



Department of Energy  
Washington, DC 20585

SEP 07 1988

Mr. John J. Linehan, Acting Chief  
Operations Branch  
Division of High-Level Waste Management  
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety  
and Safeguards  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20545

Dear Mr. Linehan:

As you know, the Department of Energy (DOE) has been aggressively pursuing its commitment to have a Quality Assurance program that is acceptable to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) before initiating new site characterization activities. In our meeting on July 7, 1988, DOE provided the NRC with a QA program development description and agreed upon a schedule of QA audits. The initial audits identified in the schedule were intended to assess the state of QA program development and implementation. While neither NRC nor DOE expected to have a fully completed formal program in place when conducting the initial audits, it represented a useful mechanism to assess QA program readiness and develop guidance for focusing additional effort and resources needed to achieve NRC acceptance of the QA program in the final audits.

Since submission of the proposed audit schedule to the NRC, DOE has been intensively reviewing the status of its QA program. These review activities have shown that although significant progress has been achieved, much work remains to be completed. We believe the currently scheduled initial audits are premature and it would be more productive to reschedule the audits for a later time and perform a broader scope audit than was originally envisioned at both the DOE and the Yucca Mountain Project Office (YMPO). This would have the dual advantage of allowing increased resources applied to QA program development at this crucial stage while providing a more comprehensive perspective and increased understanding of program status (compliance and effectiveness) prior to the final acceptance audits.

We are currently in the process of examining the results of our planning effort and expect to submit a revised schedule for DOE and YMPO audits by the end of September.

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DOE appreciates your continued cooperation in this area. If you have questions concerning this matter, please contact me on (202) 586-6046.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ralph Stein".

Ralph Stein, Acting Associate Director  
Office of Systems Integration and  
Regulation  
Office of Civilian Radioactive  
Waste Management

cc:

R. Loux, State of Nevada