
THE VERGE

Nye County Court Documents and
Newspaper Clippings —
the Nevadan Case for Nuclear
Waste Pre-1980.



ALEXANDRIA N. METSCHER
COUNTY CLERK
AND EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF
THE BOARD

ANDREW M. EASON
ROBERT H. CORNELI
ROBERT H. RUUD

Board of County Commissioners

Nye County

STATE OF NEVADA

PHONE 482-3330 P. O. Box 1031
TONOPAH, 89049

November 5, 1974

United States Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D. C. 20545

Attention: Assistant General Manager for
Biomedical and Environmental
Research and Safety Programs

Dear Sir:

In response to the recent notice allowing the public to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Management of Commercial High Level and Transuranic Radioactive Waste, please be advised that the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Nye, State of Nevada, at a regular meeting held on this date, unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the location of the nuclear waste storage facility on the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission's Nevada Test Site, which is situated in this county.

In addition, the Board adopts, as a representative attitude of the residents of the County of Nye, the letter of William P. Beko, a copy of which is attached hereto.

Very truly yours,

BOARD OF NYE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

By: Andrew M. Eason
Andrew M. Eason, Chairman

Copy

m. Gato
D. Jickel
D. milk-
R. Kisch

AME:dc

Enclosure

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission of the United States has developed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Commercial High Level and Transuranic Radioactive Waste; and,

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission is considering three sites for storage of such wastes, namely: the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, the Nevada Test Site, and the Hanford Reservation in Washington; and,

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission had previously allowed public comment to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement from September 12, 1974 to October 28, 1974; and,

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Nevada has requested that all Nevada citizens be given every opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement; and,

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission has agreed to extend the comment period to December 12, 1974, by conducting a public hearing on December 12, 1974, at 10:00 A.M. in the Ramada Inn, 999 S. Main Street in Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners do hereby endorse the request of the Governor of Nevada, and urge the residents of Clark County to review and comment on the

Resolution
December, 1974
Page Two

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board support the designation of the Nevada Test Site as the primary storage site for radioactive wastes and participate in the public hearing of December 12, 1974.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED this 5th day of December,
1974.



TOM WIESNER, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST:



Loretta Bowman, County Clerk

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission of the United States has developed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Commercial High Level and Transuranic Radioactive Waste; and

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission is considering three sites for storage of such wastes, namely: The Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, the Nevada Test Site, and the Hanford Reservation in Washington; and

WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission has previously allowed public comment to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement from September 12, 1974 to October 28, 1974; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Nevada has requested that all Nevada citizens be given every opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement; and


WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission has agreed to extend the comment period to December 12, 1974, by conducting a public hearing on December 12, 1974, at 10:00 A.M. in the Ramada Inn, 999 South Main Street in Salt Lake City, Utah.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of City Commissioners of the City of Las Vegas do hereby endorse the request of the Governor of Nevada, and urge the residents of the City of Las Vegas to review and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.


RESOLUTION
December, 1974
Page Two

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board support the designation of the Nevada Test Site as the primary storage site for radioactive wastes and participate in the public hearing of December 12, 1974.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED this 12th day of December, 1974.


ORAN K. GRAGSON, MAYOR
CITY OF LAS VEGAS

ATTEST:


Edwina H. Cole, City Clerk

CITY OF LAS VEGAS

RESOLUTION

1
2 WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission of the United States has developed
3 a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Commercial High Level
4 and Transuranic Radioactive Waste; and,
5

6 WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission is considering three sites for
7 storage of such wastes, namely: the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory,
8 the Nevada Test Site, and the Hanford Reservation in Washington; and,
9

10 WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission had previously allowed public
11 comment to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement from September 12, 1974 to
12 October 28, 1974; and,
13

14 WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Nevada has requested that all
15 Nevada citizens be given every opportunity to comment on the Draft Environ-
16 mental Impact Statement; and,
17

18 WHEREAS, the Atomic Energy Commission has agreed to extend the comment
19 period to December 12, 1974, by conducting a public hearing on December 12,
20 1974, at 10:00 A.M. in the Ramada Inn, 999 S. Main Street in Salt Lake City,
21 Utah.
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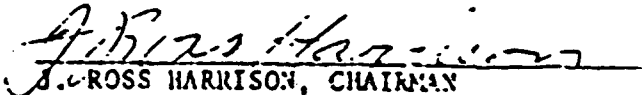
23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners do
24 hereby endorse the request of the Governor of Nevada and urge the residents of
25 Lincoln County to review and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact State-
26 ment

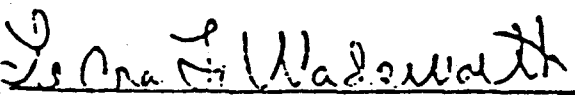
Resolution
December, 1974
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board support the designation of the Nevada Test Site as the primary storage site for radioactive wastes.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED this 6 day of December, 1974.


J. ROSS HARRISON, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST:

LEORA F. WADSWORTH, County Clerk

(REPRINTED WITH ADOPTED AMENDMENTS)

SECOND REPRINT

A. J. R. 15

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15—ASSEMBLYMEN
MANN, ROBINSON, PRICE, HICKEY, MAY, GETTO, JAC-
OBSEN, HAYES, MOODY, CHANEY, SCHOFIELD, BENKO-
VICH, DREYER, HOWARD, HEANEY, BENNETT,
CHRISTENSEN, JEFFREY, VERGIELS, SENA AND BROOK-
MAN

FEBRUARY 26, 1975

Referred to Concurrent Committees on Environment and
Public Resources and Commerce

SUMMARY—Urges the Energy Research and Development Administration to
choose the Nevada Test Site for disposal of nuclear wastes and for solar energy
research under the Solar Energy Research, Development and Demonstration
Act of 1974. (BDR 1030)



EXPLANATION—Matter in *italics* is new; matter in brackets [] is
material to be omitted.

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging the Energy Research and Develop-
ment Administration to choose the Nevada Test Site for the storage and proc-
essing of nuclear material and for solar energy research under the Solar Energy
Research, Development and Demonstration Act of 1974.

- 1 WHEREAS, The now supplanted Atomic Energy Commission has, over
2 the years, demonstrated an outstanding concern for nuclear safety and
3 has compiled, at the Nevada Test Site, an equally outstanding safety
4 record; and
5 WHEREAS, The people of Southern Nevada have confidence in the
6 safety record of the Nevada Test Site and in the ability of the staff of
7 the site to maintain safety in the handling of nuclear materials; and
8 WHEREAS, The unemployment rate in Clark County, Nevada, is 20.7
9 percent higher than the disturbingly high national unemployment rate;
10 and
11 WHEREAS, The people and the leaders in many states being considered
12 as sites for the storage and processing of nuclear material have serious
13 anxieties and doubts about providing storage and processing sites; and
14 WHEREAS, The existing facilities and the years of expertise in nuclear
15 material handling at the Nevada Test Site are a tremendous existing
16 resource; and
17 WHEREAS, Southern Nevada also offers an excellent environment in
18 which to explore the potential of solar energy; and

*Bryan in State Senate
voted in favor*

1 WHEREAS, National energy independence and a clean environment are
2 dependent upon tapping nonfossil fuel sources of energy for heating, cool-
3 ing and electricity; and

4 WHEREAS, The existing facilities of the Nevada Test Site and its sup-
5 port infrastructure are available and well suited to scientific research in
6 addition to nuclear projects; and

7 WHEREAS, The storage and processing of nuclear material, and solar
8 energy research can both be carried out at the Nevada Test Site with
9 minimal capital investment relative to other locations; now, therefore,
10 be it

11 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of Nevada,*
12 *jointly,* That the legislature of the State of Nevada strongly urges the
13 Energy Research and Development Administration to choose the Nevada
14 Test Site for the storage and processing of nuclear material provided that
15 there is an acceptance by the Energy Research and Development Admin-
16 istration of the following conditions:

17 1. Air cooling is used at the storage facility;

18 2. Rail transportation avoiding the Las Vegas metropolitan area is
19 established to the site;

20 3. Appropriate state agencies and local governments can cooperate
21 in, and contribute to, the development of the Energy Research and
22 Development Administration's site-specific environmental impact state-
23 ment;

24 4. It is satisfactorily demonstrated that adequate radiation safeguards
25 for storage and transportation can be developed and will be implemented;

26 5. Public hearings are held in at least four counties in the state prior
27 to choosing a specific site for the facility; and be it further

28 *Resolved,* That under the provisions of the Solar Energy Research,
29 Development and Demonstration Act of 1974 the Energy Research and
30 Development Administration utilize the extensive resources and facilities
31 of the Nevada Test Site to explore the potential uses of solar energy; and
32 be it further

33 *Resolved,* That copies of this resolution be prepared and transmitted
34 by the legislative counsel to the administrator of the Energy Research and
35 Development Administration, to the assistant administrators for nuclear
36 energy and for solar, geothermal and advanced energy systems and to all
37 members of Nevada's congressional delegation; and be it further

38 *Resolved,* That this act shall become effective upon passage and
39 approval.

Dec 14 '74

As We See It

Let's be nuclear waste storage site

The question of whether Southern Nevada should become the site of a massive center for the storing and managing of nuclear wastes could be one of the most important decisions to confront the state in many years.

The Nevada Test Site at Mercury apparently is one of three sites under consideration by Atomic Energy officials. The others are in Idaho and the state of Washington.

WE CONFESS that our initial reaction to this possibility was somewhat negative. Why Nevada? What good would it do the state? What about the safety? What will the environmental impact be?

What effect could it have on the state many years from now?

These were but a few of the questions that raised serious doubt for us, and, we are sure, many Nevadans.

But more extensive examination of the various factors involved now leads us to believe that Southern Nevada is the logical choice for the waste disposal site, and should welcome the decision if we are selected.

IT SEEMS OBVIOUS that this area is ideal from a geographic standpoint. We are not a high density population center. The Nevada Test site itself is a full 65 miles away and covers a massive 1,350 square miles. There is a good deal of scientific evidence that this remote site is geologically ideal as well.

Beyond that, Southern Nevada has a reservoir of talent, knowledgeability and experience in nuclear matters. The Test Site it-

self already is known as the major site for nuclear testing in this nation, and Southern Nevadans have never shown any great apprehension about this and the possible dangers from fallout or radiation leakage.

THOSE WHO OBJECT to locating the waste site here fail to realize that for many long years, since underground nuclear testing first began, substantial radioactive wastes have been locked away deep underground at the Nevada Test Site.

Over the years we have developed a great deal of confidence in the AEC's ability to cope with nuclear testing and radioactive waste management in a safe manner. There is always the danger of something happening, but the safety track record at the Nevada Test Site is so unbelievably good that we chart our own safety fears at zero.

FOR YEARS NOW, our statesmen and scientists and leading writers have been telling us that we are living in the nuclear age. This is true. But it is equally true that we have, even as the nation that led the way in nuclear development, failed to make use of its full potential as a peaceful energy source.

In reality, this nation may only now be on the threshold of the real nuclear era. Nevada should be at the center of it. Our selection as a site for nuclear waste storage and management will give us added credentials in this new nuclear era. We cannot afford to turn our backs on it. We must be a part of it.

Today's Editorial

Nuclear Waste Storage Plan Deserves Study

Whether wastes from nuclear-powered generating plants will eventually be stored at the Nevada Test Site is a matter of current debate and the decision should be based upon fact, not emotion.

Opponents of the plan have already raised questions of possible contamination of air and water, loss of tourism and possible sabotage by fanatical groups.

Gov. Mike O'Callaghan has asked that the state continue to be considered as a possible storage site, providing certain conditions are met. These include:

Minimize Dangers

The governor, among other conditions, has said he will insist that the waste be cooled by air to minimize danger on contamination of ground water and that a rail spur to transport the nuclear waste be constructed away from population centers.

There should be concern about safety and security in the handling and storage of radioactive materials, but fears about possible accidents should not blind us to the fact that the Test Site is uniquely fitted for the mission because of two major factors:

The most important is the presence of a work force highly skilled in all aspects of handling radioactive material.

The second is the natural terrain which, geographically and geologically seems to be ideal for the type of project the government has in mind.

Skilled Personnel

These factors were stressed by Las Vegas Mining Engineer William G. Flangas, who has worked at the Nevada Test Site for many years in connection with underground testing activities, in a recent appearance before the Las Vegas City Commission seeking public support for the storage project.

He said because of experiences with the nuclear testing program, there exists locally a highly skilled cadre of professional, technical and craft personnel thoroughly schooled in handling radioactive material and with the "ability to cope with the inherent hazards."

He also noted that the test site is one of the most "highly studied and geologically mapped areas" of the world which has established its suitability as a storage site.

'Natural Security'

Flangas also noted there is no population or agricultural encroachment upon the test site, thus reducing water contamination threats that a major river system is lacking and surrounding mountain ranges "Built-in natural security" which has been and can easily be maintained.

The test site is the most logical storage facility of three sites proposed, Flangas also asserts because it already is the repository of pockets of high radioactivity as the result of more than 150 underground nuclear tests. The safety record compiled by government agencies and private contractors during the testing program resulted in wide public acceptance of the program and its possible danger, he noted.

Flangas emphasized further that existing facilities at the Nuclear Rocket Development Station could be modified at minimum costs to serve as receiving and handling facilities for the radioactive waste. Original investment in one complex available for use was about \$50 million, Flangas notes, and it is ideally suited for the proposed storage

Further Study

Flangas views storage of radioactive active wastes as a logical development for the site in view of human and physical factors which uniquely qualify this area for the mission.

There's no question about the economic benefits to the area, although these cannot be allowed to override safety considerations. If further studies show the dangers to be minimal and that adequate safeguards are being taken to protect public safety, the storage project for Nevada should be encouraged.

Today's Editorial

Atomic Energy Offers Best Source For Fuel Supply

An easy way to develop a case of nerves these days is to listen to some of the "scenarios" for disaster put forth by people who want to scare us into a major reversal of national policy regarding peaceful application of atomic energy.

A freakish combination of failures in the safety systems at a nuclear power plant could disperse radioactivity for miles around and possibly "melt a hole in the earth all the way to China." Terrorists might invade an atomic power plant and threaten to blow it up. Nuclear materials might be stolen to make a primitive atomic bomb that could be used to blackmail an entire nation or the world. An accident in the transportation of plutonium could wipe out vast numbers of people.

What makes these conjectures so worrisome is that not even the most ardent supporter of atomic energy can argue that it is absolutely impossible for them to happen. Highly improbable to be sure, but not impossible. The only nightmare ruled out flatly is that a nuclear power plant could explode like an atomic bomb. The laws of physics simply would not permit that.

Stated Risks

We are left, then, with an assumption of certain risks as we push on with development of nuclear power. There is a tendency, especially among environmentalists trying to block construction of new atomic power plants, to overstate risks. The fact is, the risks they recite in their scenarios are on a par with the risk we all run of being hit on the head by a meteorite every time we step outdoors.

A two-year study of accident probabilities recently completed by Dr. Norman C. Rasmussen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows that the frequency of a "core melt" accident with any measurable effects would be once in 1,700 years if there are 100 power reactors in operation, as there are hoped to be by 1980. Stated another way, the odds would be 300 million to 1 that a person living within 20 miles of a nuclear power plant might be killed by such an accident in any one year.

Statistically, that same person now runs a 4,000 to 1 risk of being killed in an auto accident or a 100,000 to 1 risk of being killed in an aircraft accident. We have lived with those risks since the car and airplane were invented, and our response has been to try to build safer cars and planes and learn to use them safely.

Safety Measures

That is the answer to the scare-stories about nuclear power. We must calculate our risks — accurately and in the context of all the risks surrounding us in the world — and see that they are minimized. This is being done in the minute examination of the safety features designed into reactor facilities, and in the general tightening-up that is now occurring in the handling and transportation of nuclear materials. The penalties for carelessness or dishonesty by anyone responsible for these materials must be severe.

Atomic energy is our one best hope for overcoming the limitations on the world's supply of fossil fuels. What threatens us is not so much the tremendous power it represents, but the danger that fear will prevent us from harnessing it in time.

AS WE SEE IT

Nevada Should Accept Nuclear Waste Dump

Haste makes waste.

That phrase has been used more times than any of us cares to think about. But now there are those charging the Department of Energy with haste in trying to get rid of waste.

The issue is in no way new in Nevadans. It is DOE's search for a national dumping ground for high-level nuclear waste material.

PRESIDENT REAGAN has signed a bill which mandates the federal government to find a place to put the waste by sometime early next year.

There is a feeling that the repository is going to be located in either the state of Washington or our own Nevada.

It is this feeling which moved officials from both states to go before a subcommittee of the House Interior Committee to say the Energy Department is moving with anything but all deliberate speed.

A representative speaking on behalf of Gov. Richard Bryan called for the White House to exercise its option to put off a decision on the matter until 1988.

It is the governor's view that Nevada already has done its share and that since the state has no nuclear power plant, the repository ought to be put somewhere else.

BOB LOUX, the research and development administrator who spoke on Mr. Bryan's behalf, opined that there also might be a problem in terms of transporting the waste to the area under consideration — Yucca Mountain, 100 miles from Las Vegas.

Let it be clearly understood that we admire the governor for his stand. He obviously is considering the welfare of all Nevadans, which is his job as well as a characteristic of Mr. Bryan.

At the same time, there can be no disagreement with the fact that it makes him look good. Nuclear waste dumps never have been what might be described as popular, here or anywhere else.

And there is reason for concern over the proximity of the potential site to this city. There have been instances of laxity in terms of safety at the Beatty site — something which perhaps is to be expected; we know of no one for whom perfection is a strong suit — but safety standards have been upheld well.

AND IF HISTORY provides any lesson at all, there isn't much reason to expect damage — provided of course that the Beatty dump remains open, if owner USEcology wins its fight against the List Board of Health, which last year voted to shut it down.

But we do not agree completely with the view that Nevada has done its share. Oh, we're not saying we haven't done more than anybody else. We've done plenty, we should be proud of it and other states should do their fair share.

Yet it may fall upon us to bear more of the nuclear repository burden. It is not something we should accept with relish.

But it may prove to be our duty as a state sovereign to the wishes of the federal government to accept it and it may not be bad for us. Like it or not, it must be agreed that the low-level repository at Beatty brought jobs to some who would otherwise have been pounding the pavement.

THE GOVERNMENT may not need four more years to decide where to locate the high-level repository. Yet it may be needed and, if so, the government ought to take the time. It obviously is in no way a decision to be rushed into.

The Reagan administration should give this matter due and prayerful consideration before making its decision. And if Nevada is the choice, we ought to accept it, with guarantees of as many safety precautions as possible and commitment to do our best to show the rest of the nation and the government that their trust has been invested wisely.