

# Nye County NWRPO Update

Nye County Department of Natural Resources and Federal Facilities  
Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office (NWRPO)

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## NWRPO Hosts Nevada Health Study Advisory Group Meeting

Representatives from Clark, Churchill, Eureka, Lander, Lincoln and White Pine counties joined Nye County on May 5 at the UNLV Greenspun College of Urban Affairs for the first meeting of the Nevada Rural Radiologic Health Study Advisory Group. Les Bradshaw, manager of Nye County's Department of Natural Resources and Federal Facilities, has been a leader in convening the group, and initiated study development in November of 1998.

Eight counties directly affected by Department of Energy activities have signed letters of support for the proposal development and funding of a baseline radiologic health assessment for rural Nevada. The proposed health study will detail a basic, and necessary, understanding of the current health of affected populations and will provide a thorough understanding of community health conditions before any further nuclear waste transportation and/or storage activity occurs in Nevada.

Although large-scale health studies have been completed at virtually all other major Department of Energy sites in the nation, this study will be unique in that it will be coordinated by the local government in whose jurisdiction the federal sites are located. The study is also unusual in that the initial membership of the advisory group is made up entirely of representatives from local governments. Advisory Group membership and opportunities for involvement will expand as the study pro-

*Local governments affected by past, ongoing and potential future activities related to nuclear weapons testing and transportation, storage and disposal of nuclear waste in and through Nevada, are concerned about the lack of a coordinated baseline health study in Nevada.*

gresses, based on recommendations from local governments and interested Tribal Nations. The current Health Study research team includes Dr. Lynn Lyon, MD, of the University of Utah. Dr. Lyon has more than 20 years experience in conducting epidemiologic and dose reconstruction studies and is a vocal supporter of Nye County's efforts to begin a health study in Nevada. Other team members are: Dr. Shawn Gerstenberger, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (now at UNLV) as technical project investigator; Dr. Kurt Hegmann, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin; Kristine

Hegmann, MS, Public Health, University of Utah; Dr. Tony Hechanova, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (now at UNLV); and Ginger Swartz, MA, communications, Regis University, health study project coordinator and public involvement specialist for the Nye County NWRPO.

The May 5 event was the first organizational meeting for the

Health Study Advisory Group. Base membership for the group will consist of county appointed staff and/or contractors. Based on recommendations received from local governments and interested Tribal Nations, membership in the Advisory Group will be expanded.

For more information, call the NWRPO's health study Point of Contact: Ginger Swartz, (702) 293-6297.

## Nye County Submits Yucca Mountain Viability Assessment Comments to DOE

During the month of April, Nye County's NWRPO submitted a final review of the Department of Energy's "Viability Assessment of a Repository at Yucca Mountain" (VA) to the U.S. Department of Energy.

As the "situs" or "site" county, Nye County has participated rigorously and consistently in oversight of DOE's scientific evaluations of the repository site.

*Nye County's NWRPO technical team has been guided by a simple premise in reviewing the Yucca Mountain Viability Assessment: not to treat the VA as more than it really is, and not to give the VA more status in the overall project than accorded to it by the DOE.*

Review and submission of comments on the VA is part of the county's continuing oversight of the Yucca Mountain project.

VA programmatic-related comments by the county point out that the Yucca Mountain site does not exist in a wholly unpopulated area and that the VA

"completely ignores not only Nye County,

but the other affected Units of Local Government...and mentions only the State of Nevada and Indian tribes as affected by the Project." The review also notes that the VA ignores the impacts of anticipated population growth in southern Nevada. Nye County also noted Yucca Mountain cannot be recommended for selection until EPA standards are adopted; that DOE has failed to disclose ongoing Quality Assurance problems to Congress; that cost estimates included in the VA are unrealistic; and that DOE should disclose intentions to evaluate alternative repository designs within the VA document.

Technical issues addressed in the County's comment document include:

- ◆ Over-reliance on the engineered barrier system;
- ◆ The need for more Calico Hills data;
- ◆ Under-estimation of seepage into drifts;
- ◆ Inaccurate treatment of the saturated zone; and
- ◆ Questionable sorption geochemistry analyses.

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## Nye County Officials Meet with NRC Commissioners

On Friday, April 20, Les Bradshaw, manager of Nye County's Department of Natural Resources and Federal Facilities, Nick Stellavato, the NWRPO On-Site Representative, and Malachy Murphy, NWRPO's Regulatory and Licensing Advisor, met in Las Vegas with NRC Commissioner, Greta Dicus.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Nye County's concerns with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's role in the Yucca Mountain process, and other issues of concern to the county.

"The meeting was very useful and productive," according to Bradshaw. Nye County's objection to the NRC's consideration of an informal licensing process for Yucca Mountain, and concerns regarding repository design were key meeting discussion topics.

Partly as a result of this meeting, the NRC has decided to extend the comment period on its proposal to amend licensing regulations applicable to Yucca Mountain to June 30, and to hold an additional public meeting in Nye County sometime in the first or second week of June.

## Annual Devil's Hole Workshop Marks Another Success

The April 6-8 Devil's Hole Workshop met with tremendous response and interest again this year. The meeting focused on Yucca Mountain and Nevada Test Site groundwater flow issues related to southern Nye County.

Nye County provided two presentations during the three day workshop. NWRPO team hydrologist, Tom Buqo, addressed the current status of, and future work plans for, the Early Warning Drilling Program (EWDP).

Hydrogeologist Parviz Montazer presented information on the groundwater flow model for Amargosa Valley and Yucca Mountain and incorporation of new data that has been obtained from EWDP data collection activities. An NWRPO poster session illustrated current

pump and geologic data obtained from the EWDP.

On April 8, the workshop included a field trip which stopped at U.S. Geological Survey Oasis Valley wells being used to monitor migration of groundwater off Paiute Mesa on the Nevada Test Site. Additional visits included Nye County wells 1D, 1S and 9S, where the trip officially ended.

Nye County's Stellavato and Buqo continued on with Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board members and visited each EWDP site as well as the Nye County pipe and laydown yard to discuss current use of Westbay equipment.

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## Nye County Attends Friends of Death Valley Field Tour

The Friends of Death Valley geology meeting and field trip took place April 9-11 at the Tropicana Convention Center in Las Vegas. Nye County 's Yucca Mountain On-Site Representative, Nick Stellavato represented the NWRPO at the three day session. Nye County also presented a poster session related to its' Early Warning Drilling Program at the Tropicana workshop sessions.

In conjunction with the workshop, the USGS hosted a Death Valley field trip on April 10th, which included stops at various geologic interest points where Dr. Loren Wright, Professor

Emeritus at Penn State, and Dr. Bennie Troxel, retired Professor Emeritus from the University of California, discussed geological interpretations related to their most recent research. Both Dr. Wright and Dr. Troxel have been mapping in the Death Valley region since the late 1940s.

"It was fascinating to have the opportunity to listen to these legends in the field of mapping and to be able to discuss points of their research with them," said Stellavato." (Nick also reported the "highlight of the day" was a USGS-hosted barbecue at the Death Valley Ranch golf course.)

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### For more information, contact:

Nye County NWRPO  
1210 E. Basin Road – Suite #6  
Pahrump, NV 89048  
Phone: (775)727-7727  
Fax: (775)727-7919  
Email: nyenwrpo@aol.com

