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MAR 18 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Patricia A. Comella, Deputy Director
 Division of Health, Siting and
 Waste Management

FROM: Michael J. Bell, Chief
 High-Level Waste Licensing
 Management Branch
 Division of Waste Management

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF DOE'S DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
 BASALT WASTE ISOLATION PROJECT (BWIP)

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (NWP) requires DOE to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for sites nominated for consideration as a waste repository. The EA is to evaluate specific issues identified in the Act.

On March 4, 1983, DOE published in the Federal Register a notice of public hearing to announce the proposal to nominate BWIP for characterization studies. Among other things, this notice solicited public comment on issues to be included in the EA supporting the nomination. This Federal Register notice also announced the availability of a preliminary draft of the EA to facilitate commenting on these issues. (It is our understanding, based on conversations with DOE staff, that the draft EA which is attached to this memorandum is only a preliminary draft and that The Draft EA will be issued for comment in May, 1983.)

Under the NWP, alternative sites to be considered in DOE's EIS at the time of construction authorization will be selected from sites nominated by this process. NRC is required by the NWP to adopt DOE's EIS to the extent practical. Therefore, it is important to review DOE's EA carefully to identify any major objections we may have at the earliest possible date. Any written comments are due to DOE by March 31, 1983. Therefore, I am requesting that you provide any comments on the issues to be addressed in the EA in writing to Chris Pflum of my staff no later than March 25, 1983.

WM Record File
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WM Project WM-10
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In your review of the preliminary draft EA you should consider that the nominated site may later be an alternative in the EIS which NRC would adopt. If you have any questions concerning the scope of your review, contact Mr. Pflum on x74653.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Michael J. Bell, Chief
High-Level Waste Licensing
Management Branch
Division of Waste Management

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