



Nye County NWRPO Update

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

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste (ACNW) met in Las Vegas on

October 12 and 13. On October 12th Malachy Murphy, the NWRPO Regulatory & Licensing Advisor, participated in a full day round table discussion. The subjects included the EPA's proposed Yucca Mountain standard, the NRC's safety assessment, the role and management of uncertainty in the safety assessment and repository licensing, and risk communication and how better to communicate complex technical information. Jim Williams, the County's transportation and socioeconomic consultant, addressed the ACNW on analyzing the risks of transporting nuclear waste, and participated in the round table discussion on that subject.

The Committee held a public session in the evening on October 12th. Both Mal Murphy and Nick Stellavato, the County's On-Site Geotechnical Repre-

sentative, addressed the Committee and responded to public questions during that session.

On October 13th Nick Stellavato and Tom Buqo addressed the Committee on planned work in the Early Warning Drilling Program in the upcoming fiscal year, and on preliminary results from the recent Aeromagnetic survey of the Amargosa Valley and northern Pahrump Valley areas conducted in cooperation with the USGS and Inyo County, California.

The ACNW also toured the Yucca Mountain site and adjacent areas, including the DOE's drip shield experiment at the Nevada Operations Office in Las Vegas. Nick Stellavato participated in that field trip and was able to further update the Committee on several aspects of the Nye County technical oversight program and other Yucca Mountain project issues.

Nye County Comments on Proposed EPA Standards

On October 19, 1999, NWRPO officials presented comments on the US Environmental Agency's (EPA) proposed dose standards for Yucca Mountain. The hearing was held at the Community Center in Amargosa Valley. The EPA is proposing a 15 millirem limitation per year for both surface operations and storage at the proposed repository, versus the 25 millirem





EPA Standards, cont'd

proposed by the NRC. However, Nye County emphasized it would prefer the standard be at 0 millirem. In addition, EPA is proposing a separate groundwater protection standard as well as the use of the Safe Drinking Water Act maximum contaminant levels for radionuclides.

Regardless of the scientific arguments advanced by others who oppose additional ground water protection as unnecessary and redundant in an all-pathways standard, there is simply no public policy justification for providing the residents of Amargosa Valley any less protection than that afforded to the public living in the vicinity of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant site in New Mexico.

Nye County further urged that the point of compliance for the EPA standard be set at 5 km from the repository instead of other proposed points farther south in Amargosa Valley. The County's Early Warning Drilling Program will get the monitoring system in place to provide the maximum amount of advance warning of contamination migrating southward from the Nevada Test Site.

Nye County will submit formal written comments on the proposed rule to the EPA before the deadline of Nov. 26, 1999, and thereafter continue to be involved in the rulemaking process.



Amendments to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act Stalled in 106th Congress

Senate leadership promised quick action after the Labor Day recess on a Senate bill aimed at amending the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. So far, however, efforts to move the bill have stalled. The nuclear accident in Japan, another incident in South Korea and debate on the treaty to ban nuclear weapons testing have combined to make the timing for moving the nuclear waste bill unfortunate. Senate leadership say the bill will move this year, but it is slowly being shoved to the back burner by more pressing issues.

President Clinton has reaffirmed his position that high level nuclear waste should only come to Yucca Mountain if it is scientifically sound to do so and if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), not the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), sets the radiation exposure standards. EPA's proposed standards are lower than NRC's.

Both Nevada Senators have vowed to continue their opposition to the bill and appear confident that they have enough support to sustain a veto of the bill. The bill, approved June 16th

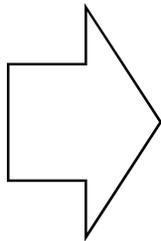




Waste Policy Act Stalled, cont'd

by the Senate Energy Committee, includes provisions first proposed by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson to store nuclear waste on-site at nuclear power plants, rather than at an interim storage facility in Nevada, as the original Bill S-608 introduced in the committee provided. The Secretary would be authorized either to take title to spent fuel and assume liability for the waste, provide storage casks, or compensate utilities for costs incurred by on-site storage.

The bill under consideration preserves oversight funding and Payments-Equal-To-Taxes for Nye County, but would require reception of waste at Yucca Mountain by 2007. The earlier reception date would be mandated even as Congress reduces funding for the DOE's site characterization work at Yucca Mountain. Nye County is worried that not enough site characterization work will be completed when the President is asked to make a decision on whether to recommend to Congress that the repository be constructed.



Phase II Drilling to Start

Phase II of the NWRPO EWDP will be starting the first week of November. As reported earlier, Phase I drilling and testing was completed in FY 98-99 with the installation of 8 new monitoring wells along the I-95 corridor. These wells were tested for hydraulic properties and also sampled in May for water quality analysis by representatives of Nye County, the United States Geological Survey for the Yucca Mountain project, Center for Nuclear Waste Research for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, State of Nevada Health Department, the Harry Reid Center at the University of Las Vegas and by Los Alamos National Laboratory. The Phase II program will drill up to 8 additional wells from south of I-95 in the vicinity of Rosa's well to the southern end of Crater Flat with additional wells located on the Nevada Test Site near the 510 gate and along 40 Mile Wash. This phase will begin in November with anticipated completion of drilling sometime in late April or early May. The main difference with Phase II drilling is the utilization of a larger drill rig capable of drilling up to 6000 feet. Sometime after the first of the year this new rig will be used for the first time. Remember that all data derived from this program will be posted on our website at www.nyecounty.com.





Cooperative Aeromagnetic Survey Completed

The final three flight lines were completed on Saturday, September 25th by Sander Geophysical. All data has been transferred to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Rick Blakely, at Menlo Park, California, for final checks for adequacy. After discussions between Rick Blakely, Sander Geophysical and Nick Stelavato, NWRPO, the decision to release Sander Geophysical was made. The USGS is now beginning preliminary data processing and will shortly receive the final processed data sets from Sander Geophysical home office in Ontario, Canada. Rick Blakely has, at the request of NWRPO, "looked" at some of the data in the vicinity of Phase II Early Warning Drilling Program well locations so final drill sites can be determined and environmental permits completed prior to commencing drilling. Rick Blakely will be doing detailed analysis of all data over the next months and as NWRPO receives reports, they will be put on the website, www.nyecounty.com, for all to review.

Nye County Participates in EIS Hearings

The Department of Energy (DOE) released its long-awaited Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed high-level nuclear waste disposal site at Yucca Mountain. At least 17 public hearings on the EIS have been scheduled, the first two of which were held in Amargosa Valley and Pahrump in late September. Hearings have been held in Goldfield, Ely and Georgia, and hearings are scheduled for Washington, DC, Lone Pine, Denver, Reno, Austin (NV), Crescent Valley, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and St. Louis. Nye County has presented comments at most of the hearings thus far, and will participate in future hearings. NWRPO staff have stated that the EIS doesn't take into account many concerns of Nye County including DOE's lack of plans to mitigate the impacts of the disposal site on the County. The County is especially concerned with the impacts of the repository on long-term water supplies and water quality and does not see the EIS addressing Nye's concerns that these impacts be identified and mitigated. Other areas of concern are DOE's plans to transport the nuclear waste by rail and/or highway through the County's communities, the lack of information about the transportation program, and the County's lack of ability to deal with an emergency involving nuclear waste.

Nye County called for additional public hearings on the EIS in



EIS Hearings, cont'd

Beatty, Tonopah, and Round Mountain. Nye County will be submitting formal written comments on the EIS before the deadline in early February, 2000, and will participate in future hearings. County residents can access the EIS on the internet at www.ymp.gov or view the documents at County libraries.



Formation of the Science & Technology Regional Development Corporation Underway

Nye County officials are working with the Nevada Test Site development Corporation (NTSDC) officials to get the by-laws and other documents ready for the official formation of the Science & Technology Regional Development Corporation (RDC). Formation of the RDC was made possible by the Nye County Board of Commissioners when it passed Nye County Bill 99-06 which allows the County to form the RDC with the NTSDC. The Commission is authorized to form the RDC under the provisions of Assembly Bill 528 passed by the Nevada Legislature earlier this year. AB 528 is being hailed as an important tool for rural counties who want to promote private investment, build the tax base and enhance job opportunities for local residents.

The RDC being formed in Nye County will begin the development of a science and technology-oriented business park in the northern end of the Town of Amargosa Valley near the intersection of Highways 373 and 95.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

November 3, 1999 – Nevada Science & Technology Corridor Meeting, Beatty Community Center, Beatty, 9:00 am

November 4, 1999 – Draft EIS Public Hearing, Statham Hall, Lone Pine, CA, 12-3 pm and 7-10 pm

November 9, 1999 – Draft EIS Public Hearing, Caliente Youth Center, Caliente, NV, 12-3 pm and 6-10 pm

December 1, 1999 – Draft EIS Public Hearing, Lawlor Events Center, Reno, NV, 12-3 pm and 6-10 pm

December 7, 1999 – Draft EIS Public Hearing, Austin Town Hall, Austin, NV, 11-2 pm and 5:30-9:30 pm

December 9, 1999 – Draft EIS Public Hearing, Crescent Valley Town Hall, Crescent Valley, NV, 10-1 pm and 6-10 pm

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