

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

**BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

<b>In the Matter of</b>	)	<b>Docket No. 63-001</b>
	)	
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY</b>	)	<b>ASLBP No. 09-892-HLW-CAB04</b>
	)	
<b>(High Level Waste Repository)</b>	)	<b>April 14, 2010</b>

**STATE OF NEVADA ANSWER IN SUPPORT OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S  
PETITION FOR INTERLOCUTORY REVIEW**

On April 12, 2010, the Department of Energy (DOE) petitioned the Commission to take interlocutory review of the Memorandum and Order (Suspending Briefing and Consideration of Withdrawal Motion) issued by Construction Authorization Board-04 (CAB) on April 6, 2010. For the reasons given below, the State of Nevada (Nevada) supports DOE's petition.

First, because the Memorandum and Order suspends the entire proceeding on DOE's withdrawal motion, it clearly affects the basic structure of the proceeding on DOE's motion in a pervasive and unusual manner. Therefore, the Memorandum and Order satisfies the Commission's criteria for interlocutory review. *See, e.g., Private Fuel Storage (Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation)*, CLI-00-2, 51 NRC 77 (2000).

Second, while it is apparent that the CAB gave thoughtful consideration of how best to conserve its and the parties' resources under the circumstances of this case, its decision ultimately failed to give adequate consideration of the relative roles of the U.S. Court of Appeals

for the D.C. Circuit (Court)<sup>1</sup> and the Commission on matters of statutory and regulatory interpretation. DOE's motion to withdraw raises questions regarding how the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, as amended (NWPAA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 10101 *et seq.*, Public Law No. 107-200, 42 U.S.C. §§ 10135 *note*, and the Commission's regulations should be interpreted. Among other things, DOE's petition raises questions regarding whether various provisions in the NWPAA and Public Law No. 107-200 somehow operate to supersede the full application of section 114(d) of the NWPAA, 42 U.S.C. § 10134(d), which provides (with exceptions not here relevant) that the Commission shall consider DOE's pending Yucca Mountain license application "in accordance with the laws applicable to such applications." 10 C.F.R. § 2.107, which allows any applicant to move to withdraw its license application, appears quite clearly to be one example of a law – an NRC licensing regulation - made applicable by section 114(d). The existence or absence of a fully developed factual record is irrelevant. The Commission has expertise in how the NWPAA should be construed, has exercised this expertise in the past, and should do so again so that the Court has the benefit of NRC's thinking and may properly defer to its reasonable interpretation. *See Chevron U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council*, 467 U.S. 837 (1984).

Moreover, the Court will generally defer to NRC's interpretations of its own regulations. *Auer v. Robbins*, 519 U.S. 452, 461 (1997). Yet, under the CAB's Memorandum and Order, these settled and normal principles of Administrative Law defining the relative roles of reviewing courts and administrative agencies would be effectively nullified, as *Chevron* and *Auer* cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Currently pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit are four cases challenging the ability of DOE to file its motion to withdraw its pending Yucca Mountain license application and, necessarily, the ability of the Commission to consider that motion. Three of those cases have been consolidated: *In re Aiken County*, No. 10-1050 (D.C. Cir. filed Feb. 19, 2010); *State of South Carolina v. U.S. Dept. of Energy, et al.* (D.C. Cir., docketed Mar. 26, 2010) (filed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Cir. on Feb. 26, 2010 and transferred to the D.C. Cir. on Mar. 25, 2010); and *Ferguson, et al., v. U.S. Dept. of Energy, et al.* (D.C. Cir. filed Feb. 25, 2010). The fourth case was filed after DOE petitioned the Commission for interlocutory review: *State of Washington v. U.S. Dept. of Energy, et al.* (D.C. Cir. filed April 13, 2010).

apply in the absence of Commission statutory and regulatory interpretations of the relevant statutes and regulations.

Third, the Board's Memorandum and Order is contrary to settled Commission precedent. *Pacific Gas & Electric Company (Diablo Canyon, Units 1 and 2)*, CLI-02-16, 55 NRC 317, 334 (2002) (and cases cited therein) indicate that it is the "usual practice" of the Commission to complete its reviews and proceedings notwithstanding the pendency of proceedings elsewhere. For example, in *Diablo Canyon* the Commission denied a motion to hold a license transfer proceeding in abeyance pending the conclusion of a parallel proceeding before a federal bankruptcy court even though the bankruptcy court might reject the reorganization plan which called for the license to be transferred. There is no reason why this settled practice should not apply here.

Respectfully submitted,

*(signed electronically)*

Martin G. Malsch \*

Charles J. Fitzpatrick \*

John W. Lawrence \*

Egan, Fitzpatrick & Malsch, PLLC  
12500 San Pedro Avenue, Suite 555  
San Antonio, TX 78216

Tel: 210.496.5001

Fax: 210.496.5011

[mmalsch@nuclearlawyer.com](mailto:mmalsch@nuclearlawyer.com)

[cfitzpatrick@nuclearlawyer.com](mailto:cfitzpatrick@nuclearlawyer.com)

[jlawrence@nuclearlawyer.com](mailto:jlawrence@nuclearlawyer.com)

\*Special Deputy Attorneys General

Dated: April 14, 2010

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

**Atomic Safety and Licensing Board**

<b>In the Matter of</b>	)	
	)	
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY</b>	)	<b>Docket No. 63-001-HLW</b>
	)	
<b>(High Level Waste Repository)</b>	)	

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that the foregoing State of Nevada Answer in Support of the Department of Energy's Petition for Interlocutory Review has been served upon the following persons by the Electronic Information Exchange:

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel  
Mail Stop - T-3 F23  
Washington, DC 20555-0001

CAB 01

William J. Froehlich, Chair  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [wjf1@nrc.gov](mailto:wjf1@nrc.gov)  
Thomas S. Moore  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [tsm2@nrc.gov](mailto:tsm2@nrc.gov)  
Richard E. Wardwell  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [rew@nrc.gov](mailto:rew@nrc.gov)

CAB 02

Michael M. Gibson, Chair  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [mmg3@nrc.gov](mailto:mmg3@nrc.gov)  
Alan S. Rosenthal  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [axr@nrc.gov](mailto:axr@nrc.gov)  
Nicholas G. Trikouros  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [NGT@NRC.GOV](mailto:NGT@NRC.GOV)

CAB 03

Paul S. Ryerson, Chair  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [psr1@nrc.gov](mailto:psr1@nrc.gov)  
Michael C. Farrar  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [mcf@nrc.gov](mailto:mcf@nrc.gov)  
Mark O. Barnett  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [mob1@nrc.gov](mailto:mob1@nrc.gov)  
[mark.barnett@nrc.gov](mailto:mark.barnett@nrc.gov)

CAB 04

Thomas S. Moore, Chair  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [tsm2@nrc.gov](mailto:tsm2@nrc.gov)  
Paul S. Ryerson  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [psr1@nrc.gov](mailto:psr1@nrc.gov)  
Richard E. Wardwell  
Administrative Judge  
Email: [rew@nrc.gov](mailto:rew@nrc.gov)

Anthony C. Eitreim, Esq., Chief Counsel  
Email: [ace1@nrc.gov](mailto:ace1@nrc.gov)  
Daniel J. Graser, LSN Administrator  
Email: [djg2@nrc.gov](mailto:djg2@nrc.gov)  
Lauren Bregman  
Email: [lrb1@nrc.gov](mailto:lrb1@nrc.gov)

Sara Culler  
 Email: [sara.culler@nrc.gov](mailto:sara.culler@nrc.gov)  
 Joseph Deucher  
 Email: [jhd@nrc.gov](mailto:jhd@nrc.gov)  
 Patricia Harich  
 Email: [patricia.harich@nrc.gov](mailto:patricia.harich@nrc.gov)  
 Zachary Kahn  
 Email: [zxk1@nrc.gov](mailto:zxk1@nrc.gov)  
 Erica LaPlante  
 Email: [eal1@nrc.gov](mailto:eal1@nrc.gov)  
 Matthew Rotman  
 Email: [matthew.rotman@nrc.gov](mailto:matthew.rotman@nrc.gov)  
 Andrew Welkie  
 Email: [axw5@nrc.gov](mailto:axw5@nrc.gov)  
 Jack Whetstine  
 Email: [jgw@nrc.gov](mailto:jgw@nrc.gov)

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
 Office of the Secretary of the Commission  
 Mail Stop - O-16 C1  
 Washington, DC 20555-0001  
 Hearing Docket  
 Email: [hearingdocket@nrc.gov](mailto:hearingdocket@nrc.gov)  
 Andrew L. Bates  
 Email: [alb@nrc.gov](mailto:alb@nrc.gov)  
 Adria T. Byrdsong  
 Email: [atb1@nrc.gov](mailto:atb1@nrc.gov)  
 Emile L. Julian, Esq.  
 Email: [elj@nrc.gov](mailto:elj@nrc.gov)  
 Evangeline S. Ngbea  
 Email: [esn@nrc.gov](mailto:esn@nrc.gov)  
 Rebecca L. Giitter  
 Email: [rll@nrc.gov](mailto:rll@nrc.gov)

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
 Office of Comm Appellate Adjudication  
 Mail Stop - O-16C1  
 Washington, DC 20555-0001  
 OCAA Mail Center  
 Email: [ocaamail@nrc.gov](mailto:ocaamail@nrc.gov)

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
 Office of the General Counsel  
 Mail Stop - O-15 D21  
 Washington, DC 20555-0001  
 Mitzi A. Young, Esq.  
 Email: [may@nrc.gov](mailto:may@nrc.gov)

Marian L. Zobler, Esq.  
 Email: [mlz@nrc.gov](mailto:mlz@nrc.gov)  
 Andrea L. Silvia, Esq.  
 Email: [alc1@nrc.gov](mailto:alc1@nrc.gov)  
 Daniel Lenehan, Esq.  
 Email: [dwl2@nrc.gov](mailto:dwl2@nrc.gov)  
 Margaret J. Bupp, Esq.  
 Email: [mjb5@nrc.gov](mailto:mjb5@nrc.gov)  
 Adam S. Gendelman  
 Email: [Adam.Gendelman@nrc.gov](mailto:Adam.Gendelman@nrc.gov)  
 Joseph S. Gilman, Paralegal  
 Email: [jsg1@nrc.gov](mailto:jsg1@nrc.gov)  
 Karin Francis, Paralegal  
 Email: [kfx4@nrc.gov](mailto:kfx4@nrc.gov)  
 Michael G. Dreher  
 Email: [Michael.dreher@nrc.gov](mailto:Michael.dreher@nrc.gov)  
 OGCMailCenter  
 Email: [OGCMailCenter@nrc.gov](mailto:OGCMailCenter@nrc.gov)

Hunton & Williams LLP  
 Counsel for the U.S. Department of Energy  
 Riverfront Plaza, East Tower  
 951 East Byrd Street  
 Richmond, VA 23219  
 Kelly L. Faglioni, Esq.  
 Email: [kfaglioni@hunton.com](mailto:kfaglioni@hunton.com)  
 Donald P. Irwin, Esq.  
 Email: [dirwin@hunton.com](mailto:dirwin@hunton.com)  
 Michael R. Shebelskie, Esq.  
 Email: [mshebelskie@hunton.com](mailto:mshebelskie@hunton.com)  
 Pat Slayton  
 Email: [pslayton@hunton.com](mailto:pslayton@hunton.com)

U.S. Department Of Energy  
 Office of General Counsel  
 1551 Hillshire Drive  
 Las Vegas, NV 89134-6321  
 George W. Hellstrom  
 Email: [george.hellstrom@ymp.gov](mailto:george.hellstrom@ymp.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy  
 Office of General Counsel  
 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
 Washington, DC 20585  
 Martha S. Crosland, Esq.  
 Email: [martha.crosland@hq.doe.gov](mailto:martha.crosland@hq.doe.gov)

Nicholas P. DiNunzio, Esq.  
 Email: [nick.dinunziok@rw.doe.gov](mailto:nick.dinunziok@rw.doe.gov)  
 James Bennett McRae  
 Email: [ben.mcrae@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ben.mcrae@hq.doe.gov)  
 Christina C. Pak, Esq.  
 Email: [christina.pak@hq.doe.gov](mailto:christina.pak@hq.doe.gov)  
 Scott Blake Harris  
 Email: [scott.harris@hq.doe.gov](mailto:scott.harris@hq.doe.gov)  
 Sean A. Lev  
 Email: [sean.lev@hq.doe.gov](mailto:sean.lev@hq.doe.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy  
 Office of Counsel  
 Naval Sea Systems Command  
 Nuclear Propulsion Program  
 1333 Isaac Hull Avenue, SE  
 Washington Navy Yard, Building 197  
 Washington, DC 20376  
 Frank A. Putzu, Esq.  
 Email: [frank.putzu@navy.mil](mailto:frank.putzu@navy.mil)

For the U.S. Department of Energy  
 USA Repository Services LLC  
 Yucca Mountain Project Licensing Group  
 1160 N. Town Center Drive, Suite 240  
 Las Vegas, NV 89144  
 Jeffrey Kriner, Regulatory Programs  
 Email: [jeffrey.kriner@ymp.gov](mailto:jeffrey.kriner@ymp.gov)  
 Stephen J. Cereghino, Licensing/Nucl Safety  
 Email: [stephen\\_cereghino@ymp.gov](mailto:stephen_cereghino@ymp.gov)

For the U.S. Department of Energy  
 USA Repository Services LLC  
 Yucca Mountain Project Licensing Group  
 6000 Executive Boulevard, Suite 608  
 North Bethesda, MD 20852  
 Edward Borella, Sr Staff  
 Licensing/Nuclear Safety  
 Email: [edward\\_borella@ymp.gov](mailto:edward_borella@ymp.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy  
 Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Mgmt  
 Office of Repository Development  
 1551 Hillshire Drive  
 Las Vegas, NV 89134-6321  
 Timothy C. Gunter  
 Email: [timothy\\_gunter@ymp.gov](mailto:timothy_gunter@ymp.gov)

U.S. Department of Energy  
 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
 Washington, DC 20585  
 Eric Knox, Associate Director, Systems  
 Operations and External Relations, OCRWM  
 Email: [eric.knox@hq.doe.gov](mailto:eric.knox@hq.doe.gov)  
 Dong Kim, LSN Project Manager, OCRWM  
 Email: [dong.kim@rw.doe.gov](mailto:dong.kim@rw.doe.gov)

Morgan, Lewis, Bockius LLP  
 1111 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
 Washington, DC 20004  
 Lewis Csedrik, Esq.  
 Email: [lcshedrik@morganlewis.com](mailto:lcshedrik@morganlewis.com)  
 Jay Gutierrez, Esq.  
 Email: [jgutterrez@morganlewis.com](mailto:jgutterrez@morganlewis.com)  
 Charles B. Moldenhauer, Associate  
 Email: [cmoldenhauer@morganlewis.com](mailto:cmoldenhauer@morganlewis.com)  
 Brian P. Oldham, Esq.  
 Email: [boldham@morganlewis.com](mailto:boldham@morganlewis.com)  
 Thomas Poindexter, Esq.  
 Email: [tpoindexter@morganlewis.com](mailto:tpoindexter@morganlewis.com)  
 Alex S. Polonsky, Esq.  
 Email: [apolonsky@morganlewis.com](mailto:apolonsky@morganlewis.com)  
 Thomas A. Schmutz, Esq.  
 Email: [tschmutz@morganlewis.com](mailto:tschmutz@morganlewis.com)  
 Donald Silverman, Esq.  
 Email: [dsilverman@morganlewis.com](mailto:dsilverman@morganlewis.com)  
 Annette M. White, Associate  
 Email: [c@morganlewis.com](mailto:c@morganlewis.com)  
 Paul J. Zaffuts, Esq.  
 Email: [pzaffuts@morganlewis.com](mailto:pzaffuts@morganlewis.com)  
 Clifford W. Cooper, Paralegal  
 Email: [ccooper@morganlewis.com](mailto:ccooper@morganlewis.com)  
 Shannon Staton, Legal Secretary  
 Email: [sstaton@morganlewis.com](mailto:sstaton@morganlewis.com)  
 Raphael P. Kuyler  
 Email: [rkuyler@morganlewis.com](mailto:rkuyler@morganlewis.com)

Carter Ledyard & Milburn, LLP  
 Counsel for Lincoln County  
 1401 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 300  
 Washington, DC 20005  
 Barry S. Neuman, Esq.  
 Email: [neuman@clm.com](mailto:neuman@clm.com)

Churchill, Esmeralda, Eureka, Mineral  
and Lander Counties  
1705 Wildcat Lane  
Ogden, UT 84403  
Loreen Pitchford, LSN Coordinator  
for Lander County  
Email: [lpitchford@comcast.net](mailto:lpitchford@comcast.net)

Robert List  
Armstrong Teasdale LLP  
1975 Village Center Circle, Suite 140  
Las Vegas, NV 89134-62237  
Email: [rlist@armstrongteasdale.com](mailto:rlist@armstrongteasdale.com)

City of Las Vegas  
400 Stewart Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89101  
Margaret Plaster, Management Analyst  
Email: [mplaster@LasVegasNevada.gov](mailto:mplaster@LasVegasNevada.gov)

Clark County Nuclear Waste Division  
500 S. Grand Central Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89155  
Irene Navis  
Email: [in@co.clark.nv.us](mailto:in@co.clark.nv.us)  
Engelbrecht von Tiesenhausen  
Email: [evt@co.clark.nv.us](mailto:evt@co.clark.nv.us)  
Philip Klevatorick  
Email: [klevatorick@co.clark.nv.us](mailto:klevatorick@co.clark.nv.us)

Nuclear Waste Project Office  
1761 East College Parkway, Suite 118  
Carson City, NV 89706  
Bruce Breslow  
Email: [breslow@nuc.state.nv.us](mailto:breslow@nuc.state.nv.us)  
Steve Frishman, Tech. Policy Coordinator  
Email: [steve.frishman@gmail.com](mailto:steve.frishman@gmail.com)

Eureka County and Lander County  
Harmon, Curran, Speilberg & Eisenberg  
1726 M. Street N.W., Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036  
Diane Curran, Esq.  
Email: [dcurran@harmoncurran.com](mailto:dcurran@harmoncurran.com)

Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force  
P.O. Box 26177  
Las Vegas, NV 89126  
Judy Treichel, Executive Director  
Email: [judyntwf@aol.com](mailto:judyntwf@aol.com)

Talisman International, LLC  
1000 Potomac St., N.W., Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20007  
Patricia Larimore  
Email: [plarimore@talisman-intl.com](mailto:plarimore@talisman-intl.com)

Nuclear Energy Institute  
1776 I Street, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20006-3708  
Michael A. Bauser, Esq.  
Associate General Counsel  
Email: [mab@nei.org](mailto:mab@nei.org)  
Anne W. Cottingham, Esq.  
Email: [awc@nei.org](mailto:awc@nei.org)  
Ellen C. Ginsberg, Esq.  
Email: [ecg@nei.org](mailto:ecg@nei.org)  
Rod McCullum  
Email: [rxm@nei.org](mailto:rxm@nei.org)  
Steven P. Kraft  
Email: [spk@nei.org](mailto:spk@nei.org)  
Jay E. Silberg  
Email: [jay.silberg@pillsburylaw.com](mailto:jay.silberg@pillsburylaw.com)  
Timothy J.V. Walsh  
Email: [timothy.walsh@pillsburylaw.com](mailto:timothy.walsh@pillsburylaw.com)

White Pine County  
City of Caliente  
Lincoln County  
P.O. Box 126  
Caliente, NV 89008  
Jason Pitts  
Email: [jayson@idtservices.com](mailto:jayson@idtservices.com)

Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 340  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
Michael Mariotte, Executive Director  
Email: [nirsnet@nirs.org](mailto:nirsnet@nirs.org)

Radioactive Waste Watchdog  
 Beyond Nuclear  
 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 400  
 Takoma Park, MD 20912  
 Kevin Kamps  
 Email: [kevin@beyondnuclear.org](mailto:kevin@beyondnuclear.org)

Abigail Johnson  
 612 West Telegraph Street  
 Carson City, NV 89703  
 Email: [abbyj@gbis.com](mailto:abbyj@gbis.com)

National Congress of American Indians  
 1301 Connecticut Ave. NW - Second floor  
 Washington, DC 20036  
 Robert I. Holden, Director  
 Nuclear Waste Program  
 Email: [robert\\_holden@ncai.org](mailto:robert_holden@ncai.org)

Churchill County (NV)  
 155 North Taylor Street, Suite 182  
 Fallon, NV 89406  
 Alan Kalt  
 Email: [comptroller@churchillcounty.org](mailto:comptroller@churchillcounty.org)

Inyo County Water Department  
 Yucca Mtn Nuclear Waste  
 Repository Assessment Office  
 163 May St.  
 Bishop, CA 93514  
 Matt Gaffney, Project Associate  
 Email: [mgaffney@inyoyucca.org](mailto:mgaffney@inyoyucca.org)

Mr. Pat Cecil  
 Inyo County Planning Director  
 P.O. Box L  
 Independence, CA 93526  
 Email: [pcecil@inyocounty.us](mailto:pcecil@inyocounty.us)

Robert S. Hanna  
 233 E. Carrillo St., Suite B  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
 Email: [rshanna@bsglaw.net](mailto:rshanna@bsglaw.net)

Michael C. Berger  
 233 E. Carrillo St., Suite B  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
 Email: [mberger@bsglaw.net](mailto:mberger@bsglaw.net)

Environmental Protection Agency  
 Ray Clark  
 Email: [clark.ray@epa.gov](mailto:clark.ray@epa.gov)

Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board  
 Joyce Dory  
 Email: [dory@nwtrb.gov](mailto:dory@nwtrb.gov)

Intertech Services Corporation  
 (for Lincoln County)  
 P.O. Box 2008  
 Carson City, NV 89702-2008  
 Dr. Mike Baughman  
 Email: [bigboff@aol.com](mailto:bigboff@aol.com)

Nye County Department of Natural  
 Resources & Federal Facilities  
 1210 E. Basin Road, Suite 6  
 Pahrump, NV 89048  
 David Swanson  
 Email: [dswanson@nyecounty.net](mailto:dswanson@nyecounty.net)

Lincoln County Nuclear Oversight Prgm  
 100 Depot Ave., Suite 15; P.O. Box 1068  
 Caliente, NV 89008-1068  
 Lea Rasura-Alfano, Coordinator  
 Email: [jcciac@co.lincoln.nv.us](mailto:jcciac@co.lincoln.nv.us)

Nye County Regulatory/Licensing Adv.  
 18160 Cottonwood Rd. #265  
 Sunriver, OR 97707  
 Malachy Murphy  
 Email: [mrmurphy@chamberscable.com](mailto:mrmurphy@chamberscable.com)

Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project  
 Office (NWRPO)  
 2101 E. Calvada Blvd., Suite 100  
 Pahrump, NV 89048  
 Zoie Choate, Secretary  
 Email: [zchoate@co.nye.nv.us](mailto:zchoate@co.nye.nv.us)  
 Sherry Dudley, Admin. Technical Coordinator  
 Email: [sdudley@co.nye.nv.us](mailto:sdudley@co.nye.nv.us)

Mineral County Board of Commissioners  
 P.O. Box 1600  
 Hawthorne, NV 89415  
 Linda Mathias, Administrator  
 Office of Nuclear Projects  
 Email: [yuccainfo@mineralcountynv.org](mailto:yuccainfo@mineralcountynv.org)

State of Nevada  
 100 N. Carson Street  
 Carson City, NV 89710  
 Marta Adams  
 Email: [madams@ag.state.nv.us](mailto:madams@ag.state.nv.us)

White Pine County (NV) Nuclear  
 Waste Project Office  
 959 Campton Street  
 Ely, NV 89301  
 Mike Simon, Director  
 (Heidi Williams, Adm. Assist. )  
 Email: [wpnucwst1@mwpower.net](mailto:wpnucwst1@mwpower.net)

Fredericks & Peebles, L.L.P.  
 1001 Second Street  
 Sacramento, CA 95814  
 916-441-2700  
 FAX 916-441-2067  
 Darcie L. Houck  
 Email: [dhouck@ndnlaw.com](mailto:dhouck@ndnlaw.com)  
 John M. Peebles  
 Email: [jpeebles@ndnlaw.com](mailto:jpeebles@ndnlaw.com)  
 Joe Kennedy, Chairman  
 Email: [chairman@timbisha.org](mailto:chairman@timbisha.org)  
 Barbara Durham  
 Tribal Historic Preservation Officer  
 Email: [dvdurbarbara@netscape.com](mailto:dvdurbarbara@netscape.com)

Shane Thin Elk  
 Fredericks Peebles & Morgan, LLP  
 3610 North 163rd Plaza  
 Omaha, Nebraska 68116  
 (402) 333-4053  
 Email: [sthinelk@ndnlaw.com](mailto:sthinelk@ndnlaw.com)

Susan Durbin  
 Deputy Attorney General  
 California Department of Justice  
 1300 I St.  
 P.O. Box 944255  
 Sacramento, CA, 94244-2550  
 Email: [susan.durbin@doj.ca.gov](mailto:susan.durbin@doj.ca.gov)

Brian Hembacher  
 Deputy Attorney General  
 California Department of Justice  
 300 S. Spring St  
 Los Angeles, CA 90013  
 Email: [brian.hembacher@doj.ca.gov](mailto:brian.hembacher@doj.ca.gov)

Timothy E. Sullivan  
 Deputy Attorney General  
 California Department of Justice  
 1515 Clay St., 20th Flr.  
 P.O. Box 70550  
 Oakland, CA 94612-0550  
 Email: [timothy.sullivan@doj.ca.gov](mailto:timothy.sullivan@doj.ca.gov)

Brian Wolfman  
 Public Citizen Litigation Group  
 1600 20th Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20009

Kevin W. Bell  
 Senior Staff Counsel  
 California Energy Commission  
 1516 9th Street  
 Sacramento, CA 95814  
 Email: [kwbell@energy.state.ca.us](mailto:kwbell@energy.state.ca.us)

Jeffrey D. VanNiel  
 530 Farrington Court  
 Las Vegas, NV 89123  
 Email: [nbridvnr@gmail.com](mailto:nbridvnr@gmail.com)

Ethan I. Strell  
 Carter Ledyard & Milburn LLP  
 2 Wall Street  
 New York, NY 10005  
 Email: [strell@clm.com](mailto:strell@clm.com)

Jennings, Strouss & Salmon, PLC  
 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 500  
 Washington DC 20006-4725  
 Alan I. Robbins  
 Email: [arobbins@jsslw.com](mailto:arobbins@jsslw.com)  
 Debra D. Roby  
 Email: [droby@jsslw.com](mailto:droby@jsslw.com)

Steven A. Heinzen  
 Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.  
 One East Main Street, Suite 500  
 P.O. Box 2719  
 Madison, WI 53701-2719  
 Email: [sheinzen@gklaw.com](mailto:sheinzen@gklaw.com)

Douglas M. Poland  
 Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.  
 One East Main Street, Suite 500  
 P.O. Box 2719  
 Madison, WI 53701-2719  
 Email: [dpoland@gklaw.com](mailto:dpoland@gklaw.com)

Arthur J. Harrington  
 Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.  
 780 N. Water Street  
 Milwaukee, WI 53202  
 Email: [aharring@gklaw.com](mailto:aharring@gklaw.com)

Gregory Barlow  
 P.O. Box 60  
 Pioche, NV 89043  
 Email: [lca@lcturbonet.com](mailto:lca@lcturbonet.com)

Connie Simkins  
 P.O. Box 1068  
 Caliente, NV 89008  
 Email: [jcciac@co.lincoln.nv.us](mailto:jcciac@co.lincoln.nv.us)

Bret O. Whipple  
 1100 South Tenth Street  
 Las Vegas, NV 89104  
 Email: [bretwhipple@nomademail.com](mailto:bretwhipple@nomademail.com)

Richard Sears  
 801 Clark Street, Suite 3  
 Ely, NV 89301  
 Email: [rwsears@wpcda.org](mailto:rwsears@wpcda.org)

Alexander, Berkey, Williams & Weathers  
 2030 Addison Street, Suite 410  
 Berkeley, CA 94704  
 Curtis G. Berkey  
 Email: [cberkey@abwwlaw.com](mailto:cberkey@abwwlaw.com)  
 Scott W. Williams  
 Email: [swilliams@abwwlaw.com](mailto:swilliams@abwwlaw.com)  
 Rovianna A. Leigh  
 Email: [rleigh@abwwlaw.com](mailto:rleigh@abwwlaw.com)

Kenneth P. Woodington  
 Davidson & Lindemann, P.A.  
 1611 Devonshire Drive  
 P. O. Box 8568  
 Columbia, SC 29202  
 Email: [kwoodington@dml-law.com](mailto:kwoodington@dml-law.com)

Robert M. McKenna  
 Attorney General, State of Washington  
 Office of the Attorney General  
 PO Box 40117  
 Olympia, WA 98504-0117  
 H. Lee Overton  
 Email: [leeol@atg.wa.gov](mailto:leeol@atg.wa.gov)  
 Michael L. Dunning  
 Email: [michaeld@atg.wa.gov](mailto:michaeld@atg.wa.gov)  
 Andrew A. Fitz  
 Email: [andyf@atg.wa.gov](mailto:andyf@atg.wa.gov)  
 Jonathan C. Thompson  
 Email: [JonaT@atg.wa.gov](mailto:JonaT@atg.wa.gov)

Thomas R. Gottshall  
 Address: Haynesworth Sinkler Boyd, PA  
 1201 Main Street, Suite 2200  
 Post Office Box 11889  
 Columbia, SC 29211-1889  
 Email: [tgottshall@hsblawfirm.com](mailto:tgottshall@hsblawfirm.com)  
 James Bradford Ramsay  
 Email: [jramsay@naruc.org](mailto:jramsay@naruc.org)  
 Robin J. Lunt  
 Email: [rlunt@naruc.org](mailto:rlunt@naruc.org)  
 National Association of Regulatory  
 Utility Commissioners  
 1101 Vermont Avenue, Suite 200  
 Washington, DC 20005

Philip R. Mahowald, General Counsel  
Prairie Island Indian Community  
Legal Department  
Email: [pmahowald@piic.org](mailto:pmahowald@piic.org)  
5636 Sturgeon Lake Road  
Welch, MN 55089

Don L. Keskey  
Email:  
[donkeskey@publiclawresourcenter.com](mailto:donkeskey@publiclawresourcenter.com)  
Public Law Resource Center PLLC  
505 N. Capitol Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48933

*(signed electronically)*  
Laurie Borski, Paralegal