period on the proposed rulemaking from 60 days to 91 days (ending March 17, 1997).

The ORs inquired about the excavation of an east-west drift from the ESF. This was a subject that surfaced at the January 1997 Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board Meeting in Pahrump, NV. DOE reiterated that, as stated on page 51 of Revision 1 of its Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Plan, this drift will be excavated if deemed necessary to allow observation and testing across the width of the proposed repository.

However, this excavation will largely depend on the amount of scientific data acquired and available funding.

- During the week of February 24, 1997, an Employee Concerns Forum Meeting was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. This meeting was attended by over 70 representatives from NRC, DOE, and other government agencies. The ORs did not receive formal notification of this meeting and therefore were not in attendance.

2. Appendix 7 Site Interactions

- The ORs are making preparations for the upcoming visits to the ESF/Yucca Mountain Site by the NRC Inspector General (April 10, 1997) and NRC Commissioner K. Rogers (April 30, 1997).

3. Other

- On February 20, 1997, the ORs and a member of the NRC Office of Information Resources Management visited the Yucca Mountain Site. There were no outstanding issues raised during this visit.

7.0 REPORTS

Over this reporting period the following reports were received in the NRC Las Vegas office.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

BB0000000-01717-5705-00001 REV 02 ENGINEERED BARRIER SYSTEM PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS SYSTEMS STUDY REPORT, 1/14/97, (TRW)

LAWRENCE LIVERMORE

UCRL-ID-124631 CHEMICAL MODELING OF BACKFILL COMPOSED OF QUARTZ SAND, LIME AND AN FE-PHASE, 1/97, A. MEIKE, W. GLASSLEY

LAWRENCE BERKLEY

LBNL-38915 GEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN RADIOACTIVE WASTE ISOLATION, 2ND WORLDWIDE REVIEW, 9/96, EDITED BY P. WITHERSPOON

LOS ALAMOS

COMPRESSIBLE GAS IN POROUS MEDIA: A FINITE AMPLITUDE ANALYSIS OF
NATURAL CONVECTION, 6/96, P. STAUFFER, L. AUER, N. ROSENBERG

NWTRB

DISPOSAL AND STORAGE OF SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL--FINDING THE RIGHT
BALANCE (A Report to Congress & the Secretary of Energy), 3/96

SANDIA

SAND95-1736 MECHANICAL PROPERTIES OF FRACTURES FROM DRILLHOLES
UE25-NRG-4, USW-NRG-6, USW-NRG-7, USW-SD-9 AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN, NV,
1/97, W. OLSSON, S. BROWN

SAND96-1368 GEOLOGY OF THE USW SD-12 DRILL HOLE, YUCCA MOUNTAIN,
NV, 11/96, C. RAUTMAN, D. ENGSTROM

ESF TUNNEL STRATIGRAPHY*

STATION

0+00 to 0+99.5m

Tiva Canyon crystal poor upper lithophysal zone.

Alcove #1 (centerline station intersection):0+42.5

0+99.5 to 1+90m

Tiva Canyon crystal poor middle nonlithophysal zone

Alcove #2 (centerline station intersection):1+68.2

1+90 to 1+99.5m

Tiva Canyon crystal poor lower lithophysal zone.

1+99.5 to 2+02m

Bow Ridge Fault Zone (placing Pre-Ranier Mesa Tuff against Tiva Canyon Tuff)

2+02 to 2+63.5m

Pre-Ranier Mesa bedded tuffs

2+20

Fault (4.3m offset)***

2+63.5 to 3+33m

Tuff "X"

3+33to 3+49.5m

Pre-Tuff "X"

3+49.5 to3+59.5m

Tiva Canyon crystal rich vitric zone

3+59.5 to 4+34m

Tiva Canyon crystal rich nonlithophysal zone

4+30m

Fault (~10m offset)***

4+34 to 4+39m

Tiva Canyon crystal rich lithophysal zone

4+39 to 5+53m

Tiva Canyon crystal poor upper lithophysal zone

5+50m

Fault (~5m offset)***

5+53to 5+87m

Tiva Canyon crystal poor middle nonlithophysal zone

ESE TUNNEL STRATIGRAPHY CONTINUED*

STATION

57+30	Splay of the Ghost Dance Fault - Offset is approximately 2 meters
63+08 to 64+53	Topopah Spring crystal poor upper lithophysal zone
63+25	Fault with the offset estimated as 3.8 meters
64+53 to 65+13	Topopah Spring crystal rich lithophysal zone
65+13 to 65+23	Topopah Spring crystal rich nonlithophysal zone
65+23	Fault
65+23 to 65+35	Topopah Spring crystal rich lithophysal zone
65+35 to 66+35	Topopah crystal rich nonlithophysal zone
66+35 to 66+40	Topopah Spring vitric zone
66+40 to 66+98	Pre-Pah Canyon bedded tuffs
66+98 to 67+26	Tiva Canyon crystal poor vitric zone
67+26 to 67+62	Tiva Canyon crystal poor lower nonlithophysal zone
67+62 to 67+70	Tiva Canyon crystal poor vitric zone
67+70 to 67+88	Tiva Canyon crystal poor lower nonlithophysal zone
67+88 to 67+91	Dune Wash fault (offset is greater than 10m)
67+91 to 68+47	Topopah Spring crystal poor upper lithophysal zone
68+47 to 68+85	Topopah Spring crystal rich lithophysal zone
68+85 to 69+84	Topopah Spring crystal rich nonlithophysal zone

ESF TUNNEL STRATOGRAPHY CONTINUED*

STATION

69+84 to 69+96	Topopah Spring crystal rich vitric zone
69+96 to 70+58	Bedded tuffs
70+58	Fault (Offset greater than 10 meters)
70+58 to 71+68?	Topopah Spring crystal poor middle nonlithophysal zone
71+31?	Fault
71+68 to 73+46?	Topopah Spring crystal poor upper lithophysal zone
73+46 to ?	Topopah Spring crystal rich lithophysal zone
? to ?	Topopah spring crystal rich nonlithophysal zone
? to 74+30?	Topopah Spring vitric zone
74+30 to ?	pre -Pah Canyon bedded tuffs
?	Pah Canyon Tuff
?	pre-Yucca mountain bedded tuffs
?	Yucca Mountain Tuff
?	pre-Tiva Canyon bedded tuffs
?	Tiva Canyon crystal poor vitric zone
? to face	Tiva Canyon crystal poor lower nonlithophysal zone

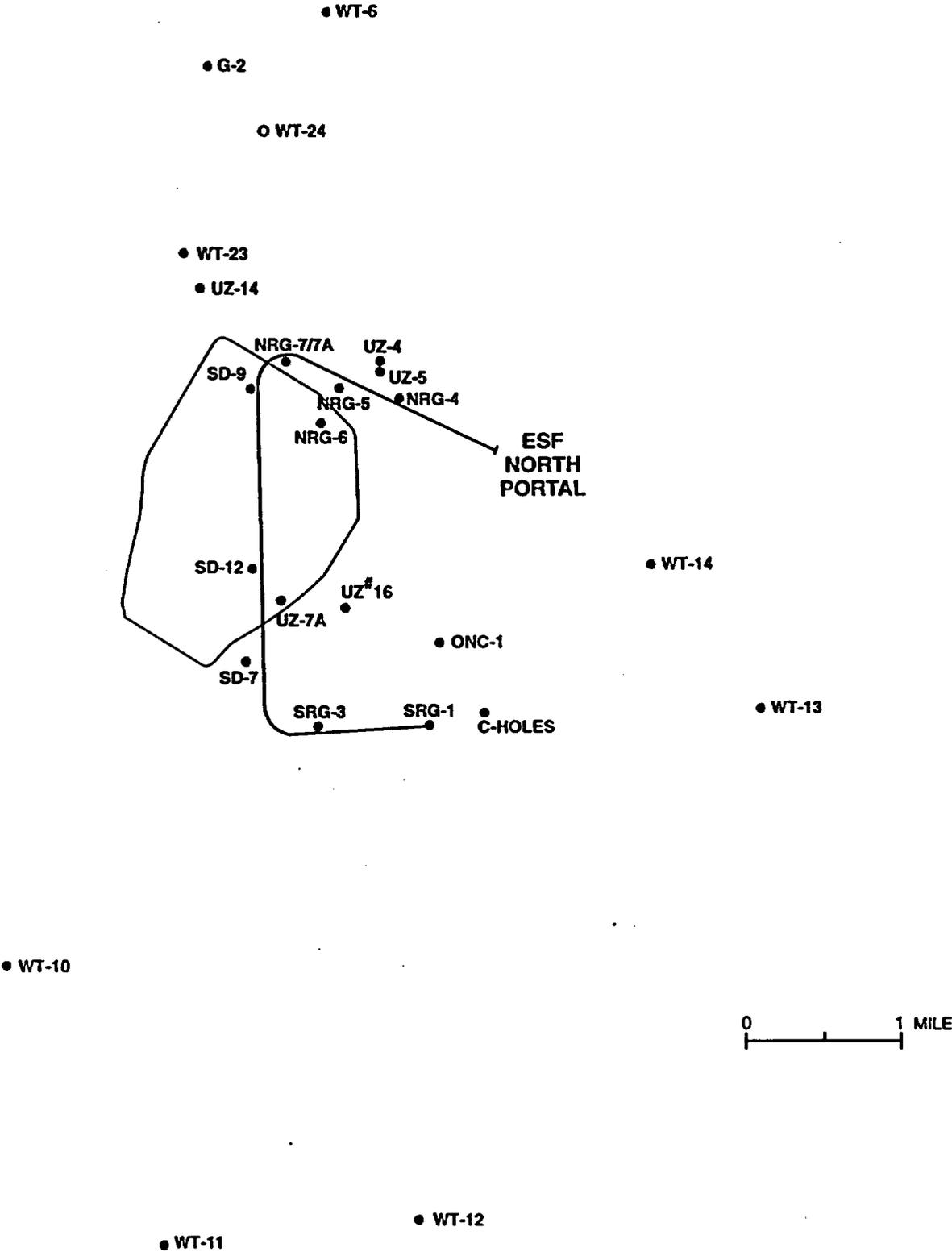
Note: Starting at station 57+02 and ending at 59+80, the crystal poor lower lithophysal zone is exposed in the lower portion of the tunnel (below springline).

* All stations given are referenced to the right springline unless otherwise noted. Station 0+00 is located at coordinates N765352.7, E569814.4.

? Indicates that contact is preliminary and has not been verified by USGS geologists.

*** Only significant faults are noted on the table.

Selected Borehole Locations



SELHOLES.CDR.123/9-7-95

AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 18, 1997, 8:30 AM W. BARNES MEETING

- o AM'S OR DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVES TO GIVE BRIEF 2-3 MINUTE PRESENTATION ON CURRENT WORK ACTIVITIES THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO NRC FROM A LICENSING PERSPECTIVE (REF: JANUARY 14, 1997, W. BARNES MEETING AGENDA ITEM AND REQUEST TO T. HAWE FOR COORDINATION)
- o 960 PUBLIC HEARING FEEDBACK/COMMENTS
 - COMPARISON/COMPATIBILITY OF 960 TO PART 60/NWPA
 - BETTER NOTIFICATION OF HEARING TO CONCERNED PROJECT INTEREST GROUPS
 - EDUCATING GENERAL PUBLIC ON ACTUAL FACTS RATHER THAN HEARSAY
 - STATUS OF DOE RESPONSE TO STATE OF NEVADA DECEMBER 24, 1996, LETTER TO SECRETARY O'LEARY
 - REACTION/STATUS OF THREATENED LAW SUIT TO DOE BY NEVADA ATTORNEY GENERAL
 - WHY 8 COPIES OF COMMENTS?
 - EIS CONTENTS - TRANSPORTATION ASPECTS COVERED?
 - SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS?
 - STATUS NRC COMMENTS/COMMISSION PAPER(REF: 960 PUBLIC HEARING & NWTRB MEETINGS)
- o STATUS OF CONSIDERATION FOR EAST/WEST DRIFT (REF: JANUARY 28-29, 1997, NWTRB MEETING)
- o DOE REACTION/RESPONSE TO SZYMANSKI CONCERN & SOON TO BE ISSUED STATE OF NEVADA REPORT ON SUBJECT CONCERNS (REF: JANUARY 28-29, 1997, NWTRB MEETING)
- o STATUS OF MAJOR PLANNED ACTIVITIES RESULTING FROM \$13 MIL. ALLOCATION BY DOE (REF: JANUARY 28-29, 1997 NWTRB MEETING)
- o DOE FEEDBACK ON NRC ANNUAL FY 96 PROGRESS REPORT
- o UPCOMING SITE VISITS
- o USGS QA/TECHNICAL PROBLEMS APPEAR TO STILL BE SURFACING POSSIBLE COST/SCHEDULE IMPLICATIONS (REF: OR REPORTS, DOE AUDITS, DOE SUMMARY REPORT OF QA PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS, RECENT USGS 3D MODEL AUDIT)
- o STATUS OF DOE RESPONSE (COPY OF RESPONSE IF AVAILABLE) (REF: FY 1996 QA MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT OF OCRWM PROGRAM BY QUALITY SERVICE ASSOCIATES INC.)
- o DOE INFORMATION FURNISHED DIRECTLY TO NRC HQ GOES INTO PDR DOE INFORMATION FURNISHED TO ORS DOES NOT NECESSARILY GO INTO PDR (REF: NRC MANAGEMENT REMINDER)
- o STATUS OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO NRC/DOE PROCEDURAL AGREEMENT (REF: OR/NRC MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION)
- o KEEPING ORS INFORMED (REF: PRIOR REQUESTS AT W. BARNES MEETINGS, JANUARY 28-29, 1997, NWTRB MEETING)