DOE NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT, LAS VEGAS, NV 89134

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For Immediate Release

Yucca Mountain Project Office Identifies Caliente as Preferred Corridor For Construction of Rail Line to Serve Repository

Las Vegas, December 23, 2003 -- The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management announced today that the program has identified the Caliente rail corridor as its preference for construction of a rail line to serve the Yucca Mountain Repository in Nevada. At this time, the Department also has identified Carlin as the secondary preferred corridor.

The Caliente rail corridor was one of five corridors studied by the Department of Energy in its Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Yucca Mountain Project. Three of the five potential corridors, Caliente, Caliente-Chalk Mountain, and Carlin, would approach Yucca Mountain from the north of the Nellis Air Force Range. Two southern corridors, Jean and Valley-Modified, would run through the Las Vegas Valley. The attributes of the Caliente and Carlin corridors, including their more remote location and the reduced likelihood of land use conflicts, appear to best assure the safe, secure, and timely transport of materials to Yucca Mountain.

The identification of five potential corridors in the Final EIS was preceded by publication of a Draft EIS and a comment process that lasted more than six months and included 21 public hearings. The Department received approximately 12,900 comments on a wide variety of issues, including the five potential rail corridors in Nevada. The Department carefully considered these comments in developing the rail corridor preference.

Having now identified its preferred corridor, the Department intends to proceed with selection of a mode of transportation and, if it selects "mostly rail" as the transportation mode in Nevada, with actual selection of a corridor no sooner than 30 days from publication of today's announcement in the Federal Register. These selections will also be published in the Federal Register in a Record of Decision. If the Department proceeds with mostly rail in Nevada and makes a corridor selection, the Department will publish a Notice of Intent to develop an Environmental Impact Statement on the specific railway alignment within the corridor. In connection with any such EIS, the Department will solicit public comment through an EIS scoping process. No actual construction of a rail line within the selected corridor can take place until completion of this process, which is expected to take several years. No waste will be transported to the repository until 2010, when the Department anticipates that it will have received a license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to open the repository.

(More)

The shipment of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high level radioactive waste (HLW) is safe. Over the past 30 years, the Department and industry have safely completed approximately 3,000 shipments of SNF and HLW. These shipments have been completed without the harmful release of radiation. There is also extensive worldwide experience with SNF transportation: more than 70,000 metric tons of SNF have been safely shipped in the past 25 years. For more information on the shipment of spent nuclear fuel, review our Spent Nuclear Fuel transportation brochure at http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/ymp/sr/snf_trans.pdf

For a more detailed view of the corridors, see the attached map.

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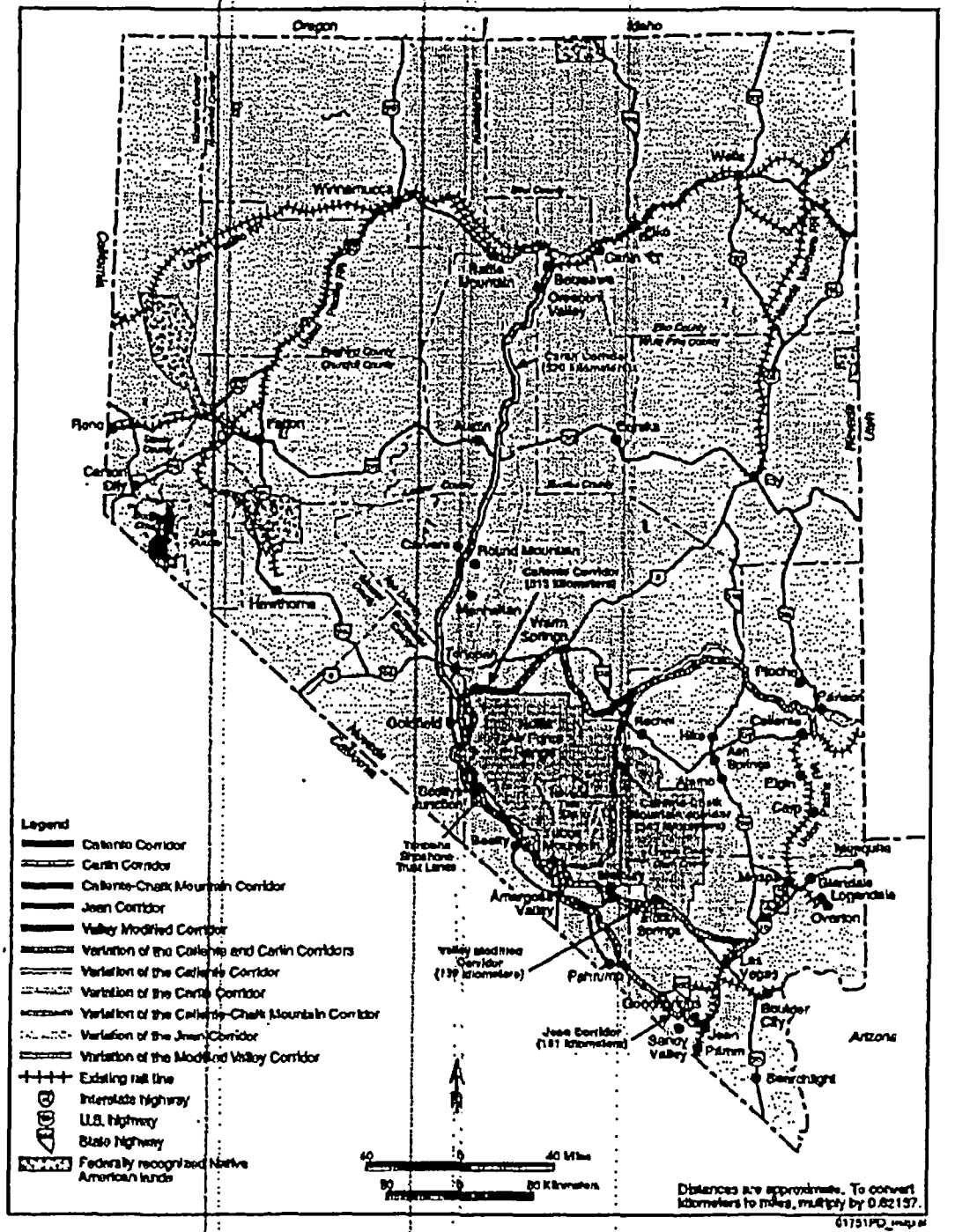
U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management

YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT

Potential Nevada Rail Corridors



Reprinted from the Final Environmental Impact Statement