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DOE ASSESSMENT F/c

Mr. Sheldon Meyers
Program Director
Office of Nuclear Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Meyers:

Your first three briefings to the NRC staff have been quite useful in providing us with a general overview of the DOE Nuclear Waste Management Program. I hope we will be able to continue these briefings on a regular basis. However, in addition to these general briefings, we would like, over the next several months, to begin assessments of selected portions of the DOE program.

We would like to begin with your in situ testing program. I feel that early review of the DOE in situ testing program would benefit both the NRC and DOE efforts by (1) allowing NRC to determine whether information being developed by DOE will be useful to NRC in developing its own regulatory program (and thus better assess its own research needs in this area), and (2) providing early feedback to DOE whether, in the opinion of the NRC staff, there are areas where (a) sufficient information is not being obtained or (b) information is not being collected and documented in a manner to support a later request for NRC licensing action. In addition, such information will assist the NRC staff in advising the Commission from time-to-time concerning the status of the national high-level waste disposal program.

In particular, we are interested in the following:

- Rationale and approach used in formulating and carrying out the program.
- Projects underway (purpose, scope, status, and schedule).
- Proposed projects (purpose, scope, and proposed schedule).
- Quality assurance programs and procedures to assure acquisition of valid technological data.

- Provisions for peer review.

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Mr. Sheldon Meyers

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- Rationale for all accelerated tests or tests with simulated waste.
- Provisions for standardizing testing procedures and comparing results from different tests.
- Other programs being monitored by DOE:
 - o In Situ field testing being done outside of the DOE Nuclear Waste Management Program (e.g., testing by other countries or organizations).
 - o Testing associated with "inadvertent" radionuclide emplacement (e.g., OKLO, migration tests associated with weapons tests, leakage or migration of stored or buried nuclear materials).
- Provisions for data accumulation, storage, and retrieval.

We would like to meet with you to determine how best to proceed. One possible approach would be to have your staff submit a written description of your in situ testing program to us. We could review this document and provide you with comments. As a follow-up, we would schedule meetings between our staffs to discuss the program and our comments. This could be followed by site visits by members of the NRC staff and their consultants.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter at your earliest possible convenience.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by
John B. Martin

John B. Martin, Director
Division of Waste Management

6/7/79

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