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MARCH 2005

Dear Editor:

Yucca Mountain is again very much in the news. A recent poll, commissioned by Senators Reid and Ensign, shows that "70% of Nevadans oppose construction of the repository and 57% want our elected officials to continue fighting it..."

Is it any wonder that so many Nevadans oppose the project when our politicians and the press continue to call it a "dump." When it is, in fact, a facility designed to store spent nuclear fuel (a very valuable commodity) so that it can be recovered and recycled when needed just as they do in Europe, Japan, Russia and other countries of the world.

To his legal credit, our Attorney General, Brian Sandoval, won a federal case against construction of the repository. He now claims, "That, the waste "dump" at Yucca Mountain will never open."

Sandoval says the waste storage tanks, "probably could fail within 100 years causing high-level waste material to leach into the ground water."

That argument is fatally flawed by the use of terms "could" and "probably" without any substantiating evidence and by the fact that the waste is a solid material which has been vitrified (turned into glass) and cannot possibly leach 1,000 ft. through impervious rock, to the ground water table.

Sandoval notes that the "dump location" is about 90 miles northwest of the fastest growing metropolitan area, next to one of the busiest Air Force bases in the country..." All of that is true but the repository site is the most intensely studied pieces of real estate in the world and has been found safe by some of the best scientists in the nation; including the National Academy of Science.

With that kind of background it would seem to be much safer than other Southern Nevada projects; consider Hoover Dam, for example. It was built across a fault zone in a lava flow. Consider also the nation's Nuclear Weapons Storage Facility, located in an intensely faulted zone on the north end of Sunrise Mountain, immediately east of Las Vegas. These two projects were not nearly as well studied as Yucca Mountain but would be far more damaging if they were to fail. There is no reason for real concern here either.

Sandoval also says that the "dump location" is literally a volcano that sits on an earthquake fault, above an aquifer.

That argument was apparently good enough to convince a federal judge; but it is entirely wrong on two issues and completely misleading on the third.

Wrong, because Yucca Mountain is not a volcano. It was formed from volcanic ash, called tuff, that derived from a volcano miles away. The oldest tuff at Yucca Mountain

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was deposited more than 15 million years ago. The more recent one was deposited 12.7 million years ago. The caldera (collapsed volcano) has not been active since that time and represents no threat.

Wrong, because the, "earthquake fault" or faults do not actually penetrate the repository site but are parallel to the mountain and define its boundaries. Movement along the faults would cause no damage.

In their wisdom, the scientists at the repository drifted (tunneled) over to these faults, to study and monitor them. To this day, not a single drop of water has appeared, in or along, any of the faults, nor any other place throughout the entire project excavation.

It is true that the site is above an aquifer; but Sandoval's statement is misleading because the aquifer is beneath 1,000 ft. of impervious rock. Water in the aquifer is very old, dating back to the last ice age (radio-nuclide tests). It is also moving very slowly northward away from the very young or recent aquifer below the fertile Amargosa Valley where opponents of the project fear there will be radioactive contamination. In truth, the two aquifers are not even remotely connected.

Sandoval and others continue to use these non-existing dangers in order to frighten the general public into believing that the Yucca Mountain project is a major threat to our safety and even to our lives. That concept is completely and obviously false.

I wonder. Were there no defense witnesses when our Attorney General made his case in federal court? My guess is that none were allowed to testify.

Did Sandoval deliberately ignore the facts or was he not properly made aware of them. He is a very bright and competent young man. I'm embarrassed for him.

Sandoval and others have said that there are no financial guarantees to Nevada that would derive from construction of the Nuclear Waste Repository. Certainly we lost our greatest bargaining chip for concessions when Governor Guinn vetoed the President's decision to complete the site and Sandoval won a bogus case against the government.

Here are some facts:

To date more than 4.5 billion tax dollars (\$4,500,000,000.00) have been spent at Yucca Mountain. An estimated 500 million dollars were used to buy equipment and products. The rest of the money was spent as follows:

Payments to Nevada (grants)	\$88,000,000.00
Payments to counties	99,500,000.00
P.I.L.T. (payment in lieu of taxes)	119,000,000.00
Payments to UNLV	84,000,000.00
Payments to UNR	55,500,000.00
Misc. other contributions	29,800,000.00
App. Total	<u>\$475,800,000.00</u>

To emphasize: that is 475 million, 800 thousand dollars.

The other approximate 3 billion dollars went to wages paid to workers and contractors mostly from Las Vegas.

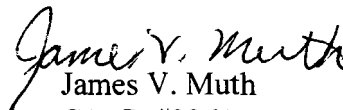
It's really too bad that these paltry amounts are not considered a benefit to Nevada.

The Nevada Nuclear Project office is keenly aware of all the favorable evidence and benefits. Their office was specifically founded for the sole purpose of defeating the repository facility. They will not publish the beneficial truths. The State was only able to create and maintain the office by using grant money provided to them by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Elected officials are now afraid to support the project because the original opposition was politically motivated, turning the public against it. Some of our strongest political leaders have told me, in confidence, that they personally favor the project but it would be "political suicide" to support it.

Where did these honorable elected officials come from? Are they more worried about their political careers than they are about the good of Nevada?

The physical and financial information contained herein is well documented fact.

  
James V. Muth  
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