



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

April 2, 1999

Mr. J. Russell Dyer, Project Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
P.O. Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

Dear Mr. Dyer:

Enclosed for your information is a March 18, 1999, memorandum containing summaries of meetings between members of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, High-Level Waste (HLW) Quality Assurance (QA) Task Force and personnel of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and its Management and Operating Contractor (M&O) for the Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Project. These meetings, on January 25 and 26, and February 16 and 17, 1999, were held in conjunction with the activities of the NRC's On-Site Representatives (OR) Office in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The meetings were held to further understand the problems which had been identified with the QA program and the steps that DOE and the M&O are taking to identify the root causes of the problems and implement corrective actions to resolve the current problems and preclude recurrence of such problems in the future. During the February meetings, as noted in the enclosed meeting summary, the root causes and schedules outlined in DOE's January 25, 1999, "Management Plan" were discussed in detail.

As stated in the enclosed meeting summaries, the NRC staff believes that DOE and the M&O are making a considerable effort to correct past problems and strengthen the QA program to prevent future problems. The schedules established by the M&O and DOE are very ambitious; although those items and events scheduled prior to February 17, 1999, appear to have been accomplished, there were indications that future schedule dates may be slipped. The staff expects that DOE will provide, in the meeting scheduled for April 22, 1999, an update on its progress in resolving problems and any revisions to the schedules presented in the January 25, 1999, letter.

The staff believes that it will not be possible to properly evaluate the success of the DOE "recovery" program until sufficient time has passed for proper identification and evaluation of root causes, definition of appropriate corrective actions, and sufficient implementation of the

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corrective actions. Since the staff committed, in the recent Viability Assessment briefing to the Commission, to provide a report on the status of the DOE QA program to the Commission by October 1999, it is vital that DOE demonstrate sufficient implementation of corrective actions and progress in resolving the QA problems to support the NRC staff review and evaluation.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by]

John T. Greeves, Director
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Enclosures: As stated

cc: See attached list

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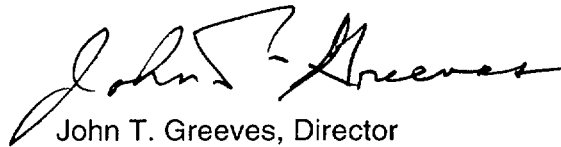
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John T. Greeves". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent and the last name "Greeves" written in a similar style.

John T. Greeves, Director
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Enclosure: As stated

cc: See attached list

Letter to J. Dyer from J. Greeves dated April 2, 1999

cc: R. Loux, State of Nevada
S. Frishman, State of Nevada
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J. Meder, Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau
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