July 28, 2006

Mr. Robert Brient, Director
Quality Assurance
Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses
6220 Culebra Road, Building 189
San Antonio, TX 78238-5166

SUBJECT: U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION STAFF OBSERVATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2006 CENTER FOR NUCLEAR WASTE REGULATORY ANALYSES QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT 2006-1

Dear Mr. Brient:

On June 26-30, 2006, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff from the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards observed the Fiscal Year 2006 Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses (CNWRA) Quality Assurance (QA) Audit 2006-1, in San Antonio, Texas. The objective of this NRC Observation Audit of QA and technical programs was to determine if the CNWRA audit, and the QA program elements audited, were implemented effectively in accordance with NRC contractual and CNWRA QA Program requirements.

The CNWRA auditors noted two good practices during the audit, as well as two minor nonconformances and two minor nonconformances corrected during the audit. The auditors also identified and issued 15 recommendations regarding quality improvements to quality-affecting processes, procedures, and technical activities.

The NRC observer team evaluated the adequacy of the CNWRA audit process and the effectiveness of CNWRA QA Program implementation in meeting the QA requirements of 10 CFR Part 63, Subpart G. The NRC observers determined that, overall, the CNWRA audit team achieved its purpose and obtained its objectives in initiating and completing CNWRA Audit 2006-1. The auditors were thorough, effective, and performed in a professional manner. The observers agreed with the auditors' conclusions and recommendations that, overall, the CNWRA QA Program controls are being implemented adequately in the areas that were evaluated, except for the identified minor nonconformances noted by the audit team. It is also recommended that CNWRA appropriately consider the NRC observers' comments listed in Section 10, "NRC Staff Findings," in the enclosed Observation Audit Report. The enclosed Observation Audit Report Number OAR-06-04-CNWRA provides NRC staff's audit observations and conclusions.

Although a written response to this letter or the enclosed report is not required, we request that the CNWRA provide us with copies of its response to the auditors's findings.

If you have any questions, please call Wilkins Smith at (301) 415-5788 or by e-mail at wrs@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Deborah A. DeMarco, Deputy Program Manager
Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Enclosure: NRC Observation Audit Report No. OAR-06-04-CNWRA, "U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Observation of the Fiscal Year 2006 Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses Quality Assurance Audit 2006-1"

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Enclosure: NRC Observation Audit Report No. OAR-06-04-CNWRA, "U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Observation of the Fiscal Year 2006 Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses Quality Assurance Audit 2006-1"

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