



June 7, 2011

Nevada Site Office Environmental Management

# EM NEWS FLASH



## Experts Share Updates on Groundwater at Beatty Open House

Groundwater on and near the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site) was the topic of discussion at a recent open house in Beatty, Nevada.

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, residents of Beatty, Amargosa Valley, Pahrump, and other neighboring communities gathered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Groundwater Open House to learn about the extensive work being done to address groundwater contamination from historic underground nuclear tests.

A series of [posters](#) and displays on such topics as drilling, hydrology, radiation, computer modeling, and groundwater sampling lined the Beatty Community Center providing community members the opportunity to move at their own pace and speak one-on-one with experts on each subject.



Open house attendees study a map that shows groundwater wells and springs throughout the Nevada National Security Site.

From 1951 to 1992, the United States conducted 828 underground nuclear tests at the Nevada National Security Site.

While the U.S Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office sponsored the open house, a variety of organizations participated in the event, including Nye County, the State of Nevada Divisions of Environmental Protection and Water Resources, U.S Geological Survey, Desert Research Institute, and the Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board. Subjects like water rights, the State of Nevada's role as regulator, and independent monitoring were part of the discussion. In addition, various contractor and federal staff working on the Nevada Site Office groundwater characterization and environmental monitoring programs shared information on the team's integrated efforts to protect the public from contaminated groundwater.

The role of computer modeling was also a featured topic at the open house—particularly how data from sampling is used to develop computerized three-dimensional images of groundwater flow patterns beneath the NNSS surface. Guests were able to see real model images as well as speak directly to the computer modeling experts who use these detailed visuals to better understand how contaminants behave in groundwater.

*The groundwater characterization team is composed of U.S. Department of Energy Nevada Site Office federal staff and a number of organizations, including:*

- *Desert Research Institute*
- *Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory*
- *Los Alamos National Laboratory*
- *National Security Technologies*
- *Navarro-Intera*
- *State of Nevada*
- *U.S. Geological Survey*

*Groundwater characterization activities are conducted in accordance with the Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order (FFACO), a legally binding document agreed to by the State of Nevada, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the U.S. Department of Defense.*

“People want to know how this affects them,” remarked Amargosa Valley resident Jack Sypolt, who spent more than an hour speaking with experts and studying NNSS maps. He said he was especially interested in the drilling component of the process, and how dozens of wells, extending several thousands of feet beneath the surface, are being placed on and surrounding the NNSS to test groundwater. “What I learned is that there is contaminant flow,” Sypolt explained, “but it is moving very slowly, and that is good.”

Representatives of the [Community Environmental Monitoring Program](#) and the [Routine Radiological Environmental Monitoring Program](#) were also on hand to answer questions from attendees. These groups regularly test water samples from sources on and around the Site—increasing the range and scope of monitoring, which helps maintain public and worker safety. “Protecting the public is always our top concern,” commented Deputy Federal Project Director, Rob Boehlecke, who spent the evening talking to open house guests. “A major part of that responsibility is keeping people informed about the real day-to-day work that is being done to ensure their safety.”

Answering questions about public involvement opportunities were members of the volunteer-based, [Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board](#). Board members spoke with open house attendees about the Board’s overall role, which is to provide the Nevada Site Office recommendations on NNSS [Environmental Management Programs](#), as well as their specific involvement in the NNSS [groundwater program](#).

“I believe this year’s Open House was the best one yet and we look forward to going back into the community to do it again,” said Bill Wilborn, federal lead for groundwater characterization. To provide feedback on this year’s Open House or suggestions for the next one, please contact Environmental Management Public Involvement at [envmgt@nv.doe.gov](mailto:envmgt@nv.doe.gov) or 702-295-3521.

---

You have received this announcement as a member of the U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office Environmental Management distribution list which is not shared with advertisers or third-party websites. If you would like to be removed from the list, please call 702-295-3521 or e-mail your request to [envmgt@nv.doe.gov](mailto:envmgt@nv.doe.gov) with the words “EM News Flash Remove” in the subject line. If you know anyone who would like to begin receiving these articles, please have them send a request to [envmgt@nv.doe.gov](mailto:envmgt@nv.doe.gov) with the words “EM News Flash Subscribe” in the subject line. You can also follow us on Facebook at [NNSA Nevada Site Office](#).



*safety* ❖ *performance* ❖ *cleanup* ❖ *closure*