



## ***Nye County NWRPO Update***

Nye County Department of Natural Resources  
and Federal Facilities  
Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office (NWRPO)  
[www.nyecounty.com](http://www.nyecounty.com)

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### ***Comment Period on the YM Draft EIS Drawing to a Close***

Nye County is coming to the close of its review of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a Nuclear Waste Repository at Yucca Mountain. Commissioners Taguchi and Davis attended the public hearing in Washington, DC, where they delivered oral comments to a large national audience. The Nye County NWRPO participated in several other EIS public hearings including those held in the Nye communities of Amargosa Valley and Pahrump. Meetings in Ely, Nevada, Boise, Idaho, and Denver, Colorado, were also attended by Nye County representatives.

Basic findings of the Nye County DEIS review address the sufficiency of data in the DEIS used to support the decisions required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, especially with respect to transportation and repository design. Other major points include failure of the DEIS to consider reasonably foreseeable action proposals, inclusion of a speculative "no action" alternative, failure to include updated demographic information in the analysis of impacts, and failure to adequately identify and assess cumulative

impacts to Nye County water resources and land uses.

Nye County will complete its review and submit comments to the Nye County Board of Commissioners for approval and formal submittal to DOE during December and January.

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### ***NWRPO Participates in NTS CAB Technical Exchange on Con- taminated Groundwater on NTS***

On November 3, 1999, the Community Advisory Board for Nevada Test Site (NTS) Programs convened to discuss the results of a review of DOE's efforts to model the movement of radioactive contaminants at the Frenchman Flat underground testing area. The radioactivity that remains in the groundwater under Frenchman Flat is of concern to Nye County because this testing area is the closest to public water supply and domestic wells in Amargosa Valley. DOE has elected to address the review comments on its groundwater characterization program at Frenchman Flat by installing new wells, collecting more samples, conducting more tests; and then completing a revised model.

Tom Buqo, Nye County's hydrogeologist, proposed an alternative solution. This proposal consists of providing southern Nye County with



### ***NTS CAB Technical Exchange, continued***

Colorado River water by installing a federally funded pipeline from Lake Mead to Pahrump and Amargosa Valley. At an estimated cost of \$425 million, this proposal would allow the cessation of groundwater studies at the NTS by eliminating the need for Nye County to rely on groundwater supplies in the southern part of the County. These studies currently cost taxpayers more than \$80 million a year and are not expected to be completed before the year 2014. Under this proposed alternative, the Untied States could continue to use the NTS for testing and other purposes while eliminating the risk to Nye County's water resources.

### ***Nye Representative Participates In Two NRC Workshops***

Nye County's Regulatory & Licensing Advisor, Mal Murphy, took part in two significant Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) meetings. On October 26 & 27, Mr. Murphy, at the invitation of the NRC's General Counsel's Office, was a member of a round table made up of lawyers representing the NRC staff, nuclear utilities and the uranium mining industry, and environmental groups. The meeting was called by the NRC to discuss potential changes to the licensing hearing process to make the process less formal and thus easier for local governments to participate. Nye County was the only non-federal governmental entity represented.

Mr. Murphy expressed the views that, while improvements can and probably should be made to the NRC licensing hearing process in order to achieve efficiencies, the hearing process should always be an adjudicative proceeding, rather than an informal, legislative process typically used in rulemaking. Such a hearing must include a full and balanced review of any license application, full discovery, the unfettered right to present evidence and cross examine witness, relaxed standing rules so that any party with an interest in the outcome can take part, and easier access for the public.

On November 2, 1999, Mr. Murphy participated, along with representatives of the State of Nevada, other local governments, the NRC staff and the DOE, in a workshop on the use of the concept of defense-in-depth in repository licensing in the NRC's proposed new Yucca Mountain licensing regulations. Defense-in-depth is a way of expressing the requirement that any repository, such as Yucca Mountain, should employ a series of barriers, including the natural geology and engineered systems such as the disposal canister, to prevent or retard the release of radionuclides from a repository.

The meeting included a detailed explanation by the technical staff of the NRC of the requirements for multiple barriers in the new regulations, how the NRC will review any potential DOE application involving Yucca Mountain for reliance on multiple barriers, and whether or not those requirements and review plans are adequate.





### ***Nye County Participates in Workshop with USGS on Results of EWDP***

Nye County scientists participated in a one-day workshop with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to review Early Warning Drilling Program (EWDP) results and work plans for FY 2000. Nick Stellavato, a geologist and Nye County's On-Site Representative, led the Nye County science team which consisted of Tom Buqo, hydrology; Dr. Maurey Morgenstein and Don Shettle, hydrogeochemistry, petrology and petrography; Dr. Perry Montazer, hydrology and modeling; Jamieson Walker, geology; Jim McCormick, drilling engineering; and Claire Muirhead, hydrology and geographic information systems (GIS).

Nye County summarized the results obtained to date from the drilling program and explained plans for FY 2000. Significant results from the EWDP are:

- completed 8 new holes along I-95 corridor
- sampled well zones for complete water chemistry samples
- presented preliminary results of May 1998 water sampling
- constructed "type" stratigraphic columns for all 8 wells to be used for

- correlation of lithologic units
- presented Nye County plans to disseminate all data to interested parties
- presented new Phase II drilling targets and schedules

Phase II drilling is expected to begin in January 2000 and continue until April 2000.

### ***NRC Meets in Pahrump to Discuss Performance of Spent Fuel Transport Package Performance***

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Spent Fuel Project Office met with local residents on December 9, 1999, at the Mountain View Casino in Pahrump. The meeting was requested and hosted by the NWRPO. Under discussion was a study to be conducted by Sandia National Laboratories regarding the performance of casks which may be used to transport spent nuclear fuel to a disposal site at Yucca Mountain. The study will examine how such casks would perform under severe accident conditions to prevent or reduce radiological releases. The study results will be used to set standards for certifying casks to be used in such shipments, and to estimate the risks of shipments during the planning for shipment campaigns.

The Pahrump meeting was attended by 40 residents of Pahrump and surrounding rural communities, including representatives from Inyo, Lander and Lincoln counties. NRC officials stated that comments made during the lively



### ***NRC Meets in Pahrump, continued***

will be used in the design of the study to be conducted over the next three years. Les Bradshaw, department manager of the NWRPO, stated that it is important for NRC to understand conditions in the prospective site county in the design of any such study.

### ***Second Sampling of Phase I EWDP Wells Took Place in November***

Geosciences Management Institute, Inc. (GMII), along with United States Geological Survey, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the State of Nevada Health Department and Los Alamos National Lab, participated in the second sampling of all Phase I EWDP wells in November.

This sampling marked the second complete set of water samples from Phase I wells and will be used to further refine the hydrology of the Yucca Mountain flow system. GMII also began processing data received from the first water sampling done in May this year. All analyses from this May sampling have been received and GMII is now compiling these data sets and doing interpretations for use. These data are in the process of being submitted into the NWRPO QA database and will be put on the website for distribution to all who are interested in using the data. GMII is now gearing up for Phase II drilling.

### ***NWRPO Assists Planning Dept. on Petition to Appeal Nye County Population Estimates***

On December 14, 1999, the Nye County Planning Department submitted a petition to the Nevada Department of Taxation appealing the State's 1999 estimate of Nye County's population. Since the State's estimates are used in the distribution of certain revenues, such as cigarette and liquor taxes, it affects the finances of Nye and other Nevada counties. The State's preliminary estimate was 31,560, about 5,800 persons less than the county's own estimate for the first quarter of 1999.

Nye County's appeal does not challenge the State's procedure for estimating population, but does provide new information for application in that procedure. Using data provided by Valley Electric Association and Sierra Pacific Power Company on active and inactive residential accounts, NWRPO estimated housing vacancy in the County at 5.9% overall (3.2% in Pahrump), about half the 11-12% figure used in the State's preliminary estimate. In effect, the lower vacancy rate would increase occupied housing units by over 800, and estimated population by over 2000. While still well below the County's own estimate, the increased population would increase Nye County's fair share of state-distributed revenues.





### **Draft Modeling Report Submitted**

A draft hydrologic modeling report of the Amargosa and Yucca Mountain area was submitted to the NWRPO for internal Quality Assurance (QA) and technical review by Multimedia Environmental Technology Institute (METI). The reviews are essentially completed and will be sent to the report authors for review. The results of this work will be compared with the DOE model and revised as new data is obtained from the EWDP Phase II drilling.

Additional tasks were continuing as all data that has been stored at METI is in the process of being transferred to NWRPO. The tasks of data reduction and posting on the website are in the process of being transferred to NWRPO staff. METI will continue data interpretation and some modeling, but NWRPO will assume a greater roll in data handling. As part of this transfer, METI is in the process of developing user manuals for the operation of the database.

These manuals, two of which have been transmitted to NWRPO, will be guides to handling the massive amount of data that has been collected from 1994 to present from wells ONC-1 and NRG-4 and all pressure and temperature data from the Exploratory Studies Facility and Enhanced Characterization of the Repository Block.

### **NWRPO Staff Attends Team Building Seminar**

Two NWRPO staff members recently attended a Team Building Seminar in Las Vegas. The seminar was informative. Topics discussed included how to build a work team that "clicks", how to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your team, how to analyze team troubles, and how to boost your team's productivity.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

*January 5, 2000* – Nevada Science & Technology Corridor Advisory Board, Beatty Community Center, Beatty, NV, 9 am – 12 noon

*January 13 & 14, 2000* – Nevada Science & Technology Symposium, Stardust Casino, Las Vegas

*January 18, 2000* – DOE Public Hearing on 10 CFR Part 963, Terrible's Lakeside Casino, Pahrump, 11 am -2 pm & 6-10 pm

*January 19, 2000* – DOE Public Hearing on 10 CFR Part 963, UNLV Museum of Natural History Auditorium, Las Vegas, 11 am – 2 pm & 6-10 pm

*February 8, 2000* – Final comments due on the DOE Draft EIS for a Nuclear Waste Repository at Yucca Mountain.

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