



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

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Mr. John J. Linehan, Acting Director
Regulatory 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. Linehan:

During a recent discussion with representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), you stated that open items resulting from interactions conducted prior to issuance of the Site Characterization Analysis (SCA) could be considered subsumed by the objections, comments, and questions within the SCA itself. As was mentioned during the discussion, the December 12, 1988, "Review Plan for U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Staff Review of DOE's Site Characterization Plan (SCP)" makes several references to the intent of the NRC staff to utilize the SCA as, ". . . the vehicle by which the NRC staff's concerns over the past several years (at the SCP level of detail), are brought together into one trackable set of open items" (page 3, Section 1.1). A similar concept is discussed in Section 8.0 of the review plan, "SCP Open Item Identification and Tracking."

The DOE fully agrees with the NRC staff's approach as outlined in the review plan and implemented via the SCA. DOE's confidence in the effectiveness and utility of the staff's approach is enhanced by the results of a recently completed review of the list of Exploratory Studies Facility (formerly Exploratory Shaft Facility)-related open items resulting from the October 19-21, 1988, meeting between DOE and NRC, and the documentation of similar items in the SCA. The results of the review indicated that, in all cases, the SCA addressed topics related to the previously identified open items.

In recognition of the fact that open items arising before the SCA was issued have either previously closed or have been restated in the SCA, or have been rendered obsolete by programmatic changes, open items generated prior to the SCA publication date of August 1989 will be considered closed for tracking purposes. The DOE intends to track and resolve concerns raised by the NRC in the SCA and those issues arising subsequent to publication of the SCA, such as NRC's comments on study plans.

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Should you have any questions, please contact Linda Desell of my office at (202) 586-1462.

Sincerely,



Dwight E. Shelor
Acting Associate Director for
Systems and Compliance
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