



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

March 10, 1989

The Honorable Bob Miller
Acting Governor of Nevada
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Dear Mr. Miller:

Thank you for your letter of February 22, 1989. I want to emphasize my personal commitment to maximize to the extent practicable public and State involvement in Civilian Radioactive Waste Management activities. I strongly endorse your view that the citizens of Nevada should have ample time to review the Site Characterization Plan (SCP), and I support your interest in expanding the opportunities for public participation.

With this in mind, let me address the four recommendations specified on page two of your letter:

Recommendation a)

that the public review and comment period be extended beyond 90 days to permit adequate time for the interested public to review the thousands of pages of plans and references associated with DOE's site characterization program;

I share your concern for the need to provide adequate opportunity for public involvement, and I encourage the opportunity for all concerned citizens of Nevada to provide their comments on the SCP during the period of review and hearings. After considering your views, I am extending the comment period from April 15 to June 1. I want to assure you that the Department of Energy (DOE) is committed to considering all comments received throughout the site characterization process.

Also, I want to assure you that the Department's Yucca Mountain Project Office in Las Vegas will continue to conduct project update meetings which are open to the

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public. These meetings, which are held approximately every 6 months, will provide an ongoing forum for dialog with the public. To determine the agenda for these meetings, the Yucca Mountain Project Office contacts a number of individuals to identify the topics of most interest to Nevadans. This agenda is discussed with the State Agency for Nuclear Projects, and the State is invited to participate in the meetings with the DOE. The meeting times and locations are advertised extensively, receive broad media coverage, and are well attended. We appreciate this participation by the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects in these meetings.

Recommendation b)

that the Public Hearings be extended to include the amount of time necessary to receive oral comment from all those in attendance who indicate their desire to present comment for the record;

The DOE has made arrangements to accommodate all persons wishing to comment by adding a second day to each of the hearings in Las Vegas and Reno to receive additional oral comments from the public, if needed. The additional days are Wednesday, March 22, 1989, in Las Vegas and Friday, March 24, 1989, in Reno.

Recommendation c)

that the scope of the Public Hearings and the Hearing Record be announced to be inclusive of all the DOE activities (geotechnical, engineering, environmental, and socioeconomic) planned during the site characterization period;

The scope of the public hearings is focused on the technical requirements of the geotechnical and engineering issues addressed in the SCP. However, if interested parties present comments on environmental, socioeconomic or other aspects of the program, they will be recorded and considered as well.

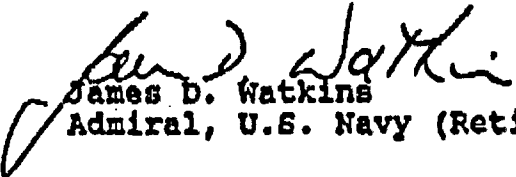
Recommendation d)

that a formal process for public review and comment, including Public Hearings, be established in association with the DOE's statutorily required periodic issuance of site characterization reports throughout the duration of site characterization at Yucca Mountain.

The DOE will continue its project update meetings at various locations in the State of Nevada throughout the period of site characterization. We expect that as a result of these meetings, interested parties will continue to provide comments throughout the course of site characterization. A process is being developed to assure that all comments received are recorded and evaluated to determine whether changes in site characterization plans are warranted. The disposition of all comments, including those which result in change in the site characterization plans, will be made available to the public and referenced through the semiannual progress reports.

In responding to your letter, I am particularly interested in conveying the message that the DOE is committed to taking the concerns of the State into serious consideration in moving forward with this Program. In this spirit, I would like to suggest that we work together to take full advantage of the opportunities we have before us to make sure that concerns that either of us may have are shared and addressed in a manner that promotes mutual confidence and understanding.

Sincerely,


James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

cc: Nick C. Aquilina, Manager
Nevada Operations Office

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