

103

PDR-1
LPDR- WM-10
WM-116
WM-166

APR 14 1987

Mr. Steve Frishman, Director
Nuclear Waste Programs Office
State of Texas
Office of the Governor
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mr. Frishman:

This letter is in response to your March 12, 1987 letter requesting clarification on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's review of the Department of Energy (DOE) final Environmental Assessments (EAs) for the Deaf Smith County site in Texas. In your letter you indicate that upon review of the NRC staff final EA comments you "were dismayed to notice that the NRC apparently does not consider retrievability to still be a major issue of concern for the Deaf Smith site".

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to your concern. As you are aware, the NRC staff did have a major comment on retrievability resulting from our review of the draft EAs for the salt sites. As part of our final EA review we considered how our retrievability comment was addressed in the final EAs. We concluded that our original major concern had been addressed adequately in the final EAs by changes which recognized many of the difficulties and uncertainties associated with retrievability.

While the draft EA retrievability concern was addressed by material presented in the final EAs, we continue to view retrievability as a potential licensing issue at the Deaf Smith County site. As such, it will continue to be one of the important topics which we will focus on during our SCP review as well as in future technical meetings with DOE and the State.

If you have any questions regarding this response please do not hesitate to call me (301-427-4177) or Robert Johnson of my staff (301-427-4674).

Sincerely,

Original Signed By *J. Linehan*

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

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