



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

OCT 6 1988

Mr. John Linehan, Chief
Project Management and Quality
Assurance Branch
Division of High-Level
Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Materials
Safety and Safeguards
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Linehan:

This is in response to your letter of August 19, 1988, regarding the interactions between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which referenced the April 13, 1988, DOE-NRC management meeting held in conjunction with the Alternative Conceptual Models Workshop in Las Vegas. As you know, since that workshop, a number of major meetings have taken place, or have been planned and scheduled.

On July 7-8, 1988, the DOE and NRC held a comprehensive discussion of the DOE quality assurance program, including QA open items and NRC comments on the NNWSI QA Plan. On July 18-19, 1988, the DOE and NRC discussed the three objections contained in the NRC Point Papers pertaining to the exploratory shaft facility, plus other topics. We have also been working with you and your staff regarding a meeting to discuss ESF open items, which is scheduled for October 18-20, 1988. Another meeting is being planned for mid-November on DOE's response to the NRC Point Papers.

In your letter, you suggested that several more technical meetings be held on the following topics prior to finalization of the Site Characterization Plan (SCP) or the start of new site characterization activities:

1. Compliance with the EPA standards (40 CFR Part 191);
2. Substantially complete containment;
3. Determination of ground-water travel time;
4. Geologic characterization of the repository block;
5. Tectonics; and
6. Seismicity characterization methodology

With respect to the first three topics, the DOE has revisited these as a result of the NRC Staff comments on the consultative draft SCP as well as DOE internal reviews. Since certain modifications to the SCP have been made, we propose that further detailed discussion of these topics be deferred until after the Staff has had the opportunity to review the SCP. Because of the evolving nature of the interpretations and positions regarding these topics, the DOE expects that these will be the subject of ongoing interactions between our staffs throughout site characterization.

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Regarding the other three suggested meeting topics, some modifications have been made to the SCP as a result of the NRC Staff comments and DOE internal reviews. We expect that some discussion of these topics will take place at the upcoming meeting on the Point Papers, planned for mid-November. We suggest that the need for more detailed discussions on these topics be addressed at that meeting.

Please feel free to contact Mr. Edward Regnier, of my staff at 586-4590 about any questions.

Sincerely,



Ralph Stein
Associate Director for Systems
Integration and Regulations
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management