

From the Director

On March 18, 2002, I was sworn in as the Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM). This Office is responsible within the Department of Energy for implementing the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and developing a geologic repository and the associated transportation system to safely manage and dispose of the Nation's inventory of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

It is my responsibility to ensure that an efficient nuclear waste management system is in place, that our disposal decisions are based on sound scientific understanding, and that my organization is responsive to Congress, oversight organizations, and the public. The focus of OCRWM's fiscal year 2001 efforts was the completion of the analyses and reports that constitute the technical basis for a decision and communication of this information to the public to enable them to participate through a public comment process.

OCRWM's endeavor is both technically and institutionally complex. This Administration is committed to making progress toward solving the national problem of spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste management, while remaining true to the principles of sound science and responsible public policy. Most of the work discussed in this report was completed before I became Director, including major actions in the site characterization phase of the Program that eventually led up to the Secretary's recommendation of Yucca Mountain.

On February 14, Secretary Abraham forwarded his recommendation to the President, based on

more than 20 years of research, that Yucca Mountain, Nevada, be developed as the Nation's geologic repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. In making his recommendation, the Secretary determined that the Yucca Mountain site is scientifically and technically suitable for development as a repository; that compelling national interests favor proceeding with the decision to site a repository there; and that there are no countervailing considerations that outweigh those interests.

On February 15, 2002, after receiving the Secretary's recommendation, the President announced that he considered Yucca Mountain qualified for a construction permit application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Accordingly, the President transmitted his recommendation of the site to Congress.

On May 8 and July 9, 2002, the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively, passed resolutions approving the siting of the repository. And on July 23, 2002, the President signed into law the Congressional Joint Resolution designating the Yucca Mountain site as the Nation's first geologic repository.

Next, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will evaluate the information we have gathered during the past two decades, and the data and analyses we continue to develop, as it considers the site for a construction authorization. The Commission will conduct an open, public process, enabling the public to continue to participate as this Nation works toward the solution to a vital challenge we all share.



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