

Nye County NWRPO Update

December 10, 1998

Volume 1, Issue 1

Early Warning Drilling Program Begins

Nye County's NWRPO works to protect the interests of its citizens in activities related to the transport and storage of nuclear waste in and through Nye County.

The NWRPO is committed to helping Nye County residents become fully informed about nuclear waste activities.

This "Update" is part of Nye County's efforts to influence the direction of existing and future Yucca Mountain actions through communication and information sharing.



On November 30, Nye County's Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office (NWRPO) began drilling the first in a series of nine wells that will provide information about future activities related to the proposed Yucca Mountain high-level nuclear waste repository. Geologists, field technicians, drillers, and dirt contractors are working at the site twenty-four hours a day. A geologist from the Beatty-Bullfrog mine, a dirt contractor from Amargosa Valley and a field technician from Nye County are members of the technical team.

The purpose of the project is to determine how contaminants might travel through the groundwater system if they escape from the repository. Nye County is using an innovative pump-spinner system at the site

which will allow technicians to gather information to characterize rock units at a much lower cost than has been customary thus far at the Yucca Mountain Project.

The Nye County Early Warning Drilling Program is funded by the United States Congress. The Quality Assurance Program for the project has been audited and approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

The Early Warning Drilling Program (EWDP) will provide groundwater information important to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository

Nye County Hosts Repository Design Workshop

Nye County formally presented a conceptual design for a ventilated repository at a two-day Yucca Mountain Alternative Repository Design Workshop on December 1- 2. The County hosted the national workshop as part of its' Yucca Mountain oversight program activities and in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office.

Fifty scientists, engineers and other interested parties from Nye County, the Department of Energy and various oversight boards and agencies participated in the Las Vegas workshop. The purpose of the gathering was to examine the status of DOE's design for the proposed Yucca Mountain Repository and to introduce Nye County's ven-

tilated repository design. Design scenarios currently being considered by DOE anticipate waste package failure within the first several thousand years of waste containment. A ventilated repository, as proposed by Nye County, could significantly increase the safety of the repository by increasing the time the waste package would remain intact.

Key features of a ventilated repository design include limitation of the volume of water coming into contact with waste packages, temperature reduction in waste storage packages, and increased stability within repository tunnels.

NWRPO Forms Emergency Responder Working Group

During the month of November, Nye County's Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office worked in cooperation with emergency response groups from Nye County communities to form an Emergency Responder Radioactive Materials Working Group. The purpose of the working group is to address potential safety issues related to transportation of radioactive waste through Nye County and to develop and implement mitigation measures to protect the environment and quality of life within the County.

The activities of the Emergency Responder Working Group will be particularly important in the near future because DOE may change the route by which low-level radioactive waste comes into Nye County. The Caliente route alternative currently under consideration by DOE is a route that is also being studied for shipment of high-level radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain.

One important emergency response task to be completed before DOE high-level waste shipments begin or low-level waste routes are changed, will be the updating of the Pahrump streets database.

The NWRPO is working in cooperation with the Town of Pahrump, the Pahrump Fire Department, the Nye County Planning Department, the Nye County Roads Department, and the Valley Electric Association, Inc., to expand and upgrade the streets database for use in emergency response planning and actions. A Geographic Information System (GIS) will be used to prepare maps for each emergency response area grid. Grids will be field-verified by Pahrump Fire Department personnel. Once the mapping work is completed, the Nye County Roads Department will maintain the database in current status using a real-time differential Global Positioning System (GPS).

Nye County Continues Yucca Mountain Impact Studies

Through the efforts of the NWRPO, Nye County continues to work at developing plans and programs to protect County residents against the impacts of the Yucca Mountain high-level waste repository, if it is sited in Nye County. These plans include ideas for mitigating impacts that cannot be avoided, and offsetting economic and resource inequities that may result from high-level and low-level radioactive waste storage and transportation activities within the county.

In relation to these planning activities, the NWRPO's Science and Technology Corridor

NWRPO's Science and Technology Corridor project recently received a Community Development Block Grant for a downtown and transportation plan for Tonopah as part of Nye County's continued efforts to study mitigation scenarios related to Yucca Mountain impacts.

project has recently begun discussions with Sterling Energy Systems, Boeing, and Florida Power and Light related to possible development of renewable energy generation along the I-95 corridor.

NWRPO is also studying the potential land use and economic effects of DOE transportation alternatives under consideration as part of the Yucca Mountain EIS. This study includes work on a draft set of criteria for transportation of high-level waste for consideration by member counties of the Affected Units of Local Government (AULG) organization.

News from the NWRPO Office.....

NOTICE: The Early Warning Drilling Program will close for the holidays from December 18 through January 3. The NWRPO office in Pahrump will maintain regular office hours.

The NWRPO team wishes you holiday happiness and joy. May the peace and beauty of the season remain with you throughout the coming year.

Nye County NWRPO
1210 E. Basin Road
Suite #6
Pahrump, NV 89048
Phone: 702-727-7727
Fax: 702-727-7919

