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TO: Ms. Wendy Dixon, EIS Project Manager, U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management,
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
P.O. Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

RE: Hearing in St. Louis, MO Thursday Jan. 20, 2000
Yucca Mountain and the Transportation of Radioactive Wastes
Proposal

From: Chris McClarren
3936 Fillmore St.
St. Louis MO 63116

(I would like a response to any of my questions and to be put on any mailing lists regarding this proposal to ship irradiated fuel rods to Yucca Mountain.)

My Response to Your Proposal

Let me quickly thank you for this chance to give you my response to your proposal. My name is Chris McClarren. I am an artist who has lived in this city of St. Louis, MO all my 35 years. I would like to preface my comments by saying that I truly do not mean anything I am about to say to sound hostile. I want you to seriously listen to what I have to say but my feelings about this are strong. Your ^{recommendation} proposal, if carried out, would be one of the gravest mistakes this country could ever make and would unnecessarily endanger the lives of millions of people, including generations of folks to come. Please hear me out.

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Now, let me be clear: I oppose this ^{action} plan with all my heart and soul. I oppose all transport of this high level radioactive waste (the irradiated fuel rods) by air, water, highway or railway. I oppose its concentration at Yucca Mountain, a known earthquake active site.

1 continued

High level radioactive waste is the most deadly toxin known to humans and this beautiful planet. We made a grave mistake producing it. It is humanities most lethal legacy. There should be an immediate halt to its production because its production is behind why we are here today. Some scientists feel there are safe ways to store and dispose of this waste. Most agree that there is no truly safe way to do this. Since there is disagreement in the scientific communities, we should wait until it is absolutely clear how to deal with it before transporting it and burying it deep in tunnels in Yucca Mountain. My own proposal would be to not only halt production of the waste but to keep this stuff permanently where it is, on-site, above-ground, monitored, and retrievably stored. At least this waste should be left where it is until it is safer to deal with and until we know more about possibly neutralizing the radioactive poisons. At the very least, you should

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3 continued

3 continued wait to ship it until the facility at Yucca Mountain is ready. Having these fuel rods sitting around in a parking lot is not a good idea.

1 continued Of course the gravest danger is and will be transportation. First of all, transportation is not needed and would be a waste of taxpayers money. The wastes can be stored at or near existing nuclear sites. Utility companies are just trying to get the taxpayers to shoulder the cost, responsibility and liability for long-term storage. We taxpayers would be paying for our own death warrants if we pay for this transportation to Yucca. To quote an editorial in the Las Vegas Review Journal, "As these poisons are dragged across cities, every mile toxins go adds another dangerous mile to the potential for a disaster..." and as Rick Rappaport, a Seattle neurosurgeon and member of the Puget Sound Physicians for Social Responsibility said, "The likelihood of cancers (among people along a shipping route) in the event of an accident is 100 percent." With large numbers of shipments, accidents are guaranteed to happen. Take one quick look at the track record of the shipping industries - the trucking and railroad industries to be used - and you will know immediately that it will prove fatal to transport these wastes. I have a short time to speak so I will not go into a litany of the accidents that have occurred with these industries but I will mention one in particular to make my point. Southern Pacific Railroad dumped almost 20,000 gallons of a highly toxic pesticide into the Sacramento River in 1991 which killed over 100,000 fish along a 45 mile stretch of water leading to Lake Shasta, a major source of drinking water supply for millions of Californians. I want to read you a quote from a man in the Sacramento Bee because it highlights the dangers of transporting these waste. "Instead of a derailed train dumping toxic weed killer into the Sacramento River and the subsequent catastrophic effects, picture the wreck, for whatever the cause, of a truck and trailer hauling a load of nuclear waste through any of our towns and cities. Nature may dissipate the weed killer in 40 days, but the number of lifetimes it would take for the radioactivity to wear off can only be wildly imagined." To paraphrase various information sources I have researched, if a serious accident were to occur and release radioactivity, people and land would be contaminated, resulting in severe long-term health effects and environmental problems. Avoiding the release of radioactivity depends on the safety of shipping containers and no safe shipping container exists today. If an accident occurred, local emergency response people would most likely arrive with no training or equipment to handle radioactive waste accidents. Few hospitals are prepared to treat victims of radiation exposure. Most local governments and states don't have funding for such training or equipment.

Imagine lots of new spills around the country in highly populated areas like St. Louis, millions of increasing cancer victims, truckloads of this waste possibly dumped we know not where (hazardous waste has been known on occasion to just disappear when corrupt entities are involved)... Continue to imagine trains derailed as they cross old worn out rail lines, terrorists having a field day as

thousands of these fuel rods are transported. Imagine sabotage, fires, collisions, natural catastrophes. It's a nightmare scenario.

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How do you at the DOE propose these communities around the country that live along the radioactive shipment routes prepare and what are you going to do to help? Are hospitals prepared? Are you going to have hazardous response teams in place across the country ahead of time? If you do decide to transport this stuff, I beg of you to have acceptable emergency response plans developed and implemented beforehand. As Mike Nelson of the Greater St. Louis Lead Poisoning Prevention Council says, "We can no longer tolerate the attitude that residents of St. Louis City or any community should be considered the "collateral damage" of any plans created by individuals who do not have public health and safety as a priority." I ask you then, what are your priorities? Are they us, the general public, or are they the many who would stand to profit from this clean up?

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This is a time in humanities history when we can no longer afford to make decisions according to profit or those who profit. I feel this ^{action} proposal was made with the nuclear power interests in mind, not the welfare of the people of this country. This decision should be made according to what is best for us all. We must wake up. We are going through a sixth mass extinction due to the many mistakes made by us humans in our treatment of the Earth. We cannot afford any more big mistakes. So what you do about this waste will be critical, now and in the future. More community residents and public involvement is needed in this decision making. Public education of all should be required about the source, nature and necessary containment of radioactive materials in order to preserve continuity of life on the planet so an informed citizenry can join together locally, regionally, nationally, and globally to expose this lethal reality of our nuclear legacy and better participate in these processes of what to do about it. Until then, leave the waste where it is as I have suggested. Make these sites monuments to a new legacy of humans turning the tide of their own folly and beginning to live not as Gods but as one humble creature amongst many, accountable to the laws of nature. We could surround the sites with murals and educational materials. They could be monuments of hope that humans can learn from their mistakes and live simply and well with the earth and each other.

also
little
attention
given
to the
NO action
alternatives
indicate

Questions I want answered and raised for debate:

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12 | How many truck and train accidents are there a year? | What are you going to do
13 | when a truck or train crashes? What funding is provided to local communities for
equipment and training for a high level radioactive accident/ emergency?
If there is an accident, how large an area could be affected? |

14 | Who will be the contractors that will transport the waste? How will they be
assigned? Will it be the lowest bidder or will you investigate for the safest and
best track record? |

15 | Do any fool-proof fuel containers exist for the storage, shipment or the
permanent disposal of the wastes? Have these containers had full-scale tests?
If radioactive gas leaks out, wouldn't it go around the world? |

16 | What shape are the highways and bridges and rail lines you propose to use? |

17 | What routes do you propose to use? Have they been identified and studied for
safety? Shouldn't the shipments be delayed until this is done and emergency
response preparations are in place? |

18 | It has been estimated that at least 40% of the highway shipments and 25% of
the rail shipments would come through this area. Is this true? How much of this
waste do you plan to come through St. Louis and at what frequency over this 30
year period? | Will the trucks and rail cars be marked and tracked? If so, how will
19 | you prevent terrorist activity when you only propose two armed escorts in your
own regulations? |

20 | How many lost lives are considered acceptable and whose lives? St. Louis
lives? | Yours?

21 | I here that the proposed estimate for the cost to the taxpayers for this project
would be \$42.5 billion? Why do we have to pay for the clean up? Why aren't the
producers being forced to pay for it, while we oversee it? If we do have to pay
for the clean up, wouldn't it be more cost effective to halt waste production,
leave the stuff where it is and pay for any cleaning up and monitoring needed on-
site? Aren't most of these sites contaminated anyway? |

22 | Isn't it risky, storing all this waste in one place? |

23 | Since federal transportation law requires hazardous shipments to travel the
interstate highways, rather than the least populated and less traveled state
byways, these shipping routes are going to cut through the heart of homes,
resorts and some of the most densely populated areas in the country. What is
the thinking behind this? |

24 | Isn't this horrifying risk of transportaion unnecessary? Can't we halt waste
production and leave the waste on site? |

I am concerned about insuring that the agencies set up to protect me and the
welfare of the public are able to do just that. What could we do to insure that
there is no influence of those producing this waste and profiting from its clean
up over entities like the NRC and the DOE and any other entities that are
supposed to oversee and monitor the nuclear power industry and various nuclear
weapons facilities?

What is stopping you from eventually storing not just the irradiated fuel rods from the places in the U. S. you propose they are coming from but also taking in the worlds waste as we currently are doing with Canada, Africa and Europe as well as the third world countries we sell the technology to and as part of the deal offer to take their waste off their hands and store it here?

Don't we need a global ban on all nuclear waste generation if the planet is to survive?