

Carl Gertz, Director
 Waste Management Project Office
 U.S. Department of Energy
 Nevada Operations Office
 P.O. Box 14100
 Las Vegas, NV 89114-4105

Dear Mr. Gertz:

REFERENCE: NNWSI Project Background Paper, "Proposed Changes to the Nevada Nuclear Waste Storage Investigations Project Exploratory Shaft Facility", March, 1987.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has reviewed the reference document, which was provided to the NRC in connection with the April 14-15, 1987 NRC/NNWSI Project Exploratory Shaft Facility (ESF) meeting, to ascertain whether the increased drifting from the main test level of the ESF will enable the NNWSI Project to gather data representative of the entire repository block. Based on this review, in conjunction with an examination of the geology of the Yucca Mountain site as presented in the final Environmental Assessment (EA) for Yucca Mountain and other references listed in Enclosure 1 to this letter, the NRC staff has concluded that the proposed area of drifting may not provide data representative of the southern part of the site and that if the surface-based testing program does not obtain data sufficient to define the southern part of the repository block, the information available might not allow adequate characterization of the site.

Enclosure 1 contains the staff analysis supporting this conclusion. This analysis is intended to provide the NNWSI Project with feedback for consideration in developing the Site Characterization Plan. If you have any questions concerning the contents of this letter or the enclosure, please contact Keith McConnell (FTS 427-4697) or Charlotte Abrams (FTS 427-4390) of the NRC High Level Waste Management Division Technical Review Branch or King Stablein (FTS 427-4796) of my staff.

Sincerely,

8906210262 870828
 PDR WASTE
 WM-10 PDR

John J. Linehan, Section Leader
 Projects Section, Operations Branch
 Division of High-Level Waste Management
 Office of Nuclear Material Safety
 and Safeguards

Enclosure:
 As stated

cc: J. Knight, DOE/HQ
 R. Stein, DOE/HQ
 D. Alexander, DOE/HQ
 E. Regnier, DOE/HQ

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 WM Project: WM-10
 PDR w/encl
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WM Record File: 102
 LPDR w/encl

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 FROM: Linehan
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