

CENTER FOR NUCLEAR WASTE REGULATORY ANALYSES

TRIP REPORT

Subject: Caliente Rail Corridor Visit and Cultural Resource Tour by Yucca Mountain
Environmental Impact Statement Adoption Review Team AI:
20.06002.01.151.602

Authors: David Turner
Bradley Werling
Patrick LaPlante
Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses

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Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses (CNWRA)

Travel Dates: September 30 – October 3, 2007

Location: Lincoln, Esmeralda, and Nye Counties, Nevada

Persons Present: D. Turner, CNWRA
P. LaPlante, CNWRA
B. Werling, CNWRA
S. Blanco, Raba-Kistner Consulting (CNWRA Consultant)
L. McKague (CNWRA Consultant)
J. Parrott, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
M. Wong, NRC
C. Schulte, NRC
J. Pohle, NRC
N. Garcia Santos, NRC
P. Justus NRC

Organization/Committee: N/A

Desired Outcome:

The specific purpose of the trip was to

- Provide an opportunity for members of the environmental review team to view the affected environment along the proposed Nevada Rail Corridor starting in Caliente, Nevada in preparation of U.S. Department of Energy issuance of draft Environmental Impact Statements related to the potential repository and rail corridor and alignment.
- Familiarize staff with the affected environment around the potential Yucca Mountain repository

Results Achieved:

All desired outcomes were achieved.

Summary of Trip:

The trip was led by J. Parrott (NRC) and was useful for familiarizing staff with areas relevant to environmental reviews associated with the potential repository at Yucca Mountain. On September 30, 2007, the participants traveled from Las Vegas to Caliente, Nevada, the eastern terminus for the Nevada Rail Corridor proposed by DOE to transport high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel to Yucca Mountain.

On the evening of September 30, NRC trip participants met with two representatives of Lincoln County. NRC staff explained the purpose of the trip and the Lincoln County representatives explained their position on some aspects of the proposed Caliente corridor and alignment.

The trip started on October 1, 2007, guided by three employees of Bechtel SAIC Company, LLC, with a visit to one of the potential sites for a proposed interchange yard in Caliente where national rail shipments could be received from the Union Pacific line.

The group then traveled north on highway US-93 from Caliente to Panaca, Nevada, and turned west off the highway to follow the proposed rail corridor through Bennett Pass to Dry Lake Valley. The group observed the proposed location for the Southern Nevada Water Authority pipeline from Lincoln County, which may cross through Dry Lake Valley and south to the Las Vegas area. Cattle grazing activities were noted in the vicinity of Dry Lake Valley and other locations along the tour. The trip continued off-road through Garden Valley to view "City," a large-scale sculpture that has been in development since the 1970s. The group then traveled north and west along Nevada 375, through Reveille Valley to Warm Springs, an abandoned spa at the intersection with highway US-6. The trip for the day ended in Tonopah, Nevada, an historic mining community in Nye County on the border with Esmeralda County.

On October 2, 2007 the group traveled south from Tonopah on US-95 to Goldfield, Nevada, the county seat for Esmeralda County. This is another mining community that had a population of more than 10,000 during its peak years in the early 1900s, but now has a population of about 250. Historic structures that have been purchased, but not renovated, include Goldfield Hotel and Goldfield High School. The group observed the three alternatives being considered for the rail alignment in this area. During the afternoon of October 2, the group continued south from Goldfield to visit several natural springs in Oasis Valley just north of Beatty, Nevada. The group also drove into the Bare Mountains to observe the proposed location of the bridge across Beatty Wash. The group then drove from Beatty to Crater Flat west of Yucca Mountain to view the final stretch of the proposed rail corridor.

Along the corridor, the group observed potential quarry sites for fill material. Bechtel SAIC Company, LLC staff also discussed potential water use, as well as other aspects of rail construction in the areas of Bennett Pass, the Pahroc Mountains, the Goldfield Hills, and Beatty Wash. The trip for the day ended in Amargosa Valley.

On October 3, 2007, the group traveled to the Yucca Mountain site for an overview of historical and cultural sites near the potential repository. DOE staff described the DOE program of conducting archaeological and historical surveys. NRC staff also participated in a tour of Yucca Mountain.

Next Steps:

The DOE draft environmental impact statements were released for public comment on October 12, 2007. The members of the environmental team will review these documents and develop any comments, as appropriate.

Were policy issues or other items of Commission interest raised?

No

Contact Information:

David Turner
dturner@swri.org
(210)522-2139

Bradley Werling
bwering@swri.org
(210)522-6565

Patrick LaPlante
plaplante@swri.org
(301)881-0289