

EIS000213

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U.S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site
Characterization Office
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Dear Ms. Dixon

I am writing to comment on the draft environmental impact statement that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has issued related to its ongoing efforts to site the proposed Yucca Mountain repository for isolating the nation's commercial used nuclear fuel. I have worked for two nuclear utilities that have dry storage facilities for used fuel – Duke Energy Co. of Charlotte, N.C., and currently Virginia Power in Richmond.

1 My experience at these utilities has been that nuclear safety is of paramount importance, and decisions regarding handling, storing and moving used fuel are made conservatively to ensure employees and the public are protected. Although it has been demonstrated that used nuclear fuel can be safely stored in dry storage containers at the reactor sites, this is only a temporary solution and I oppose the no-action alternatives in the draft EIS that would have the fuel remain on site permanently.

2 Instead, it makes more sense from a public safety perspective to keep this fuel at a central location, isolated in a licensed repository specifically designed for this purpose. It is ridiculous to keep used nuclear fuel on site near large bodies of water – as some have proposed – especially since there are years of experience in safely transporting the waste. Since the draft EIS does not identify any potential environmental impacts that would be the basis for not proceeding with the proposed repository, I urge DOE to move ahead to resolve this important issue.

Already, there has been an extraordinary body of credible and conservative scientific evidence that continues to support moving forward with the Yucca Mountain project. Indeed, Yucca Mountain has undergone scientific study for over a decade and is probably one of the most extensively studied pieces of property in the world.

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As you know, electricity from safe nuclear power plants represents about 20 percent of the overall energy mix in the United States. These plants make this electricity without emitting carbon-dioxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, pollutants that either may be linked to global warming and contribute to air pollution. It is important that we preserve this safe technology so that future generations can continue to enjoy its clean air benefits. It is also important that we do not push off on the next generation the burden of dealing with used commercial nuclear fuel by not moving ahead with the proposed repository.

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I urge you to continue with your preferred alternative to address a permanent solution to the used nuclear fuel problem – completing the technical review for storing this material at Yucca Mountain. Scientific facts, not emotional reactions and conjecture, should govern the Department's ultimate decision on the proposed Yucca Mountain site.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Zuercher
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cc: The Honorable Thomas J. Bliley, Jr.
The Honorable John W. Warner
The Honorable Charles S. Robb

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