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November 21, 1996

John C. Hoyle
Secretary of the Commission
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Chief of Docketing and Services Branch
Washington, DC 20555-0001

Dear Mr. Hoyle:

We have reviewed several of the Strategic Assessment Issue Papers and have prepared comments on individual issue papers. These papers are enclosed. We also support the comments of the Organization of Agreement States regarding all issue papers. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important direction-setting issues for NRC. The extension to the comment period was also appreciated. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

William J. Sinclair, Director
Division of Radiation Control

c: Dianne Nielson, Ph.D., Executive Director, UDEQ
Bob Quillin, Chairman, Organization of Agreement States



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STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT ISSUE PAPER
DSI 6 - HIGH-LEVEL WASTE AND SPENT FUEL
STATE OF UTAH COMMENTS

The basic question asked by NRC was: "In recognition of current uncertainties, how should NRC approach the present high-level waste situation?"

Utah has no nuclear power reactors and, as such, is not saddled with the problem of storage of high level waste for an indefinite amount of time. Utah is concerned about the status of Yucca Mountain either as an interim storage site or a permanent repository. This would require the shipment of spent fuel through Utah. As such, Utah could expect a significant increase in shipments upon opening of Yucca Mountain for either interim or permanent storage. Public perception of shipment of spent fuel being dangerous is a significant issue. An additional activity that NRC may want to consider is the development of outreach materials on the transportation issue for use by Radiation Control and emergency response programs. A brochure explaining the safeguards associated with the transportation of spent fuel and the safe history associated with such shipments would be helpful. Citizens of Utah become alarmed when they hear from the media or other sources that spent fuel is to travel through the state in significant numbers. NRC may want to partner with USDOT and DOE in pursuing the development of such information.

The Monitored Retrievable Storage (MRS) program has been one that has impacted Utah. Three separate siting attempts have been proposed - one by a county, one by an Indian tribe, and one by a private individual. From a technical standpoint, spent fuel can be safely stored, however a significant issue exist in public perception and acceptance of such storage. This is further complicated when it appears to be an East versus West issue or a transfer from the "haves" to the "have nots." Central in the political discussions of the siting attempts in Utah has been - we don't produce it here, why should we be burdened with its management. No state will readily accept a MRS or repository.

Considering the realization of the siting difficulties, Utah agrees that the Commission should take a more active role in resolving issues in the National high-level waste program consistent with the NRC mission. Perhaps lessons learned from the Military Base Closure Commission could be applied to high level waste. A process was established to get through "the politics" to accomplish what was best for the nation. A process needs to be established for management of high level waste.

Submitted by:

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