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TO: Mr. Robert E. Browning, Director
FROM: Paul T. Prestholt, Sr. OR - NNWSI
DATE: August 21, 1986
SUBJECT: Newspaper Articles

Please find attached recent articles that appeared in our local newspaper. Again, I believe you will find them to be of interest.

FTP:nan

Attachments

WM Record File 102 WM Project _____
Docket No. _____
PDR _____
LPDR _____

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Reports conflict on earthquake study

By Steve Tetreault
Review-Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chic Hecht, R-Nev., announced Tuesday the Energy Department has agreed to form a panel of scientists to study potential earthquake danger at the proposed nuclear dumpsite in South-Nevada, but the department says it has agreed to no such thing.

Hecht, in a statement put out by

his office, said the DOE has agreed to the study, which would examine if underground nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site would affect the geologic safety of the high-level nuclear waste dump being considered at Yucca Mountain, near the test site.

However, Ginger King, information services director for the office of radioactive waste management, said Tuesday she consulted with Energy

Secretary John Herrington's office, and that Herrington has not committed to the study.

Herrington "has not made a final commitment, that's correct," King said. She added Herrington may not decide until Congress returns from its summer recess in September.

"Yes, the senator did recommend this strongly, and the secretary has agreed to consider it," King said.

But, she added, Herrington "has not made a final commitment."

Hecht had pressed for the study in two meetings he held over the past two weeks with Herrington. The Nevada senator threatened to hold up Senate confirmation of three department officials in protest of the DOE's site selection process.

Reached in Las Vegas, Hecht said he delayed making the announce-

ment of the meeting until after the Senate had adjourned from its struggle with the recent tax-overhaul plan.

Nevada officials opposed to locating the dump in the state are hoping the study may back their contentions that Yucca Mountain is too geologically unstable to guarantee thousands of years of uninterrupted rest for the highly radioactive wastes that would be buried there.

After the first meeting, Hecht said he would drop his objections to the DOE nominees because he said Herrington had agreed to consider the earthquake study.

Hecht spokesman Mike Miller said Tuesday that, at the second meeting, a breakfast, Herrington told Hecht the study was definitely on.

Not so, said King. The Energy sec-
Please see HECHT/4B

Hecht

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retary "agreed to consider it, but as of the moment he has not made a final determination."

Herrington and Hecht met the second time without aides present, a factor that could have lead to this subsequent confusion.

Hecht said that if the DOE is unable to fund the study panel, he will suggest the Senate's committee on energy sponsor the work. He said he would also like to have a study investigate the possibility that nuclear testing done at the Nevada Test Site may affect the the geological stability of the Yucca Mountain site.

In his statement announcing the study, Hecht said the panel would consist of "independent scientists, experts in earthquake science and the physics of nuclear weapons testing" selected by the National Academy of Sciences.

The Nevada senator said the panel would be named early next year, and

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(The panel would consist of) independent scientists, experts in earthquake science and the physics of nuclear weapons testing.

— Sen. Chic Hecht, R-Nev.

could take as long as two years to complete its work.

The scientists would review what studies the Energy Department has conducted on the earthquake issue, recommend what work needs to be done, and oversee the department's action on the recommendation, he said.

Nevada officials contend that the Southern Nevada site at Yucca Mountain is susceptible to earthquakes, making the site unacceptable to house the nation's first high-level nuclear waste dump.

Yucca Mountain is located on a southwest corner of the test site, where underground nuclear weapons

tests are conducted.

The Nevada location, as well as ones in Hanford, Wash., and Deaf Smith County, Texas, have been named the three finalists for the repository. The Energy Department currently is preparing to conduct in-depth "site characterizations" of each location before making a final recommendation to President Reagan on a dump site by the mid-1990s.

Hecht said that because the Senate recently blocked funds for the DOE's site-selection work, there is more time to look into the suitability of the proposed sites.

He said the proposed panel will not start its work until 1987.

Thursday, August 21, 1986

DOE mum about quake studies for high-level storage sites

United Press International
Department of Energy officials in the Nevada Operations Office of the federal agency refused to comment Wednesday on a controversy between Sen. Chic Hecht, R-Nev., and Energy Secretary John Herrington over a proposed study of earthquake dangers at the Nevada Test Site.

Hecht announced Tuesday that Herrington agreed to a study of the effects of seismic activities from underground nuclear tests on a proposed high-level radioactive waste repository at Yucca Mountain, located on the southwest corner of the test site.

A DOE spokeswoman in Washington, however, said Herrington only agreed to consider the matter of a study of earthquake dangers on the proposed repository.

DOE Nevada Operations Office spokesman James Boyer said Wednesday: "We have no comment on it at this level."

Washington DOE

spokeswoman Ginger King said Herrington "has not made a final commitment" on the study and may not make a final decision on the Hecht proposal until Congress returns to session next month.

Mike Miller, a spokesman for Hecht, said the senator held two meetings with the DOE secretary and during the second session,

Herrington promised to conduct the earthquake study.

King, however, disagreed and said Herrington "agreed to consider it, but as of the moment he has not made a final determination."

Hecht, who held up the confirmation of several DOE nominees to press his case to

Herrington about the study, said a committee made up of independent scientists will be appointed early next year.

The Republican lawmaker said that because the Senate has reduced funds for selecting a high-level radioactive repository, "there will be ample time to do an excellent job of defining the

panel's mission and recruit blue-ribbon quality members."

Hecht estimated the earthquake-nuclear testing study will take up to two years to complete.

Yucca Mountain and sites in Washington state and Texas were selected earlier this year as the three finalists for the nation's first high-level repository.

Design for casks to store high-level waste sought by DOE

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (UPI) — The Energy Department is asking contractors to design a new generation of nuclear-waste casks that will be used to haul spent fuel and waste to the nation's first high-level nuclear waste dump.

The Energy Department's Idaho National Engineering Laboratory is in charge of selecting new cask designs and is seeking proposals from contractors for the development of up to 10 designs, agency spokeswoman Penny Phelps said Wednesday.

The contracts are to be awarded next spring and the agency hopes the new casks will be available before the nation's nuclear waste dump site is selected. Sites in

Washington, Nevada and Texas are being studied as potential dump sites.

Energy Department engineer Carla Dwight said Transnuclear Inc. of Germany has developed two types of casks, but the agency needs at least four types.

"We need to develop a whole fleet of casks," she said.

Dwight said the agency is seeking designs for a legal-weight truck cask, an overweight truck cask, a cask for trains and barges that could hold up to 50 tons and a "dual-purpose" cask that could be used for both transportation and storage.

Contract proposals must be submitted to

the Energy Department by Oct. 31 and should include plans for cask design, engineering, certification, testing and the construction of prototypes.

The Energy Department plans to select and finance several proposals to assure the best designs and prototypes are fully developed, certified and tested before it starts obtaining a fleet of casks that could be used as soon as the early 1990s.

The casks selected for procurement must meet safety standards specified by the Transportation Department and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.