

AUG 27 1992

Mr. John P. Roberts, Acting Associate Director
for Systems and Compliance
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy, RW 30
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Roberts:

SUBJECT: PHASE I REVIEW OF U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) STUDY
PLAN FOR CLIMATIC INTERPRETATIONS OF TERRESTRIAL
PALEOECOLOGY

On June 22, 1992, DOE transmitted the study plan, "Climatic Interpretations of Terrestrial Paleoecology" (Study Plan 8.3.1.5.1.3) 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). Based on its review, the NRC staff determined that 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.

Of the references listed for this study plan, all but two are readily obtainable or have been provided to NRC. Those two references are Coleman and Pierce (in press) and Edwards and Fritz (in preparation). The staff requests that DOE provide the NRC with those two references when they are published or, alternatively, provide the complete reference for the Edwards and Fritz paper, if published in a readily obtainable publication.

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 field sampling and data collection activities described in this study plan will interfere with other Yucca Mountain site characterization activities or have any adverse effects on the repository performance. Phase I Review of this study plan identified no objections with any of the activities proposed.

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

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

Sincerely,

for 15/ Original Signed by *Joseph J. Holonich*

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

- cc: T. J. Hickey, Nevada Legislative Committee
- R. Loux, State of Nevada
- C. Gertz, DOE/NV
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- M. Baughman, Lincoln County, NV
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