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The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

December 28, 1988

Honorable Lando W. Zech, Jr.
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA), as amended, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is issuing the Site Characterization Plan (SCP) for the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada. A copy of the SCP is being sent to you under separate cover for your review and comment. The SCP has been developed pursuant to the statutory requirement for a general plan, as specified in section 113(b) of the NWPA, and to applicable sections of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) regulations for disposal of high-level radioactive waste in geologic repositories, 10 CFR Part 60.

The issuance of the SCP follows nearly a year of interactions with your staff and others, including the State of Nevada, on the Consultation Draft SCP issued on January 8, 1988. The SCP contains extensive modifications made to address the objections, comments, and questions received during the comment period for the Consultation Draft SCP. The DOE believes that the implementation of this plan will provide the necessary information to assess the suitability of the site and, if the site is found suitable, to prepare a high-quality license application. Prior to implementing new site characterization activities, the Department is committed to having a fully qualified quality assurance program in place for those activities.

As required by the NWPA, the SCP is being sent to the Governor and the Legislature of the State of Nevada. Copies are also being sent to cognizant Members of the United States Congress and to the County Commissioners of Nye, Clark, and Lincoln Counties in Nevada. To ensure that the SCP will be available to the public, individual copies are being made available upon request, and in addition, copies will be placed in selected libraries throughout Nevada; in the DOE Yucca Mountain Information Office in Beatty, Nevada; in the DOE's reading room in Las Vegas; and in the public reading rooms in the DOE's Headquarters and its Operations Offices nationwide.

In addition, the DOE has prepared the SCP Overview and the SCP Public Handbook to assist the public in understanding and commenting on the SCP. Copies of these documents are enclosed.

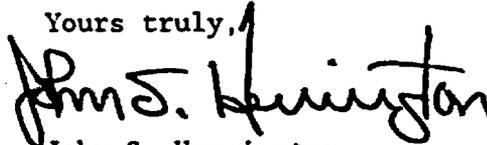
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There will be a 90-day comment period on the SCP, beginning January 15 and ending April 15, 1989. This comment period will include hearings in several locations in Nevada to receive oral comments. A Federal Register notice will be issued shortly detailing the procedures for participation in the public hearings. Comments received from the State of Nevada, the public, and others through this period and from the NRC in its site characterization analysis will be considered by the DOE. Changes made in the site characterization program in response to these and subsequent comments will be addressed in semiannual progress reports.

I want to extend my appreciation to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and its technical staff for their review of the Consultation Draft SCP.

Yours truly,



John S. Herrington

2 Enclosures

Separate Cover:

Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Plan