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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
"DETACHMENT FAULTS AT OR PROXIMAL TO YUCCA MOUNTAIN"

On August 13, 1992, DOE transmitted the study plan, "Detachment Faults at or Proximal to Yucca Mountain" (Study Plan 8.3.1.17.4.5) 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 material submitted in the study plan was considered 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.

In its Site Characterization Analysis (SCA) and other reviews the NRC staff has previously stated concerns with the technical integration of the DOE site characterization program. The study plan presents discussions on the integration of technical information and how that integration will be accomplished. Those discussions describe the type of integrated effort the staff believes to be necessary in study plans related to the site characterization of Yucca Mountain.

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

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items, or its reliance on unique, state-of-the-art test or analysis methods. Based on these criteria, we have decided not to proceed with a Detailed Technical Review of this study plan.

As noted in the letter transmitting this study plan to the NRC (letter from Roberts to Holonich, August 6, 1992), the work proposed in this study plan does not resolve the staff's SCA concern related to detachment faulting (Comment 68); however, the study plan appears to represent one step toward resolution. According to the DOE strategy, this study plan and others will provide information to Study Plan 8.3.1.17.4.12, under which the synthesis, integration, and development of tectonic models will be conducted. As a result, Study Plan 8.3.1.17.4.12 may require detailed technical review as it is intended to resolve the outstanding open item (Comment 68).

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

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

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