



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

MAR 15 1993

Mr. Joseph J. Holonich, Director
Repository Licensing and Quality
Assurance Project Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Holonich:

The purpose of this letter is to provide some points of clarification which are necessary regarding the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) letter to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dated January 8, 1993 (Bartlett to Bernero).

Dr. Bartlett's letter responded to the NRC letter dated November 18, 1992 (Bernero to Bartlett), which indicated recognition of the events that have led to significant progress in the high-level waste repository program during the past year.

As stated in the letter of January 8, 1993, DOE intends to submit issue resolution documentation as site characterization proceeds. The general process for this was described in the Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Project Office (YMPO) Technical Support Documentation Management Plan (TSDMP), which NRC received on April 30, 1991. The January 8, 1993, letter referred to all of the issue resolution documentation now in preparation as "topical reports." This is not the case. We do intend to submit a topical report on extreme erosion to you in the near future; however, the report on origin of calcite-silica deposits will be a YMPO technical report (referred to as a "working paper" in the TSDMP), and the volcanism report will be a Los Alamos National Laboratory technical report. Current plans call for a discussion of a draft version of the latter report at a technical exchange with the NRC staff on June 9, 1993.

With respect to the need to understand tectonic phenomena, an accelerated seismic action plan was developed and will be implemented as funding allows.

In addition to the activities of the Geophysics Integration Group mentioned in the January 8, 1993, letter, a technical exchange is planned for June 8, 1993. The purpose of the exchange is to discuss the DOE integrated geophysics program and to provide an opportunity to explain our approach to resolving NRC staff concerns regarding the planned geophysical studies as stated in the Site Characterization Analysis (SCA). We also plan to discuss the geophysics program initiative that was mentioned at

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the NRC Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste meeting conducted in October 1992, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

DOE has been very concerned about resolution of SCA open items and has been providing documentation to NRC to seek to resolve open items. Recently, DOE forwarded information to the NRC regarding the status of open items (DOE letter dated November 23, 1992; Roberts to Holonich). NRC has since acknowledged receipt of this documentation and has concurred that some of these candidate open items are indeed closed. A viable mechanism has been set up for addressing remaining SCA open items. The NRC has completed this process by advising DOE as to whether or not open items stated to be closed are indeed closed. Of the 196 outstanding SCA concerns as of July 31, 1991, 122 open items remain. As new study plans are prepared, they are evaluated with respect to resolution of SCA open items, and this information is included in study plan transmittals to the NRC.

If you have any questions in this regard, please contact either April Gil of YMPO at (702) 794-7622 or Sharon Skuchko of my office at (202) 586-4590.

Sincerely,



Dwight E. Shelor
Associate Director for
Systems and Compliance
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cc:

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