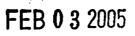


Department of Energy Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Office of Repository Development 1551 Hillshire Drive Las Vegas, NV 89134-6321

QA: N/A Project No. WM-00011



OVERNIGHT MAIL

ATTN: Document Control Desk
Director, Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S OFFICE OF CIVILIAN RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT'S (OCRWM) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (S&T) PROGRAM

References: (1) Ltr, Reamer to Ziegler, dtd 11/5/04 (DOE Science and Technology Program)

This letter is in response to your letter of November 5, 2004, requesting information on the OCRWM S&T Program. An S&T Program section will soon be designated on the current OCRWM website. In addition, if you believe it would be useful, we can give your staff periodic briefings on the S&T Program activities. It is our intention to conduct this program openly, and we will keep you informed on the technical content and progress of our S&T work.

The S&T Program's mission statement is: "Provide advanced science and technology to continually enhance our understanding of the repository system and to reduce the cost and schedule for the OCRWM mission." We believe that it is prudent to consider possible future improvements in design and operation for a project that is planned to span several decades, like the development of a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. These would be future improvements beyond the technical basis necessary and sufficient for developing and licensing the facility.

Planning for the S&T Program was inaugurated in fiscal year (FY) 2002 and the first technical activities were begun in FY 2003. Currently, there are several ongoing projects, with other potential activities under consideration subject to funding availability.

Although the S&T Program and the Yucca Mountain Project (Project) maintain close communication and collaboration, it is important to note that no S&T activity is required for the Project to proceed. S&T activities are aimed at enhancing the OCRWM mission beyond what is currently required. Technical activities necessary to the Project are placed in the Project

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baseline, not the S&T Program. While much of the exploratory S&T activity will be conducted with quality controls suitable to such investigative work, we intend that any experimental or theoretical work that might become a basis for later licensing actions will be conducted in full compliance with the approved quality assurance program.

Of course, any information arising from S&T activities, as from any other source, that finds potential negative impacts to public or worker health and safety, will be promptly and fully disclosed to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the public, and appropriate action taken.

Please contact me or Stephen H. Hanauer, Senior Policy and Technical Advisor, if you would like further information on the S&T Program. Dr. Hanauer will coordinate your communications with Dr. John L. Wengle, Director of the Office of Science and Technology and International. Dr. Hanauer can be reached at (702) 794-1358 or steve_hanauer@ymp.gov.

OLA&S:AVG-0519

foseph D. Ziegler, Director Office of License Application and Strategy Director, Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety

FEB 0 3 2005

cc:

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