

FEB 8 1993

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, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Roberts:

**SUBJECT: PHASE I REVIEW OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) STUDY PLAN
"CHARACTERIZATION OF STRUCTURAL FEATURES IN THE SITE AREA"**

On December 24, 1992, DOE transmitted the study plan, "Characterization of Structural Features in the Site Area," to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for review and comment. 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). The staff considers the material submitted in the study plan to be consistent, to the extent possible at this time, with the NRC-DOE agreement on content of study plans made at the May 7-8, 1986, meeting on Level of Detail for Site Characterization Plans and Study Plans.

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 the Site Characterization Plan for the Yucca Mountain site). It does not appear that the conduct of the activities described in this study plan will have significant adverse impacts on repository performance and the Phase I Review of this study plan identified no objections with any of the activities proposed.

After completion of the Phase I Review, selected study plans are to receive a second level of review, called a Detailed Technical Review (DTR), 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. DOE, in its letter of transmittal of the subject study plan (Roberts to Holonich, December 24, 1992), provided a discussion of how Site Characterization Analysis (SCA) open items (Comment 36 and Question 5) are addressed in the study plan. We will proceed with a DTR of this study plan based on its relationship to specific SCA open items. A review of the information provided to address SCA open items will be conducted as part of that DTR.

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Mr. John P. Roberts

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If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Charlotte Abrams (301) 504-3403 of my staff.

Sincerely,

JSJ

Joseph J. Holonich, Director
Repository Licensing and Quality
Assurance Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and
Safeguards

- cc: R. Loux, State of Nevada
- T. J. Hickey, Nevada Legislative Committee
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