



Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office Bulletin

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Dear Reader:

This is a collection of clippings from various publications about recent developments in the high-level nuclear waste repository program. The controversial issue is covered by a wide range of the media, and we thought there might be interest in seeing how some newspapers and trade journals handled a few of the stories.

The Bulletin will be published every couple of weeks. It will include not only relevant news clippings, but also important correspondence, summaries, reports and some occasional original material. I believe that the Bulletin, which is intentionally informal, will be a valuable and more current adjunct to our existing newsletter and fact sheets. Please feel free to bring to our attention any materials, newsclippings or other information that you feel would be of interest and value to others.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Loux
Executive Director

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Nuclear dump would scare off LV tourists — state expert

*Nevada appeal
7-14-88*

By ED VOGEL
Appeal Capital Bureau

Las Vegas could lose \$200 million to \$300 million a year in tourism revenue if the Energy Department builds a nuclear repository in Yucca Mountain, a top state official said Wednesday.

Preliminary studies show as many as 40 percent of tourists say they will not visit Las Vegas if the repository is placed in the mountain range, 110 miles northwest of the city, said Bob Loux, director of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office.

Loux made the statement during a mock Senate Energy Committee hearing put on by students at Clear Creek, a state-owned youth camp about five miles west of Carson City.

His statements were challenged by Carl Gertz, the Energy Department official who heads up the Yucca Mountain investigations.

"I haven't seen his data," said Gertz about Loux's claim of a tourism loss.

"Very preliminary studies by us show that isn't the effect."

Gertz added it is difficult to gauge whether people will follow through on what they say they will do.

"The Las Vegas hotel fires did not have a significant effect on tourism," he said.

About 85 people lost their lives in the MGM Grand Hotel fire in November 1980. Three months later, another 13 died in a fire at the Las Vegas Hilton.

While Nevada tourism was somewhat stagnant in 1982-83, possibly because of a national recession, it has climbed to record levels in recent years.

Loux said the study on the nuclear repository's effect on tourism is "very tentative," but he reiterated that because of fears about the repository the Southern Nevada economy will lose "a couple hundred million a year."

For that last reason alone, Nevada will not accept a legal provision that would give the state \$20 million a year if it accepts Yucca Mountain as the repository site, Loux said.

"To take the money, we would have to drop all opposition and give up claims for future impact money," he said.

Gertz repeatedly assured the students, including some from foreign countries, that the repository will not be built in Yucca Mountain unless studies find the site is safe.

Students posed as senators, including one from Nevada, and asked Gertz and Loux various questions about the repository.

In fact, Gertz said Las Vegas would not be harmed even if an earthquake popped open the repository and exposed radioactive materials.

"Nothing would happen to Las Vegas," he said. "Those closer to

the repository, if not shielded, would get radiation."

Gertz said seven years of geological studies lie ahead before the Energy Department decides whether to seek a permit to construct the repository.

The repository, 1,000 feet under the mountain, would hold as much as 70,000 tons of highly radioactive spent fuel rods shipped from nuclear power plants.

"We aren't looking for the very best site, but a site that is safe and meets the regulations," Gertz said.

During his presentation, Loux reiterated his stance that the repository was shoved on Nevada by congressmen from politically powerful

states.

He contended politicians in heavily populated states were able to have prospective repository sites in their states withdrawn from consideration.

"The evaluation is based on politics, rather than good science," he said.

"Science has played little, if any role, in selecting Yucca Mountain."

One of the student "senators," however, questioned Loux if he were not being short-sighted by his opposition since there is a national need for a central location to dispose of nuclear wastes.

Loux countered by saying that earthquake activity has occurred in

Yucca Mountain in the last 35,000 years, while sites in Louisiana and Mississippi have been untouched for hundreds of millions of years.

He also pointed out that 90 percent of the wastes are created in power plants in the East.

"We ought not to look at sites in the West," Loux said.

Rather than a repository, Loux suggested that concrete storage bunkers might be constructed in the East to hold the radioactive wastes.

He also compared the movement to build nuclear plants without a disposal plan with "shooting John Glenn into space and then trying to come up with a way of getting him down."

Bryan warns nuke panel front for industry

*Las Vegas Sun
6-22-88*

By Mary Manning
SUN Staff Writer

Gov. Richard Bryan warned Monday that the Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee is a front for the nuclear industry to sell a high-level nuclear dump at Yucca Mountain to Nevadans.

Congress dealt Nevada a severe blow first by singling the state as the only study site for the nation's first commercial nuclear repository, and then cutting independent state money, Bryan said.

The governor said he supported using state general funds to conduct independent studies at Yucca Mountain, about 85 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

The governor released a letter by Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee co-chairman Bob Dickinson outlining plans for newspaper ads in major newspapers throughout Nevada.

"The name (of the committee) is a euphemism," Bryan said. "It is propaganda for the nuclear power industry and they have every right to their position, but the public should be aware of its stand."

"We believe that with larger membership, our input in public discussions of the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain will have a greater impact," Dickinson's letter said.

Bryan said he wanted to alert Nevada citizens who support the Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee. "It's the nuclear industry speaking," he said.

"They have every right to express their view," Bryan said. "They are not an objective, unbiased group."

Dickinson earlier said the committee wanted to inform the public in an impartial way.

But Bryan and state Nuclear Projects Office Director Robert Loux said Dickinson's committee is supported by the U.S. Committee on Energy Awareness, backed by the nuclear industry.

"This is a pro-nuclear power industry group," Bryan said. "They want to send us 17,000 tons of nuclear fuel rods stored at reactors across the country."

Bryan said the nuclear industry was a prime mover in persuading Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., to narrow DOE's choices for a nuclear repository down to Nevada. Washington and Texas were also considered for the dump.

Loux said if the state had not uncovered DOE scientist Jerry Szymanski's report that casts doubt on Yucca Mountain's suitability as a nuclear repository, the public would not know about it.

Szymanski and state investigators said that Yucca Mountain may be in "an advanced case of geologic decay," Loux said. Some state experts suspect Yucca's tuff is under stress from the U.S. nuclear weapons program active at the Nevada Test Site next door to the site since 1951, Loux said.

Loux said it will take two to three months to prepare a budget for the 1989 Legislature for funding to study the dump site.

Nevada asked Congress for \$23 million, but received \$11 million for state studies and another \$5 million for local governments.

The governor said there was division over the repository — possible jobs and an economic boost to rural counties — in the 1987 Legislature, although the public overwhelmingly opposes it. The state Senate failed to pass a resolution against the repository.

DOE's nuke clean-up figures wrong

BY DAVID KOENIG
Appeal Washington Bureau

Nevada Appeal 7-4-88

WASHINGTON — Congressional investigators said Wednesday that the Department of Energy has underestimated the cost of cleaning up hazardous and radioactive waste at the nation's nuclear weapons facilities.

They said the cleanup and safe disposal of waste, and needed improvements in old weapons facilities would cost \$100 billion to \$130 billion, nearly double the Energy Department's estimate this month for the same work.

The safety problem is so serious it could threaten the production of nuclear weapons, said investigators for the General Accounting Office.

The comments were made in a report by the GAO, an arm of Congress, and in testimony by GAO officials to the Senate Government Operations Committee.

"We just have to do this cleanup," said Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, the committee chairman who called for the GAO study.

"It's going to be monstrous, but it just has to be done."

Glenn said toxic and radioactive waste problems at defense facilities dwarf the dioxin contamination discovered at Love Canal, N.Y., yet "we're not doing a blooming thing about it."

"For some reason, when you put 'nuclear' on something, eyes glaze over. Nobody wants to read about it, write articles about it, do television documentaries about it," Glenn said.

The Energy Department this month ranked the Nevada Test Site seventh in the cost of cleaning up and monitoring hazardous and radioactive waste.

A survey by the Energy Department found that nuclear blasts have released large amounts of tritium at the Test Site.

At one location 1,400 feet from a blast area, the water contained 5,000 times the tritium level allowed in drinking water.

But department officials believe migration of the tritium is slow because of the scarcity of water to carry the radioactive compound.

They say there is very little threat of contamination outside the boundaries of the Test Site.

J. Dexter Peach, assistant comptroller general of the GAO, said in a brief interview that he has no evidence to contradict the Energy Department's opinion that contamination does not pose a threat outside the Test Site.

Peach said he doubts the Test Site can ever be completely cleaned.

"I don't know, and I don't think they know," Peach said, referring to Energy Department officials.

"The only way to find out is to monitor it after 100 years (of cleanup). And in the meantime, it would have to be restricted."

Joseph F. Salgado, acting deputy Energy secretary, agreed that many areas cannot be returned "to their pristine state."

Salgado acknowledged that critics say the department is moving too slowly to fix the legacy of 40 years of atomic weapons production.

But, he said, it's a long-term problem that will require Congress and the administration to approve the money for a cleanup.

Two weeks ago, the Energy Department estimated that cleaning up toxic and radioactive waste pollutants would cost \$66 billion to \$110 billion.

In a report released Wednesday, however, the GAO concluded that the cost would be \$100 billion to \$130 billion.

Further, the report said the Energy Department inflated its estimate by including the price of maintaining compliance with federal environmental laws.

Without that figure, the GAO estimate is double the department's figure.

Much of that money has to be spent replacing aging weapons plants to both reduce contamination and improve safety, Peach testified.

"Overall, the current condition of some facilities in the complex has resulted in safety concerns that could lead to prolonged shutdowns, thus threatening the nation's ability to produce nuclear weapons," Peach said.

Glenn criticized Energy Department officials who testified at Wednesday's hearing for not asking for more money to begin a cleanup campaign.

The department will spend about \$1 billion this year and \$1.4 billion next year on environmental, safety and health programs, officials said.

GAO investigators said the government should be spending \$5 billion to \$8 billion a year on the programs.

Nearly half of the estimated cleanup costs involve the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington state.

The GAO investigators also said there needs to be more independent oversight of work at the weapons facilities.

Las Vegas Review-Journal 7-1-88

Utah anticipates more nuke shipments

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — A state task force said Thursday that the siting of a nuclear waste repository in Nevada could increase the amount of radioactive material being transported through Utah from less than 10 metric tons a year now to 3,000.

At a news conference, the eight-member Utah High-Level Nuclear Waste Transportation Task Force released a report to Gov. Norm Bangerter containing recommendations concerning the movement of waste and spent reactor fuel through the state to a newly designated dump site at Yucca Mountain in Southern Nevada.

Currently, only a few shipments

of the hazardous materials are made each year. Between 1979 and 1987 about 880 metric tons of spent fuel were shipped in the United States, with only one-to-eight metric tons passing through Utah, said Utah Public Safety Commissioner John T. Nielsen, who also served as task force chairman.

The Department of Energy estimates shipments to the Nevada repository will peak at 3,000 metric tons a year, most of which will be transported through Utah via interstate highways, railroads or a combination of both.

"We believe that if in fact the waste is sent to the site in Nevada, that it will have a significant trans-

portation impact on the state of Utah," Nielsen said.

The task force report contained three major recommendations, including establishment and funding of a state nuclear waste representative to insure Utah's involvement in nuclear waste policy planning.

The task force also recommended that the governor ask legislators to allow Utah to join the Pacific States Agreement on Radioactive Transportation Management, a group of Western states cooperating on nuclear waste management.

Finally, the task force recommended that it continue to meet periodically to plan the state's response to various issues involved in the transport of radioactive wastes.

Las Vegas Sun 7-1-88

State nuke task force advisory board elects officers

A statewide advisory board for the Nuclear Waste Task Force has completed organizing and electing officers, said executive director Jody Treichel.

The task force is a non-profit coalition of citizens and public interest organizations in Nevada.

The Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force, funded by a contract with the state, will provide educational information and programs regarding high-level nuclear waste and the possible construction of a dump site at Yucca Mountain. The task force was formed six months ago.

"Because the task force is open to membership for individuals as well as organizations who want representation, we will be enlarging and expanding the board from time to time," Treichel said.

Assemblywoman Myrna Williams was elected chairman, Chris Brown vice chairman and Kathy Thorpe secretary.

Williams holds an individual membership in the task force, while Brown represents the American Peace Test and Thorpe is public relations liaison for the Western Shoshone Council.

Other board members and their affiliations include Ted Travers, National Association of Retired Federal Employees; Solveiga and Jim Unger, American Civil Liberties Union; Martha Wood, American Association of University Women.

Also, Bob Dickinson, Nevada Nuclear Waste Study Committee; Karen Croxall, Nevadans for a Nuclear Test Ban; Norma Cox, League of Women Voters; Dart Anthony,

Humane Society of Southern Nevada; Bill Vincent, Citizen Alert; Pat Van Bellen, Nevada School Nurses Association; Mark Bird, Sierra Club; and Lorna Castro, Nevada Mobile Home Owners Association.

"Our rapidly growing membership is certainly proof that the people of Nevada are concerned about the Department of Energy project at Yucca Mountain and continue to seek information about its risks to Nevada," Treichel said.

The task force has scheduled a series of seminars throughout the state, she said. The group also provides speakers expert in the fields of nuclear waste management, transportation and related issues.

In addition, a 15-minute video produced by the Nuclear Waste Project Office of the state is also available for showing at meetings.

The

7/5/88

Radioactive Exchange'

AMENDED HLW MISSION PLAN RAISES POSSIBILITY OF AN "EARLIER" MRS

The DOE Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management's Draft Mission Plan Amendment forwarded to Congress on June 30 postulates that spent fuel could be accepted at a Monitored Retrievable Storage Facility (MRS) prior to 2003 (the current year in which the HLW repository is scheduled to begin Phase I operations) if it is developed in the stages, and changes are made in the 1987 proposal.

Though not explicitly stated in the Draft, the possibility of this occurring would also require that new legislation be enacted that would void the current MRS-Repository coupling language in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act (NWPAA) restricting the beginning of construction of a MRS "until the [NRC] Commission has issued a license for the construction of a repository." As specified in the Draft Mission Plan amendment and previous DOE timetables, the receipt of the NRC repository construction authorization is not scheduled until 1998. To accept the fuel earlier than 2003, therefore, would require that the MRS be constructed in less than five years, and ready for operation.

According to the program time schedule in the Draft, DOE-OCRWM intends to issue the final Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Plan (SCP) in late 1988 and begin the construction of the Exploratory Shaft Facility in June '89.

Only One Repository Needed?

On the question of whether a second repository will need to be developed, the Draft Amended Plan document reports that, based on latest estimates on spent fuel generation from the DOE's Energy Information Administration, "given a no-new-order, end-of-reactor life" forecast, the "total quantity of spent fuel discharged from U.S. reactors now operating or in active construction will be about 87,000 MHTM." To this amount, by the year 2020, would be added approximately 9400 MHTM of defense and commercial waste, bringing the total amount of waste to be disposed of in the repository by 2020 to 96,400 MHTM.

According to the "Draft," "the data indicates that the Yucca Mountain site has the potential capacity to accept at least (emphasis added) 70,000 MHTM of waste but only after site characterization will it be possible to determine the total quantity of waste that could be accommodated."

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HOUSE RECEDES TO SENATE ON HLW FY89 APPROPRIATIONS; NV LOSES MORE THAN \$s

If there are any doubts about who, almost singlehandedly, is steering the course of the HLW repository program, the House and Senate Conference approval of FY89 Appropriations for the HLW program puts them to rest -- its Senator Bennett Johnston. The Louisiana Senator demonstrated again to his colleagues on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which has collateral jurisdiction over the HLW program, and to his counterparts on the House authorization Committees, Interior and Commerce, that through his chairmanship of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee and Senate Energy Committee, he can direct the HLW program, almost at will, particularly if there is no strong interest or consensus on specific issues among the House authorization Chairs and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The conference agreement which was approved by the full House on June 30 by a vote of 384-17 includes the language relating to the HLW program and Nevada's use of DOE funds as passed by the Senate, which was initially recommended by Senator Johnston's Energy and Water Subcommittee.

As reported in the previous EXCHANGE, the language limits the total amount of funds that DOE can provide Nevada in FY89 (\$11 million to the state, \$5 million to local gov'ts); caps the amount of funds that can be used for certain activities (\$1.5 million for socioeconomic studies, \$1.5 million for transportation); and prohibits the use of the funds to support Nevada lobbying activities.

Nevada - A Voice in the Desert

Johnston's success in using appropriations bills to accomplish his objectives also highlights another axiom of the waste program: Nevada has few allies in the Congress, and virtually none in the Congress to direct the HLW program. When Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) tried in the Appropriations Committee to boost Johnston's cap on state funding from \$11 million to \$18 million, he was soundly defeated. On the floor of the Senate, he tried again. This time, he wasn't even allowed to offer his amendment. Johnston obtained a ruling from the presiding officer forbidding Reid from offering his amendment, on the grounds that it would be "legislating on an appropriations bill." Reid did not argue with the ruling even though Johnston had done exactly that to amend the Nuclear Waste Policy Act this past year.

In the House, Nevada has two junior members, neither of whom serves the Appropriations Committee. So there was little that they could do to prevent that Committee's senior members from agreeing to Johnston's changes as part of the final bill.**