

SEIS/REIS Hearings
Comments for the Record
Amargosa Valley, Nevada
November 26, 2007

Good afternoon. I am Joni Eastley, vice-chair of the Nye County Board of Commissioners. As you are well aware, Nye is the site county for the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain. As commissioners, we are responsible for developing county policy as it relates to this project, then communicating that policy to our Nuclear Waste Repository Office for implementation.

I appreciate DOE scheduling one of these hearings in Nye County. Nye is a cooperating agency on the Supplement to the EIS and is pleased to have had an opportunity to work with DOE to ensure that our interests and concerns are included in that document. And although we reserve the right to make additional comments, I do not anticipate any beyond those that I will make today. Nye County will however, submit formal comments for the record on the Rail Alignment EIS, and anticipate doing that on or before January 10, 2008.

First, let me say that Nye County is the site county for the repository. That decision was made long ago by others. Nye County was not consulted, and we had no say in its selection. But regardless of being excluded from the decision-making process, as elected officials we have pragmatically chosen to actively and constructively engage DOE in this process. We are firm in our resolve concerning this and until the law changes, if it ever does, we believe that we need to do everything in our power to represent our citizens by providing the oversight needed to:

- Protect the health, safety, economic well-being and quality of life of our residents;
- Protect the environment;
- Ensure that the repository operates safely and successfully, and
- Ensure that whatever transportation system is put in place operates safely and serves to advance opportunities for economic development throughout the county.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act was signed into law in 1982. It was amended in 1987 to make Yucca Mountain the only site characterized, and then Congress formally designated the site in 2002. My colleagues and I refuse to ignore this law and lazily assume that the State will prevail in its opposition to this project. It would be dangerous and irresponsible not to constructively engage DOE during this process when we have so much to lose by not doing so.

The various political leaders of both parties insist that decisions about Yucca Mountain should be based on sound science. Through its independent scientific oversight program, Nye County has produced approximately \$30 million worth of studies, and what we have observed is that this is not only a technically feasible project, but that it can be done safely. In fact, we have reason to believe that the environmental impact of nuclear weapons tests at the Nevada Test Site (which, I'd like to point out, is also wholly-contained within the borders of Nye County), up gradient from Yucca Mountain, puts Nye County citizens, at least in the relative nearer term, at greater risk than this repository ever will. I firmly believe that as long as this is a retrievable repository, as opposed to the "dump" that it has been so commonly referred to, we would all be better served if it was viewed as a national energy reserve and its contents as a resource. IF

As I noted previously, Nye is a cooperating agency in the Supplemental EIS. Of particular note in our display in this room is a news release that announces the results of a rail economic study suggesting that west central Nevada could realize significant economic benefit from the construction of the railroad designed to serve the repository. Also included is a position paper prepared by the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization that sets forth their view of how important Yucca Mountain is to them in the context of energy independence and sufficiency, the nuclear renaissance, and energy policy in general. As can be seen, Yucca Mountain does not stand alone in the arena of energy policy and economic growth. Many reputable experts and experienced managers and planners in similar areas see the value of this project.

In the end, Nye County expects that the people who will ultimately work at Yucca Mountain will live in Nye County, as opposed to riding buses to and from Las Vegas. And when and where it makes sense, we also believe that the businesses and industries associated with the repository should be located here in Nye County.

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Finally, consider the irony that at one time Nevada's political leadership actually endorsed this project and even attempted to segregate the Yucca Mountain site in a separate county—Bullfrog County. In the context of contemporary politics where responsible government would have us find solutions as opposed to political opportunities, it can certainly be said that “We were for it, before we were against it.” As I said earlier, the law is what it is and until it changes or the state prevails in the courts, we intend to remain actively and constructively engaged with DOE until the end.

The time has come to either advance or terminate this program based on its merits—but only on its merits. The NRC has been charged with that responsibility and regardless of one's position, either for or against, we need to see an end to the stalling tactics and politicizing of science and bring this project to a conclusion. }