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2138 Bristol Pl.
Carson City, NV 89703
Nov. 17, 1999

pm

Ms. Wendy R. Dixon, EIS Project Manager
Yucca Mountain Site Office
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 30307, M/S 010
North Las Vegas, NV 89036

EIS000403

Dear Ms. Dixon:

1 I'm writing in opposition to the proposed "temporary" nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, and request that you place into the official record this letter and an accompanying newspaper column (copy enclosed) in preparation for the Dec. 2 DOE public hearing on this project at the Legislative Building here in Carson City.

5 I commented as follows on this issue in a column published on Feb. 14, 1999, by the Carson City daily "Nevada Appeal": "Although the waste dump would be a financial bonanza for the nuclear power industry and its lobbyists, the potential (environmental and human) costs to Nevada and Nevadans far outweigh any benefits." And echoing Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn in congressional testimony earlier this year, "This (nuclear waste dump) legislation throws science out the window . . . and places raw political expediency as the driving force for dealing with difficult problems involving technology and the environment."

2 cont'd. Most Nevadans recognize that this "temporary" project was foisted off on our state more than ten years ago by politicians who felt that we were too small and too weak to defend ourselves. For that reason, it is readily apparent that the project has much more to do with politics than with science, and we fear that your Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will merely attempt to justify a political decision that has already been taken.

3 Therefore, I urge you to consider reasonable, no-action alternatives to the Yucca Mountain site, including the option of storing nuclear waste where it's generated for the next 100 years or until a viable alternative can be developed.

4 Again, as I wrote in my column, "The Feds have miscalculated on this contentious issue. They probably think we'll welcome the dump if they wave a fistful of federal dollars at us. But on this issue, it won't work." Please comply with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969, which requires you to "take actions that protect, restore and enhance the environment." The Yucca Mountain Project does none of the above.

Sincerely,


Guy W. Farmer

(1)

Enclosure: column, as stated

cc: Yucca Mountain Project
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, D.C.

Mr. R. Michael Turnipseed
Nevada State Engineer
Carson City, NV

Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office
Carson City, NV

U.S. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV)
Washington, D.C.

opinion

NEVADA APPEAL SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1999

38

Nevada delegation makes earth-shaking argument

It was good news for all Nevadans last Wednesday when Gov. Kenny Guinn appeared before Congress to strongly oppose the establishment of a "temporary" nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain. That means our new Republican governor and bipartisan congressional delegation are unanimous in their opposition to the dump.

Guinn testified against the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1999, co-sponsored by Reps. Fred Upton, R-Mich., and Ed Towns, D-N.Y., before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power.

"This legislation throws science out the window," Guinn told congressmen. "It throws equity and fairness away (and) places raw political expediency as the driving force for dealing with difficult problems involving technology and the environment." He pointed out that the southern Nevada site is so earthquake-prone that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service recently rejected the area for construction of a data processing center.

"Isn't it ironic that it's acceptable to store extremely dangerous and long-lived radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, but it's too risky to use the same area for storing records on ... immigrants?" Guinn asked. Democratic Sens. Richard Bryan and Harry Reid and Republican Rep. Jim Gibbons of Reno continue to oppose the federal project as does newly elected Rep. Shelley Berkley, a Las Vegas Democrat. Bryan called it a "life or death issue" for our state and Reid said shipments of nuclear waste to Nevada



recently congratulated Guinn ... for not falling into the perennial pattern that seems to require all politicians to demagogue the Yucca Mountain issue sometime during their campaign." Ed Allison is an old friend of mine but he's on the wrong side of this issue.

Although the waste dump would be a financial bonanza for the nuclear power industry and its lobbyists, the potential costs to Nevada and Nevadans far outweigh any benefits. As Guinn told Congress, "It (the dump) creates health and safety risks, not only for the people of Nevada but also for all those whose homes and businesses are in the transportation paths of the deadliest substances known to mankind." He added that Yucca Mountain is one of

"would jeopardize millions of American citizens."

Guinn's opposition is particularly significant because some of the nuclear dump's strongest supporters are high-powered Republicans. As Nevada political analyst Jon Ralston wrote last week, "Some of the anti-dump folks might have been suspicious because Guinn's swearing-in was co-chaired by nuclear waste dump advocate Ed Allison. Also, a pro-dump group, the Study Committee,

the nation's most seismically active regions with more than 621 earthquakes of magnitude 2.5 or greater registered in the past 20 years. Well said, governor!

Just last month, on Jan. 27, a magnitude 4.7 earthquake hit Yucca Mountain and the nearby Nevada Test Site. "This is just another serious warning about the unsuitability of the Yucca Mountain site," said Rep. Gibbons, who holds a master's degree in geology. He cautioned that if the U.S. Department of Energy doesn't "recognize these earthquakes as a signal, something is wrong with their approach to this matter." Yes congressman, something is wrong with their approach because Yucca Mountain is the only site DOE is studying for storage of the nation's most radioactive nuclear waste — 77,000 tons of spent fuel pellets from nuclear power reactors that will be encased in steel-nickel containers. That's not very reassuring, however, since nuclear waste remains radioactive forever. In other words, we pass the problem along to our children and grandchildren, and their children and grandchildren. No thanks!

Meanwhile, DOE plunges ahead in its single-minded pursuit of the Yucca Mountain site. And while President Clinton has promised our Democratic senators to veto any bill designating Nevada as an interim storage site, a bipartisan effort is under way in Congress to override such a veto. Meanwhile, I have yet to hear an encouraging word from Clinton's new Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, a former New

Mexico congressman.

The whole debate reminds me of that old television commercial where two kids feed what they don't want to eat to cute little Mikey, who doesn't know any better. The general idea in Washington is to dump the nuclear waste on Nevada, which is a desert state with a small population that supposedly doesn't know any better.

As usual, the Feds have miscalculated on this contentious issue. They probably think we'll welcome the dump if they wave a fistful of federal dollars at us. But on this issue, it won't work.

As Rep. Berkley said, the current House proposal would "force virtually all of the nation's high-level waste on the people of one state — a state where there is not even one nuclear reactor." Like her, I think nuclear waste should be stored where it's generated. Remember when New York City happily shipped its garbage to other states until the unwitting recipients spoke up and told the New Yorkers where they could put their garbage? Well, that's the way I feel about nuclear waste.

IMPEACHMENT: The Senate impeachment trial ended Friday with President Clinton's acquittal on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. In a courtroom, they'd call it jury nullification. I call it a hollow victory for the president. We deserve better.

Guy W. Farmer, a semi-retired journalist and former U.S. diplomat, resides in Carson City.