

JAN 23 1992

Mr. John P. Roberts, Acting Associate Director
for Systems and Compliance
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Roberts:

SUBJECT: PHASE I REVIEW OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) STUDY PLAN FOR
SOIL AND ROCK PROPERTIES

On October 16, 1991, DOE transmitted the study plan entitled "Studies to Provide Soil and Rock Properties for Potential Locations of Surface Facilities and Subsurface Access Facilities" (Study Plan for Study 8.3.1.14.2) to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for review and comment. The NRC has completed its Phase I Review of this document using the Review Plan for NRC Staff Review of DOE Study Plans, Revision 1 (December 6, 1990).

Aside from the exceptions noted below, the material submitted in the study plan was determined to be consistent with the agreement on content resulting from the NRC-DOE agreements made at the May 7-8, 1986, meeting on Level of Detail for Site Characterization Plans and Study Plans. However, the study plan did not: (1) specify the number of tests and locations, (2) provide illustrations of test locations, (3) provide the rationale for number, location, depths, duration, and timing of tests, considering uncertainties and obvious alternatives. These items are of particular importance because the ability to execute the test borings and the corresponding tests depend upon identification of the specific number, locations, types, and depths of the borings. NRC staff recognizes the uniqueness of the situation in that the missing information could not have been included in the study plan because at the time of the preparation of the study plan, the ESF Title I design had not proceeded far enough to develop this information. However, more design information is currently available, and therefore this study plan needs to be updated to include all relevant information consistent with the study plan content agreement. The missing information should be provided to NRC as it becomes available either in a revised study plan or in a letter.

A major purpose of the Phase I 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 Site Characterization Plan for the Yucca Mountain site). Enough information was available in the study plan to make a conclusion that there are no objections with any of the activities proposed.

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After completion of the Phase I Review, selected study plans are to receive a second level of review, called a Detailed Technical Review, based on the relationship of a given study plan to key site-specific issues or NRC open items, or its reliance on unique, state-of-the-art test or analysis methods. We will make a decision regarding the need for a Detailed Technical Review of this study plan after receiving the missing information.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Robert Johnson at [301]-504-2409/(FTS 964-2409) or, after January 27, 1992, Charlotte Abrams at [301]-504-2446/(FTS 964-2446).

Sincerely,



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
- C. Gertz, DOE/NV
- S. Bradhurst, Nye County, NV
- M. Baughman, Lincoln County, NV
- D. Bechtel, Clark County, NV
- D. Weigel, GAO
- P. Niedzielski-Eichner, Nye County, NV
- C. Thistlethwaite, Inyo County, CA
- V. Poe, Mineral County, NV
- F. Sperry, White Pine County, NV

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* See previous concurrence

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Date: 01/23/92	:01/16/92	:01/16/92	:01/22/92	:01/22/92	:01/23/92	:01/22/92

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NAME:RJohnson/d	:DGupta <i>DG</i>	:KHooks <i>KH</i>	:MNataraja <i>MN</i>	:RBallard <i>RB</i>	:JHolonich <i>JH</i>	:JLinehan <i>JL</i>
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