

**Regional  
Community Support for the  
HT3R Facility  
(High Temperature Teaching and Test Reactor)  
in West Texas**

***Partners:***

The University of Texas System  
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin  
General Atomics of San Diego, Ca  
Andrews, Texas  
Midland, Texas  
Odessa, Texas

Dedicated to the economic, social, and political growth of this dynamic Texas county for over 70 years!

# ANDREWS COUNTY NEWS

SEVENTY-SECOND YEAR

NUMBER 54

ANDREWS, TEXAS

16 PAGES

75¢

## Lines and type

by Don Ingram

The findings offered Monday by a pollster hired to determine the public's perception about Waste Control Specialists offered some insightful conclusions about Andrews residents.

Basically, those most local citizens are a savvy bunch when it comes to the topic of WCS, low-level radioactive waste and the LES project and proposed nuclear test reactor.

Mike Baselice with Biselice & Associates did the research by polling residents in Andrews and in surrounding counties, and the data he collected showed that, by and large, or over 60 percent of Andrews residents have a favorable opinion of WCS and its operation.

By contacting a sizeable audience living in Andrews, Gaines County and Lea County, N.M., the pollsters asked several questions about WCS, and the bottom line was that residents feel comfortable with the company's operation, including the handling of low-level radioactive waste.

In fact, when the questions zeroed in on radioactive waste, the response from residents was even more favorable. The polling expert, who is headquartered in Austin and has done polling since the late 1980s, appeared even surprised at the response of people quizzed about such a oftentimes-controversial subject.

While the percentage of favorable opinions from residents living outside the county wasn't as high as those living inside the county, it still was positive.

While the response to the poll was positive for WCS and com-

munity activists who have supported the business since its inception, it really showed how we've all done our homework over the last decade regarding radioactive waste. Residents, especially those in Andrews County, know far more than many do in other areas of the country, because they were educated with the facts about the issue at the very beginning.

Local citizens were given the facts about radioactive waste and how it can be safely stored in far western Andrews County and in doing so bring jobs and the beginning of economic development to our county. In other words as James Roberts used to say, turn our liabilities into assets.

Far western Andrews County has deep beds of red clay, which offer a great additional buffer for holding non-liquid waste. It also is remote and located away from a major population center and, as we all know, it only averages between 10-15 inches of rain annually. And more importantly, an active part of the Ogallala underground aquifer doesn't run that far west.

All of the components resulted in an ideal spot for disposing of hazardous and low-level radioactive waste. It's provided good jobs for Andrews County and Lea County, and it provided a greatly needed service for the state and country. Many, many hospitals and other facilities currently store low-level radioactive waste in basements and other urban areas, some in non-secure situations.

So while the numbers in the polls may have surprised some,

See LINES Page 16

## Lines

*Continued from Page one*

they only reaffirmed what many Andrews residents already know. That you can take something dangerous and do something safe with it to the benefit of all concerned, just like we've done for decades in the oil industry.

It's no wonder that the LES project was steered to this area. With support from not only Andrews County but New Mexico residents and politicians, the site was easily determined and, following hearings by the National Regulatory Commission, approved for construction, which is due to start this summer.

And, no doubt, the fact that the University of Texas of the Permian Basin and General Atomics, with local support, decided our county would be a great place for a new type of test reactor.

Midland and Odessa concurred and, with donations from the city and county and Midland, Odessa and private sources, that project is being seriously explored and would be another major asset for our county, our area and us.

All these topics received positive feedback during the telephone interviewing.

It confirms what I've said for years. Give the public the facts, and they'll make the right decisions.

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# ANDREWS COUNTY NEWS

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## Survey results favor WCS disposal license

By SAM KAUFMAN  
Staff Reporter

A recent telephone survey pertaining in part to views about disposal of low-level radioactive waste material should assist Waste Control Specialists LLC of Andrews County in its effort to become licensed in that capacity. Survey results were presented by Michael Baselice of Baselice & Associates, Inc. at the Andrews County Commissioners' Court meeting Monday morning at the courthouse.

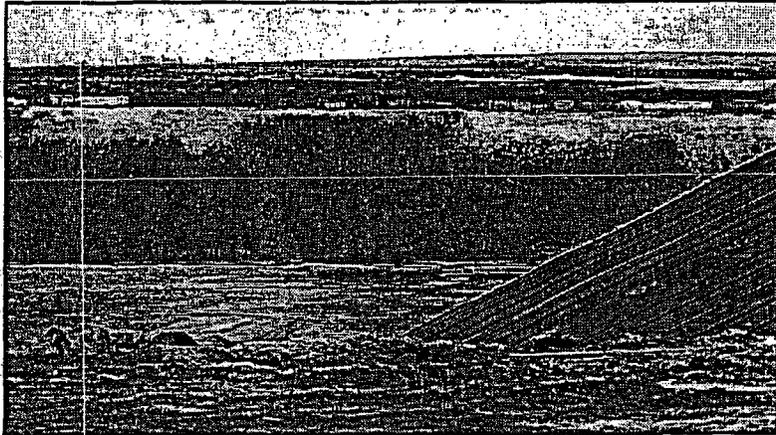
Baselice told a large gathering consisting of county, city and

school officials that nearly two-thirds of those surveyed in Andrews County support the idea of WCS providing disposal of low-level radioactive waste at its site near the Texas/New Mexico border.

Waste Control Specialists is presently involved in a lengthy application process that began in 2004 to become licensed for disposal of low-level waste.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality required the recent telephone survey as part of the application process. Survey results that confirmed local sup-

See SURVEY Page 3



**WASTE**  
Control Specialists is in the midst of pursuing a license to dispose of low-level radioactive waste. The site pictured is a current hazardous waste landfill.

port for the license to WCS officials will soon be submitted for state review.

A draft license and hearing notice will be published by TCEQ in July of 2006, according to a timeline sheet provided by WCS. From there, a year-long contested case hearing period will begin next September. The actual decision by TCEQ commissioners for license issue or denial will be made in December of 2007.

### Phone Survey Promising

The positive phone survey results should help WCS clear the socioeconomic hurdle in the application process, according to WCS President Rod Baltzer. About 65 percent of those surveyed in Andrews County supported disposal for low-level radioactive waste here, while only 26 percent were against it, Baselice said.

"These results confirm what we've told (the TCEQ)," Baltzer said. "This survey helps prove it, and it drives home the point that we've made sure people here are informed."

Baltzer added that a similar license application for low-level waste disposal at Sierra Blanca in 1984 was shot down largely due to public outcry. According to the vast majority of public support from the recent survey, that won't be the case with WCS in Andrews County, officials believe.

"In politics, a 2-to-1 approval rate makes a politician happy," former U.S. Congressman and WCS representative Kent Hance said at Monday's meeting. "But a 4-to-1 approval rate is a happy day. The survey results confirmed that the more people know about what (WCS) is doing, the more the positive support increases."

Officials also said that, although public support is key in the application process, the science aspect and capabilities of WCS is the major criteria to become licensed. Waste Control Specialists Vice President and General Manager Tom Jones said the local company perfectly meets the criteria.

"We definitely have the science end of it covered," Jones said of WCS possessing all the right specialists.

Baselice & Associates, Inc. was hired by WCS to perform a thorough phone survey that included



WCS is currently storing 11e.(2) waste from Ohio and is in the process of getting licensed to dispose of it on site.

605 interviews for topics ranging from low-level waste disposal to support rates for a proposed test nuclear reactor in Andrews County, and the upcoming construction of a uranium enrichment facility near Eunice, New Mexico.

The phone survey included 300 random interviews in Texas, and 305 more from New Mexico residents, Baselice said. A majority throughout the entire calling area supported low-level radioactive waste disposal by WCS.

Of those surveyed in Andrews County, 67 percent favored storage of low-level radioactive waste, 66 percent were in favor of processing it, and 65 percent supported disposal, according to Baselice's figures.

### WCS Treats LLW

Waste Control Specialists is currently licensed to store and treat low-level radioactive waste. With approval of the pending license process, WCS will be permitted to dispose low-level material received from its three-state compact, and from throughout the United States, Jones said.

Waste Control Specialists has already designated adjacent locations for the proposed federal and Texas-Compact low-level disposal

landfills. Those targeted landfill areas go along with WCS' existing RCRA/TSCA hazardous landfill, planned expansion and a proposed 11e.(2) landfill location.

Waste Control Specialists, which began receiving hazardous waste in 1997 and currently employs more than 100, would add 25 employees if approved for the low-level disposal license.

As it stands now, there are only two other sites in the United States that can dispose of low-level radioactive waste, Jones said.

The North Carolina facility is approaching capacity, and will accept waste only from its compact area beginning in 2008. High tax rates have also made the North Carolina site unappealing to many, Jones added.

"I read that it was costing about \$500 per cubic foot (for disposal)," he noted. "There are a number of people closely following our license process. There are a lot of utility companies interested, and state and federal interest, along with a myriad of other people who need waste disposal."

Low-level waste includes items contaminated with radioactive material or that have become ra-

dioactive through exposure to neutron radiation. It typically consists of contaminated protective shoe covers and clothing, wiping rags, mops, filters, reactor water treatment residues, equipment and tools, medical tubes, swabs, injection needle syringes, and laboratory animal carcasses and tissues.

If approved for the low-level disposal license, WCS would operate the services, but the state and federal government would take title to it. The state operation would include a 10 percent tax rate that would be split between Andrews County and the state. In addition to its application for low-level disposal, WCS is waiting to become licensed for 11e.(2) waste disposal. That waste consists of tailings produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium or thorium from processed ore.

Jones said WCS could possibly be licensed for 11e.(2) waste disposal by August. That would allow for what will eventually total 40 shipments of mill tailings of uranium coming from Ohio to be disposed of at a WCS landfill.

Large 20,000-pound containers that include waste encased in steel casks inside concrete from

the Fernald Project are currently being stored at the WCS facility.

The phone survey by Baselice & Associates, Inc. also included questions about support of the proposed test nuclear reactor project for Andrews County. Results revealed a high rate of Andrews County residents who favored the project, Baselice said.

"The test nuclear reactor received 70 percent support in Andrews County, and 56 percent support in the whole calling area," he noted.

### Other items...

-Commissioners approved payment of \$100,000 to Arena Design Consultants Inc. for stamped engineered drawings for the multi-purpose arena.

-Commissioners approved payment of \$38,025 to Trans Texas Tennis Inc. for construction of a basketball court at the Lincoln Center.

-Commissioners approved Sparks Pump Services for renovation of the pump station at the golf course. The service will cost \$34,300.

-Commissioners approved the part-time employment of Sheri Delgado as a dispatcher with the sheriff's department.

# **WEST TEXAS AND EAST NEW MEXICO ADULT SURVEY**

**January 21-23, 2006**

**N = 605 Total Sample respondents**

**margin of error:  $\pm 4.1\%$**

**n=172 Andrews County respondents**

**margin of error :  $\pm 7.4\%$**

## **QUALIFICATIONS / EXPERIENCE**

Baselice & Associates, Inc. is a national research organization that has conducted projects across a broad range of issues and topics. Michael Baselice, owner of Baselice & Associates, Inc., has conducted over 1,200 quantitative and qualitative research projects over the last 16 years.

Public policy survey research performed by Baselice & Associates includes business and economic issues ranging from tax/revenue, tort reform, and construction issues such as highway, school, and stadium bond measures. Additionally, social issue research has been conducted in areas ranging from education and health care to gaming and safety issues.

Michael received his Bachelor of Science cum laude in Commerce and Engineering from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Baselice & Associates, Inc. was retained to perform a random telephone survey to identify public attitudes related to Waste Control Specialists LLC's (WCS) operations and the proposed management of low-level radioactive waste in Andrews County. The survey included open-ended questions related to the public's understanding of WCS and perceived positive and negative impacts of WCS in Andrews County.

The purposes of the survey were:

To measure awareness of various facilities and to gauge reaction to any information seen, read, or heard recently about specific facilities.

To assess support for various processes including disposal of radioactive waste.

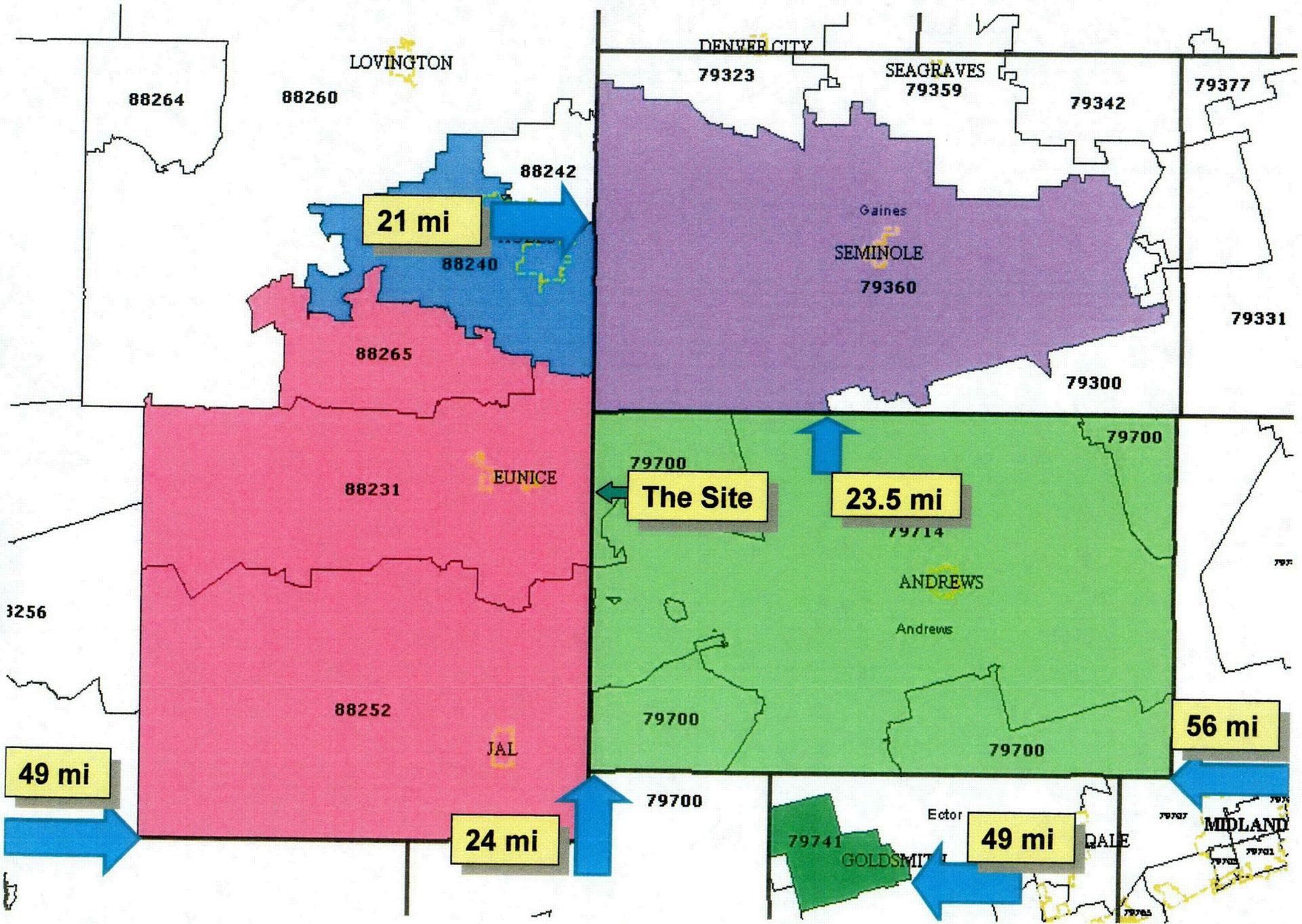
To measure attitudinal statements regarding disposal of radioactive waste.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

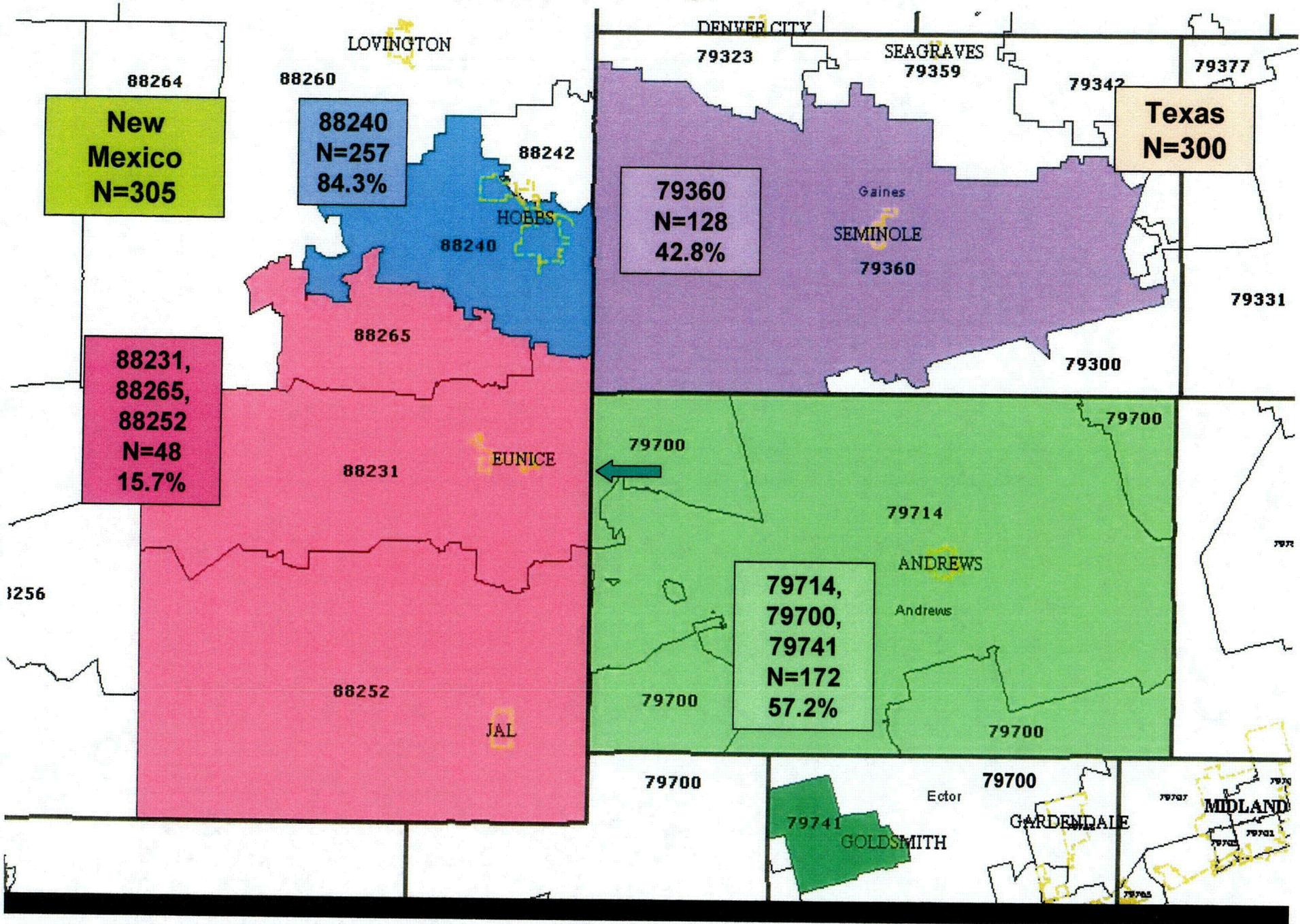
Interviewing specialists, under contract to Baselice & Associates, Inc., conducted data collection for the survey on January 21-23, 2006. All interviewing specialists received a half-hour training session and were required to perform simulated interviews before beginning actual data collection activities. In addition, interviewers were continually monitored to ensure the highest level of quality was maintained.

The average length of each completed survey was 14.5 minutes. Data were interactively collected during the interview phase utilizing computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software. CATI interviewing was essential to the research process to ensure the proper randomization of questions and that the information was collected in the most efficient manner.

# INTERVIEW AREA WITH CITIES



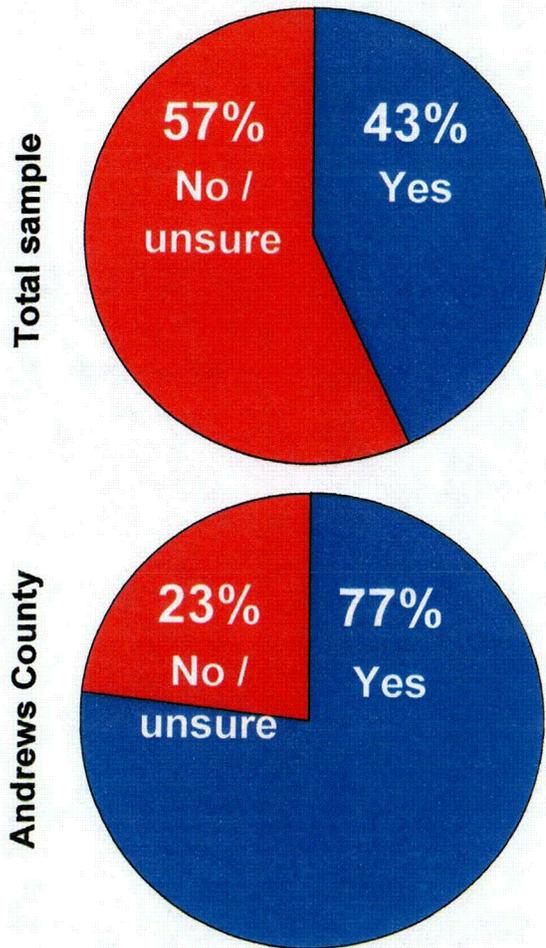
# SAMPLE QUOTAS



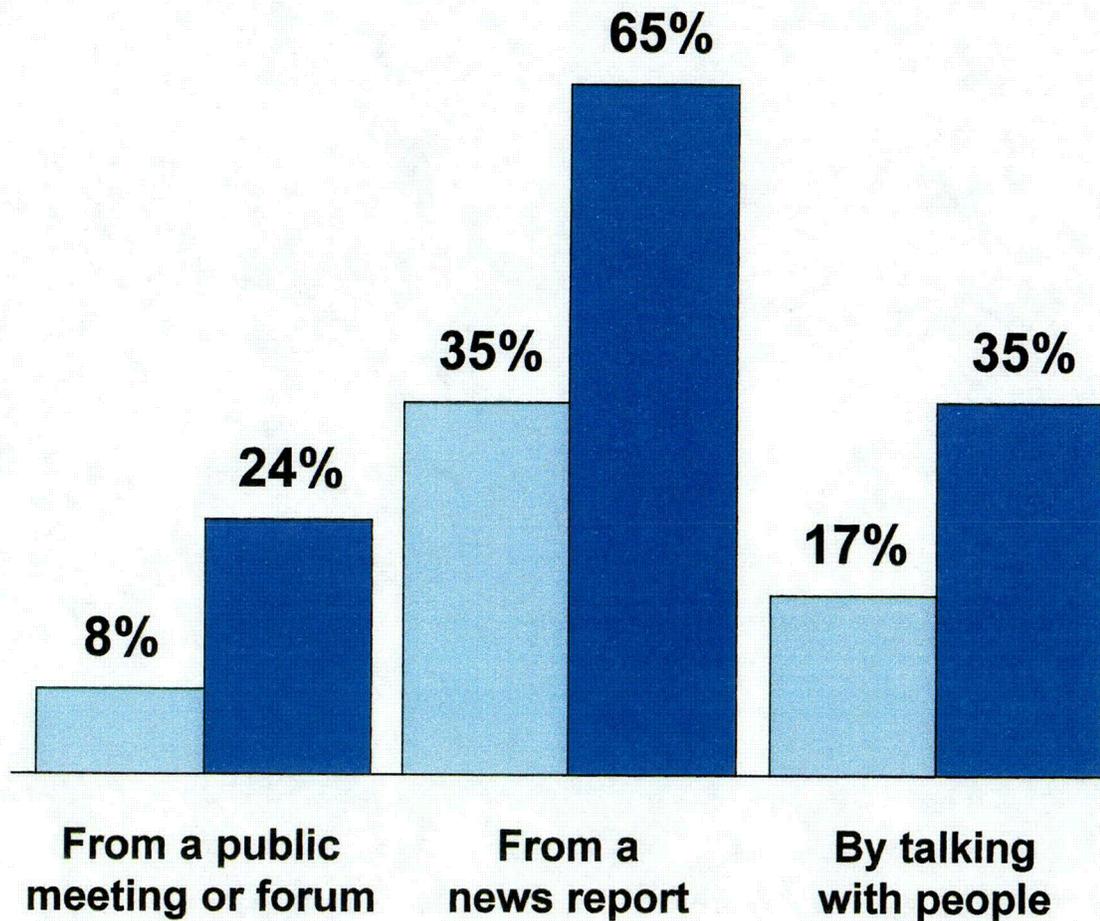
# SRH ABOUT UT of PERMIAN BASIN NUCLEAR REACTOR

**Q18. Have you seen, read, or heard anything recently about the proposed University of Texas of the Permian Basin nuclear reactor in Andrews County?**

**Q19. And have you seen, read, or heard this recent information about the proposed nuclear reactor...**



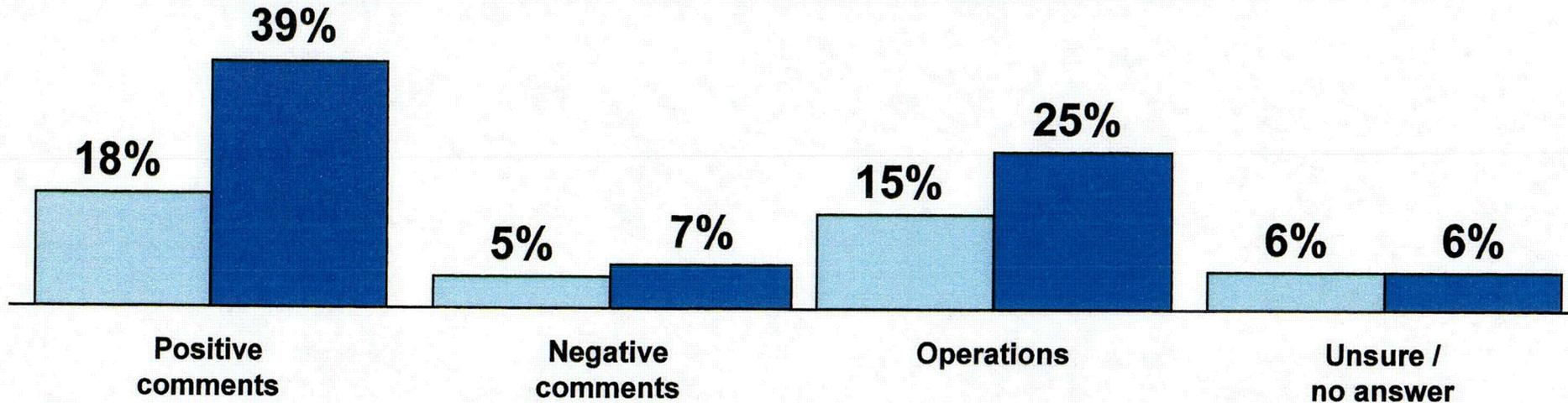
Legend: ■ Total sample ■ Andrews County



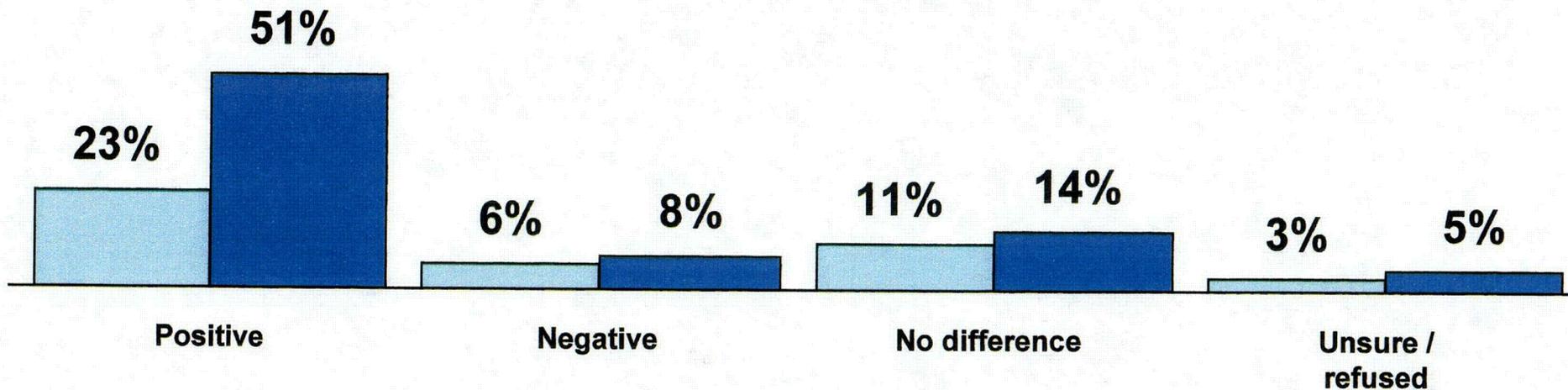
# SRH ABOUT UT of PERMIAN BASIN NUCLEAR REACTOR

■ Total sample      ■ Andrews County

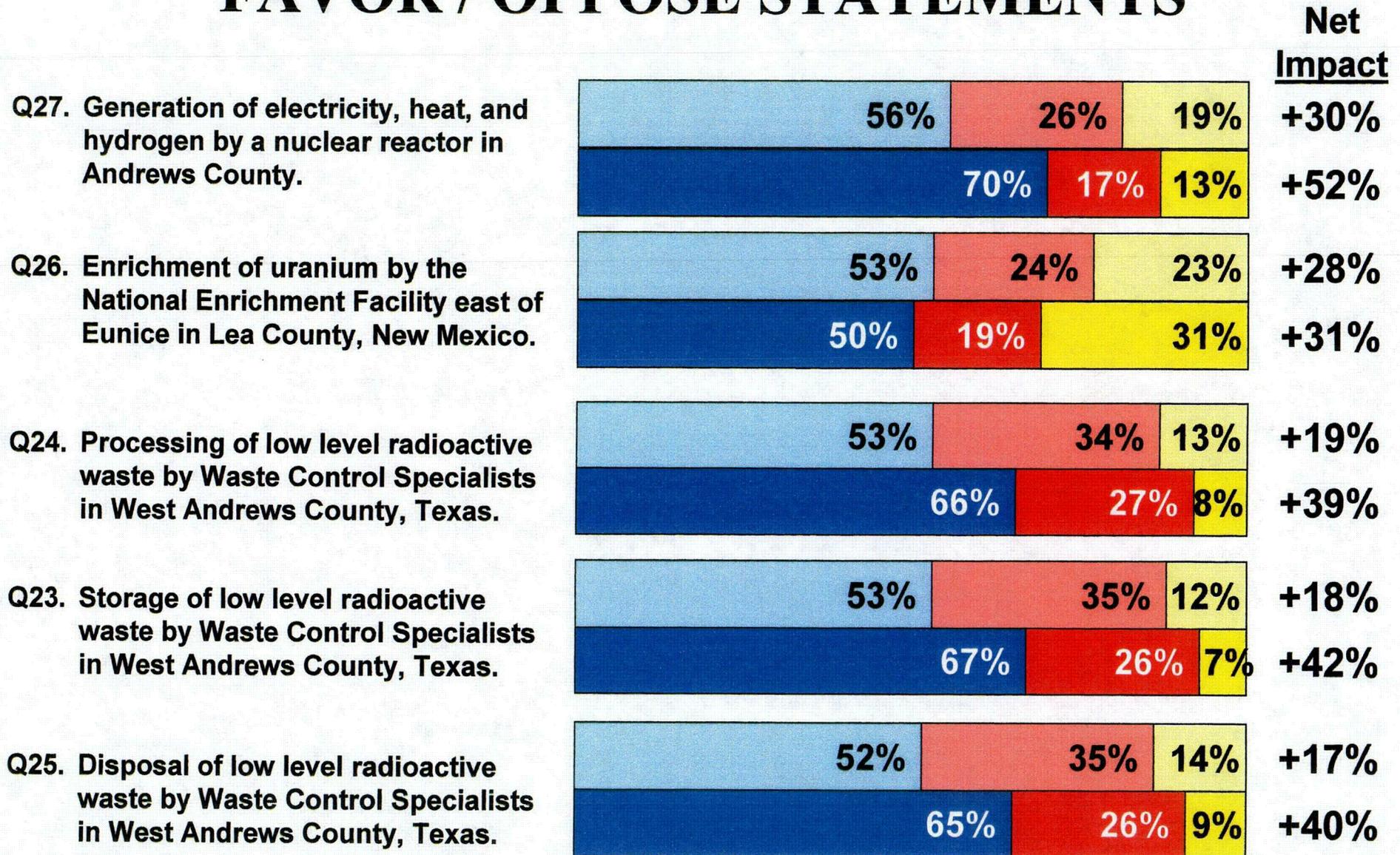
**Q20. And in your own words, please describe what you have seen, read or heard about the proposed nuclear reactor?**



**Q21. Has what you have seen, read, or heard given you a more positive or more negative image of the proposed nuclear reactor?**



# FAVOR / OPPOSE STATEMENTS



Total sample Andrews Co. 
  Favor 
  Oppose 
  No Difference / Unsure

# BASELICE & ASSOCIATES, INC.

## Opinion Research for Decision Making in Politics and Public Affairs

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Baselice & Associates, Inc. conducted a telephone survey of N=605 adults in selected ZIP codes in West Texas and Southeastern New Mexico. Responses to this survey were gathered January 21-23, 2006. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample based on the adult population figures for each region in the selected area.

The confidence interval associated with a sample of this type is such that 95% of the time the results will be within  $\pm 4.1\%$  of the "true values" where "true values" refer to the results obtained if it were possible to interview every adult in the selected ZIP codes. The universe for this survey was defined as residents in the following selected ZIP codes who were 18 years of age or older.

### TEXAS (300 interviews)

79360 Seminole, Gaines County  
79714 Andrews, Andrews County  
79700 Andrews County  
79741 Goldsmith, Ector County

### NEW MEXICO (305 interviews)

88240 Hobbs, Lea County  
88231 Eunice, Lea County  
88252 Jal, Lea County  
88265 Monument, Lea County

Note: The Andrews County portion of the results included 172 interviews.

1. The image of WCS, Waste Control Specialists is 42% positive versus 8% negative. In Andrews County, the image of WCS is 69% positive versus 5% negative. At 70% positive versus 10% negative, the image of the WCS facility in Andrews County has a similar image to that of the organization itself.
2. Slightly over half of respondents (53%) state that WCS handles waste, but nearly seven out of ten respondents in Andrews County (69%) indicate the same. Specifically, 20% of all respondents and 31% of Andrews County respondents accurately state that WCS stores or processes radioactive waste.
3. A majority of respondents in total sample favor the storage (53%), processing (53%) and disposal (52%) of low-level radioactive waste at the WCS facility. In comparison, approximately two-thirds of the Andrews County subsample favors each of these three actions: storage (67%), processing (66%) and disposal (65%).
4. Support for disposal of low-level radioactive waste reaches 68% among respondents in the total sample, and 74% among the Andrews County subsample, who know that WCS handles low-level radioactive waste. This finding shows that knowledge of what the WCS facility does translates into support.
5. By over a five-to-one ratio, Andrews County residents agree (76%) over disagree (14%) with the statement: The Waste Control Specialists facility has had a positive impact on the community.

# News-Sun

JAL EUNICE HOBBS LOVINGTON TATUM SEMINOLE DENVER CITY

## Lea bidding for nuclear recycling plant

**Lea, Eddy counties file joint application for plant that would recycle spent nuclear fuel**

RICHARD TROUT  
NEWS-SUN

Lea and Eddy counties have jointly submitted an expression of interest to be one of four preferred sites for a proposed U.S. Department of Energy nuclear recycling plant.

At least four other communities were expected to submit letters of interest to the department. Lea and Eddy counties submitted an expression of interest on Thursday, a day before the deadline.

"This is a historic event that we filed this application together," Lea County Chairman Harry Teague said. "I think this is a pretty his-

toric agreement.

The spent-fuel recycling plant could employ 3,000-4,000 people in the region the DOE selects. The selection process continues with the DOE issuing a request for proposal within 60 days.

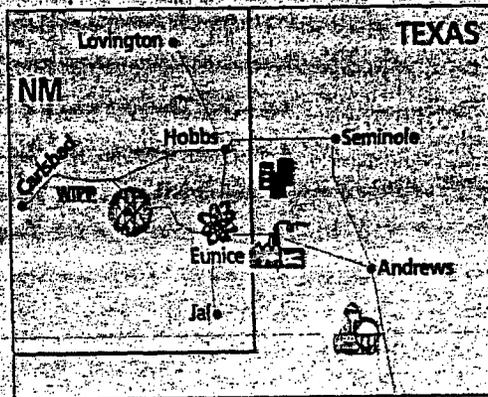
By August, four of the sites that submit proposals will each receive \$5 million to conduct an environmental impact study that would assist the federal government in picking a final site.

Spent-fuel recycling plants are located in other countries, but none exist in the United States. The recycling process, also known as nuclear reprocessing, separates the usable elements in spent nuclear fuel rods from the waste elements. Fuel rods are used by nuclear power plants to produce electricity.

The Lea/Eddy proposal has the recycling plant sited 35 miles west of Hobbs and 35 miles

SEE NUCLEAR, Page 7

### Area's growing role in nuclear industry



#### MAP KEY

- National Enrichment Facility: uranium enrichment plant hoping to break ground in August
- Waste Control Specialists: hazardous waste repository applying for radioactive waste permit
- Spent Fuel Recycling Plant: project to separate usable elements in spent nuclear fuel rods
- High Temperature Test Reactor: proposed University of Texas-Pernian Basin research center
- Decommissioning Facility: Areva of Holland plans to convert LES byproduct to stable form
- Waste Isolation Pilot Plant: underground DOE repository for radioactive waste disposal

# Nuclear

from PAGE 1

east of Carlsbad. Negotiations between the communities resulted in the plant being sited in Lea County, though a specific area has not been decided other than south of U.S. 62/180 and east of N.M. Highway 176.

Although the program would take about five-six years to develop, Sen. Carroll Leavell, R-Ial, said a project of this magnitude would produce great economic gains.

"The number of employees is very large," he said. "They'd be high-paying jobs and they'd be good jobs. ... I think it will further diversify our economy and improve the quality of life in southeast New Mexico."

The DOE's plan is part of President George W. Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative to encourage U.S. energy independence while promoting global energy security. The DOE, in turn, unveiled its Global Nuclear Energy Partnership to achieve similar goals. The \$50 million search for a recycling plant is one of the initiatives in GNEP.

In its request for expressions of interest, the DOE said it was open to a wide range of federal and nonfederal sites.

## Partnership a plus

Residents of Lea and Eddy counties were quick to point out the partnership provides a



COURTESY PHOTO

Workers at a Department of Energy facility in Savannah River, S.C., move spent nuclear fuel within a storage basin. Savannah River

## Partnership a plus

Residents of Lea and Eddy counties were quick to point out the partnership provides a huge advantage in making the first cut. Some believe the partnership's only major competition would come from Savannah River, S.C.

Many in both communities also said southeast New Mexico's solid background in nuclear energy lends another edge.

"I think we have a really good chance at this first go-around," said Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest. "We have a very good reputation in Carlsbad with the (Waste Isolation Pilot Plant) and in Hobbs with (Louisiana Energy Services) and with (Waste Control Specialists) near Andrews. This area is really getting to be known as a nuclear area."

Located between Hobbs and Carlsbad, WIPP is an underground repository for the disposal of radioactive waste left over from Cold War nuclear weapons facilities. Louisiana Energy Services is planning to build a \$1.4 billion uranium enrichment plant near Eunice. Waste Control Specialists offers a repository for hazardous waste in Andrews County, Texas, a stone's throw away from the LES site.

The strong support Lea and Eddy have exhibited for nuclear projects gives the area an advantage over the other sites with the exception of Savannah River, said Leavell, whose N.M. senate district is in both counties.

"I also think that we have Sen. Domenici and Bingaman, and Congressman Steve Pearce in Washington. That really gives us an additional positive leg up," he said.

Eddy County Chairman Lucky Briggs said the local proposal not only brings a nuclear background to the table, but also two communities that have been receptive to nuclear projects. Although WIPP and LES received some resistance, most of it came from the state's central corridor and anti-nuclear groups.

"The main positive aspect we have is that our communities would receive the project so well," Briggs said, "whereas in other communities they would receive a lot of resistance."

Teague of Hobbs agreed the region's openness to nuclear technology will be strongly considered by the federal government.

"They want to go to a site where they are wanted by the community and where they have a reasonable state government to work with," he said.

## Lobbyist key

Leavell credited Lea County lobbyist Vikki Bell with spearheading the partnership when she informed Lea County about the DOE program in November.

"I was aware that Carlsbad was looking at the project on their own," Leavell said, "and I knew that two separate proposals going in from southeast New Mexico would certainly be very counterproductive, so I suggested the counties work together on this."

Lobbyist Bell said the other communities expected to submit proposals include Savannah River, Portsmouth, Ohio; Paducah, Ky.; and Nye County, Nev. With the DOE having nuclear facilities in all these areas, Bell said Lea and Eddy's proposal would have the advantage of offering a "clean site" free of contamination and significant security issues.

Others noted both counties have conducted extensive geological and environmental studies in parts of each county. The proposed site in Lea County, however, has not been studied.

When the DOE's plan first appeared in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill passed in

Workers at a Department of Energy facility in Savannah River, S.C., move spent nuclear fuel within a storage basin. Savannah River is one of four sites expected to compete with Lea and Eddy counties for a spent-fuel recycling plant.

November, Bell said she started contacting Lea officials by e-mail. The section of the bill proposing a search for a spent-fuel recycling plant later became part of the president's energy initiative.

"I told them they're kind of a natural for this with WIPP and LES," Bell said, "and the site selection process became part of a new initiative they were rolling out called GNER."

If the Lea/Eddy region is selected as one of the four sites to compete for the recycling plant, she said the counties would have to work collaboratively with the DOE. Geological, environmental and infrastructure issues — such as electricity, water and rail lines — would have to be covered in the environmental impact statement.

The technology used at the plant will be entirely up to the DOE, Bell said, and will probably be contracted out after the DOE issues a request for proposal.

## Meeting in D.C.

About two weeks ago eight representatives from Lea and Eddy counties went to Washington, D.C., to talk about the project with legislators and three of DOE's top officials. They met with Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., Rep. Steve Pearce, R-N.M., and the DOE's Undersecretary David Garman, its Deputy Secretary of Energy Clay Sells and Shane Johnson, acting director of DOE's office of nuclear energy, science and technology.

Residents of the two counties met in Santa Fe during the January legislative session and in each of the communities after the session, Leavell said.

Hobbs Mayor Monty Newman, Johnny Cope of Hobbs and News-Sun publisher Kathi Bearden were members of the contingent that visited Washington in March, and they voiced their support of the joint effort.

"The economic impact of a facility like this would be absolutely huge for our area as far as the salaries, benefits and the number of jobs," Newman said. "And the quality of jobs created would be very sophisticated and would require great expertise in the nuclear area."

"It's a first for the two counties," Cope said, "to be able to work on a project besides WIPP, and I truly believe with our combined resources we have a better chance to be chosen as one of the four preferred sites. And we have a very good chance to become the final site chosen."

"The people of Lea County understand the importance of energy to our country, and the opportunity for an energy project like this is significant to southeast New Mexico and our country," Bearden said. "The president and Congress are addressing alternate energy sources on a national level, and this is an opportunity that we must pursue with all our resources and dedication."

Until the DOE releases a request for proposal, Lea and Eddy counties won't be working on anything because it's impossible to anticipate what the federal government might ask in the RFP, Bell said.

"This will be a large response and a fairly intensive one," she said. "They have identified various people to put the proposal together when the RFP comes out."