

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT

REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Caliente Rail Corridor Environmental Impact
Statement (EIS)
Public Scoping Meeting

Monday, May 17, 2004
4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Cashman Center
Rooms 103-106
850 Las Vegas Boulevard North
Las Vegas, Nevada

Reported by: Jane V. Michaels, RPR
NV CCR No. 601
CA CSR No. 10660

And why does it have to come here? Why can't it just stay where it is? We don't even have a nuclear plant here. Why can't the places that have nuclear plants and waste keep their own waste? I don't know why I feel as though it's being railroaded into Las Vegas. They're pushing it -- or I mean Nevada. I just don't trust it. It's unsafe for my children and my grandchildren.

MR. VAN EE: For the record, I want it to be reflected that these comments are also on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity.

I'm Jeff van Ee, and I'm submitting comments on behalf of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Center for Biological Diversity.

MR. REIM: My name is Kenneth Reim, P.E., RG. I'm making some comments today, May 17th, 2004, at the Cashman Center in regard to the Caliente Yucca Mountain land rail route for the transport of high-level nuclear waste.

My professional view is that the Caliente Yucca Mountain rail route has many difficulties associated with it because of its long distance going over five to seven mountain passes and the high cost of construction and the increased total transport route of high-level nuclear waste increasing the risk

MR. THOMPSON: My name is Charles Thompson. I have a physicist master's degree. I've worked with the Department of Defense. I worked on nuclear targeting. I'm very aware of the nuclear situation. My state, South Carolina, is the host of the Savanna River site.

I have two words for the people I consider important: "comparative risk." Presently the risk at Yucca is measured at one hundred years or less. The risk factor at the Savanna River site is measured at two hundred years or less. The Snake River aquifer in Idaho is showing signs of contamination. Hanford in Washington state is already gone. To delay is insane. To delay is to pander to the environmental radical movement as it would be equivalent to pandering to the radical abortionists that murder doctors. There comes a time when you must take the best option out of many bad options. That is my statement.

MS. DAVIES: My name is Susan Davies. My address [redacted] And my comments are I don't believe this is safe. I don't believe that they know the long-term effects of nuclear waste buried in the ground. I don't believe it's safe to transport it.

involved.

In regard to this proposed route, if finalized, it should include the opportunity for commercial transport on the rail route. It is imperative that in finalizing the environmental impact statement on this route that a detailed mineral appraisal be made along the route and in the surrounding area which might contribute to commercial use of the rail route.

In my view, the best route to connect Yucca Mountain would be to use the old rail bed from Las Vegas to Beatty and lay the rails on that route. It would be the shortest, cheapest, and probably have the least environmental impact and the lowest environmental risks.

The only problem with that is the public perception and political perception of the Nevadans in regard to this route. The Department of Energy has failed in correcting information to the public which has developed false perception.

The transport will go through major metropolitan areas, such as St. Louis, Chicago, Omaha, and other Eastern sights. They apparently don't have the adverse perception at this time compared to the Nevada politicians.

1 Nevada initially accepted and encouraged
2 the storage -- disposal of high-level nuclear waste at
3 Yucca Mountain. But, however, now they've changed
4 their mind. The U.S. government has entered into a
5 contract with all of the nuclear power companies to
6 accept their high-level nuclear waste. The government
7 should fulfill these contracts, which is a matter of
8 law.

9 The real answer to this solution is to
10 reprocess this high-level nuclear waste as being done
11 in France, Europe, and other parts of the world. The
12 reason it's not being reprocessed is that President
13 Carter signed an executive order precluding the
14 reprocessing of high-level nuclear waste.

15 I'm not sure if that has now been codified
16 into law, but the U.S. Congress should revisit this
17 situation and eliminate this restriction of
18 reprocessing high-level nuclear waste material. It's
19 very valuable and should benefit our society in
20 forward years.

21 Yucca Mountain is often considered as a
22 disposal site. It should really be addressed as a
23 storage site. There's a significant difference
24 between disposal and storage. The Secretary of Energy
25 Spence Abrams and his senior staff should seriously

1 address these comments in a meaningful way. Thank you
2 for your attention to these matters.

3 MR. VASCONI: I'm Bill Vasconi, 40-year
4 resident of the State of Nevada. I am not in
5 opposition to Yucca Mountain. I see it as a viable
6 solution to the nation's nuclear waste issues and
7 problems.

8 The rail corridor, I don't think it's the
9 best rail corridor because it doesn't come through the
10 geographical center of the state of Nevada. I would
11 have preferred the route that comes from Beowawe,
12 which is between Carlin and Battle Mountain. It would
13 come down heading dead south towards Austin and
14 Eureka, Austin being the geographical center of the
15 state of Nevada.

16 From there it would proceed south through
17 the monitor or Smoky Valley. And if I might add, the
18 valley that comes down from the north would be
19 Grass Valley, would be the original. It would hit
20 Tonopah and make a left-hand or a southeast turn past
21 Goldfield onto the test site.

22 Now, the reason I would have preferred that
23 route is it would have economically opened up this
24 geographical center of the state of Nevada for
25 development. The route that they have chosen from

1 Caliente, seeing it's a DOE-preferred route, does
2 eliminate populated areas such as Reno and Las Vegas,
3 which has been a hindrance to shipping the waste.

4 It also gives the rural residents an
5 opportunity to become involved and improve their
6 economic base. I believe the residents of obviously
7 Caliente, Goldfield, and those in Nye County and
8 Esmeralda County should be given an opportunity to
9 participate in any of their construction or
10 procurement of materials while this rail system's
11 being built.

12 Also, I'd like to see a great deal of
13 emphasis on the fact that the training of emergency
14 responders in those rural communities be undertaken.
15 The reason I feel this way is because areas like
16 Caliente into Alamo or from Alamo into the Warm
17 Springs area, their fire departments, their
18 responders, can only travel a certain distance because
19 they have to protect their communities. I believe
20 that figure is 40 miles. There is a number of those
21 areas that would far exceed 40 miles for emergency
22 responders. And that should be taken into
23 consideration.

24 I know the way it works is why train people
25 now that may retire or be out of the system by the

1 time the rails are built? But the community should be
2 involved. There should be some kind of training
3 station offered or available for the citizens of
4 Lincoln, Esmeralda, and Nye counties to participate.
5 The more active participation you get by the people
6 that live in those communities, the lesser the
7 resentment would be that the rail system is passing
8 through their geographical area.

9 I would also like to see, if it doesn't
10 exist already, a designation by DOE and DOT
11 representatives that those rural communities would
12 have direct contact with. In the past it's been
13 people coming out and addressing them, talking to
14 them, that they don't see again. And so being
15 on-line, being a representative of those communities,
16 they would know who to contact and direct their
17 questions or comments to.

18 The other thing would be educational. As
19 we progress into this rail system with the thought in
20 mind that Yucca Mountain will become a reality, a lot
21 of our rural communities do not have access to our
22 visitor centers or informational centers on Yucca
23 Mountain. And, at the least, a mobile educational
24 center such as a semi-truck trailer should be provided
25 with information monitors with programs on them

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1 showing the casks, the studies on the casks, the
 2 safety factors, the security. And in that way, it's
 3 going to help alleviate any apprehensiveness on the
 4 part of the general public.

5 I would also like to add the fact that to
 6 this point in time, May 17th, 2004, Nevada's federal
 7 delegation and state representatives have viewed this
 8 project unrealistically, irresponsibly, and I believe
 9 there should be more meaningful dialogue addressing
 10 the issues and concerns of these citizens of Nevada.
 11 Addressing it politically does not work well for a
 12 scientific project.

13 I would also like to add that this should
 14 be a multiuse railroad system, primarily the
 15 transportation of high-level nuclear waste and spent
 16 fuel rods but as a multiuse facility and railroad
 17 system. Then the rural counties could derive some
 18 benefit from that.

19 MR. SONTAG: My name is Harry Sontag. I'm
 20 going to quote from the American People's
 21 Encyclopedia, 1959 Edition, Subject: Atomic Energy,
 22 page 2.763, last paragraph, "Waste Products for
 23 Economic Reasons."
 24 "It is customary in this industry to seek
 25 uses for all waste products. Their radioactivity is

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1 an added reason for seeking uses for the fission
 2 product waste from nuclear reactors, whether the
 3 reactors are operated for the production of heat or
 4 power, the radioisotopes, or fissionable materials for
 5 reactor fuel. Even though the radioactivity of a
 6 source made from these wastes will fall below a useful
 7 level in a year or so, it will be many years --
 8 probably two centuries -- before the radiation has
 9 fallen to a level that makes it safe merely to throw
 10 the source away. Consequently, the atomic energy
 11 industry still must face up to a long-term storage
 12 problem. Two advantages accrue from finding uses for
 13 these waste. One, for use the bulk must be reduced,
 14 and this, in turn, reduces the storage cost. Two,
 15 part or all of the cost of storage may be recovered by
 16 losing or renting the waste to industry."

17 The above comments came from Dr. Walton A.
 18 Roger. And the most important thing is that for two
 19 centuries they cannot use waste material. It's too
 20 hot to handle.

21 Now, the point is who's going to be around
 22 two hundred years from now? Who's going to be around
 23 50 years from now? Who's going to be around 10,000
 24 years from now when that stuff is still hot? The heat
 25 involved is 260 degrees Fahrenheit all the time. It

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1 only takes 210 degrees to boil it. So if the
 2 ventilation system or another coolant system fails to
 3 operate, that means that the containers can add an
 4 additional temperature of 70 percent to 266.5 degrees
 5 Fahrenheit and comes to 186.5 degrees at Fahrenheit.
 6 So if the coolant ventilation systems fail, a chain
 7 reaction will develop, and each of the 11,000 to
 8 17,000 containers can melt down and explode.

9 I've lived here since 1976. I bought two
 10 homes here. My posterity, the Declaration of
 11 Independence, is upon my children, my grandchildren,
 12 my great-children. It doesn't mean a thing to me
 13 because I'm getting old right now anyway. I'll
 14 probably be dead before they put it in. I am now 80
 15 years old.

16 But the problem is what are you going to do
 17 with this high-level nuclear material? It's not
 18 waste. It's still alive. It will be alive for
 19 centuries. The encyclopedia says you can't handle
 20 this stuff for two centuries. Who's going to be alive
 21 to say it's safe to handle? It cannot be safe to the
 22 employees. It cannot be safe to anybody that's
 23 nearby. It's radioactive materials. It includes
 24 everything.

25 I'd like to give you an example. The

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1 atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima in 1945. That
 2 bomb was loaded in the airplane, but the elements were
 3 not put together until they reached Hiroshima. And as
 4 soon as the elements were put together and the bomb
 5 became radioactive, they had to put a fuse in it.
 6 They could not bring that plane back with the bomb in
 7 it anymore. They had to drop it. Look what
 8 happened.

9 The elements in that bomb are the same
 10 elements that are in the rods. If you put 1700 rods
 11 in one place like Yucca Mountain, one accident will
 12 cause all of them to explode because it's a chain
 13 reaction.

14 It's too dangerous to put it here. Put it
 15 in the Atlantic Ocean where it won't bother anything.
 16 The fish will swim away like they do with volcanos.
 17 Crustaceans would crawl away. They won't have
 18 anything to do with what's not good for them.

19 Why Nevada? Don't they realize the wind
 20 blows from west to east, and if they have a nuclear
 21 accident, it will cover the whole country. There will
 22 be airborne radioactive material in every sense of the
 23 word. It will cause death and leukemia and they won't
 24 know why.

25 What they are doing is poisoning us.

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1 Congress, the senator, the government, should know
 2 better from what they did. I don't understand why
 3 they did it unless -- and here's something you have to
 4 understand. Nevada became a state in 1865, one year
 5 before the Civil War ended. The only way the South
 6 could get currency was from gold and silver to pick up
 7 their currency. What did the South do? They lost the
 8 war. Why? They ran out of money because Nevada
 9 became a state. They were frozen out.

10 Now, remember this. Of the southern
 11 senators that voted to put Yucca Mountain here, there
 12 were 11 states, 22 people, 22 senators. One voted
 13 against it. One did not vote. 20 southern senators
 14 voted to send it here to Yucca Mountain. With their
 15 compatriots it was enough votes to do that.

16 Just for your information, those states
 17 which were part of the Union in 1864 when Nevada
 18 joined the Union voted against it. They would not
 19 have sent Yucca Mountain here in Nevada. That stuff
 20 is too dangerous to ignore. And anyone that does it,
 21 as far as I'm concerned, is not American, doesn't
 22 realize that states' rights exist for all the states
 23 in the Union.

24 And they're putting it in here for an
 25 apparent reason, as strange as it may seem, as a

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1 vendetta against Nevada from the southern states that
 2 left the Union during the Civil War. And that's the
 3 way I feel about it. I did research on it. I know
 4 exactly what happened and who voted and who voted
 5 against it. I have the Act that became official in
 6 2001. And I know who voted for it as far as the
 7 senator is concerned, and they violated the
 8 Constitution in order to bring it here.

9 All they have to do is read it, read the
 10 Constitution, Article 1, Section 9. Read what it
 11 says. You cannot give priority to any one industry.
 12 And that's what nuclear power is. It's a privately
 13 owned nuclear industry. It has nothing to do with
 14 national defense.

15 They've learned a long time ago how to
 16 protect against an explosion as far as the
 17 government's concerned, as far as the military's
 18 concerned. Why aren't they acting on it? Why are
 19 they favoring a private industry? They're not allowed
 20 to do it in the Constitution. We never had the chance
 21 to vote on it. Nobody was allowed to vote on it. And
 22 it's in the Constitution. All of the amendments in
 23 the Constitution, so many of them, at least six, give
 24 the people a right to vote. Color, women, young men,
 25 regular people. Why aren't they allowed to vote on

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1 it? We don't want it. They're afraid to give us the
 2 right to vote.

3 What they should do is take what's here now
 4 and put it in the north Atlantic, in the cold waters
 5 of the Atlantic. The winds that will blow from west
 6 to east will blow it out to the open ocean, 3,000
 7 miles of ocean, and protect the American people.
 8 Don't they realize it's going to spread throughout the
 9 country if you have a nuclear accident. And even if
 10 they don't, the fans in the mountain is going to blow
 11 the residue away. It's going to cause leukemia, it's
 12 going to cause sickness, and nobody will know why.
 13 That's all I have to say.

14 MS. KOSTOFF: My name is Karen Kostoff. I,
 15 as a citizen of this valley, can see no reason or
 16 benefits to the people of Southern Nevada for Yucca
 17 Mountain. I spoke to a number of very nice, earnest
 18 people from the Yucca Project. For every reason they
 19 gave me, I can give them as many or more answers
 20 against it.

21 We must look for other options and ways.
 22 Why aren't we looking into recycling nuclear waste and
 23 looking for other, safer methods for energy
 24 production? I absolutely feel this is not a sensible,
 25 sound project for the future of Nevadans.

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1 MR. BUDETICH: I'm Mark Budetich, and I'm a
 2 congressional candidate, Third District, democrat.

3 And my basic questions are, this canister
 4 seems to be rated almost as good as my gun safe in my
 5 den that can handle the 1475 degrees heat for 30
 6 minutes. Shouldn't we have something better than a
 7 gun safe?

8 Is there a place that these vehicles can be
 9 stored overnight in a bombproof closure to ensure they
 10 wouldn't be tampered with while they're not being
 11 operated? Are there retrieval devices that can get to
 12 them in 30 or 45 minutes when they are broken down on
 13 the tracks to take them to these enclosures when
 14 there's an emergency? Do we have military units that
 15 are deployable by helicopter that can be on the scene
 16 in five to ten minutes to physically secure the site
 17 if there's a breakdown. Just little simple questions
 18 like that.

19 What is the rate of decay of the canisters
 20 that they're going to be stored in at Yucca Mountain?
 21 And what is the rate of decay of the contents of the
 22 canisters? And what's the expected heat coefficient
 23 as the decay occurs? And would it be feasible to put
 24 cooling coils down in this hole to later create the
 25 world's largest nuclear reactor to produce free

1 electricity to Southern Nevada? Just minor
 2 questions. Nothing significant. Nothing
 3 intelligent.
 4 Another question. Do we need to
 5 encapsulate the interior and line it like a trash can
 6 liner, put a big 36-inch-thick concrete barrier to
 7 isolate it like a trash can liner through this
 8 tunnel. That might help some people's minds. We did
 9 build things like that for storing our missiles in and
 10 those launchers in Midwestern Kansas and Wyoming and
 11 Nebraska and whatever other states they're in. They
 12 had 36-inch ceilings and 48-inch side walls. We need
 13 to encapsulate.
 14 MS. INGRAM: My name is June Ingram. I'm
 15 against the project. I think that if this were a good
 16 deal, another state would have gotten this instead of
 17 us, because there is a lot of desert in other places.
 18 I'm concerned too about the upheave of our
 19 roads and highways. What will that cost us? This
 20 just can't come by train and never touch a truck or
 21 anything like that. There's going to be a lot of
 22 traffic on our highways somewhere along the way
 23 besides just the rail. So that would be so expensive
 24 for our state since we haven't asked for any pay for
 25 this being done.

1 I understand Alaska -- people who live in
 2 Alaska, they get a big check every year on like the
 3 oil that's sold. But as far as I know, we're not
 4 getting anything for payback for letting this come
 5 here.
 6 The earthquakes are quite prominent in that
 7 area too. And just Sunday they had like a 4.2
 8 earthquake near Caliente. And that's going to be an
 9 important spur there, I understand, for the railroad.
 10 So I'm concerned about that.
 11 MS. BOYLE: My name is Carolyn Boyle. I
 12 don't believe that anybody can accurately predict what
 13 will happen in 10,000 years. And I don't believe it's
 14 safe to transport nuclear waste across the country.
 15 And I don't believe it should all be stored in one
 16 place. I think it's a target for terrorism.
 17 MR. BRODT: My name is Gary Brodt. My
 18 concern is why, when they've spent many billions of
 19 dollars so far, they have to come up along the
 20 highway, why they just can't go through the test range
 21 and come out at the test site rather than coming so
 22 close to the 95 and 6 here. They're right on 6 by
 23 Tonopah and the Eli highway. While there may not be
 24 much traffic, I don't see any reason for it except
 25 there's a cost saving measure.

1 And rather than use the government land,
 2 which is area 51 or the test range which is already
 3 government controlled, they're putting civilians in
 4 jeopardy by running it so close to the towns and the
 5 highways where there is no detour. So I see no reason
 6 why they couldn't come in the back way through the
 7 test range to the site. That's my final comment.
 8 And just make a note that I'm opposed to
 9 the whole thing including using Yucca Mountain without
 10 sufficient study completion. And I didn't appreciate
 11 Abrams coming through in half a day and taking it back
 12 to the president okaying it just like that with a
 13 promise there would be sufficient scientific evidence
 14 when he ran for president, and his statement was such
 15 in Nevada.
 16 MS. OMOHUNDRO: My name is Charlotte
 17 Omohundro. The 100 miles between Yucca Mountain and
 18 Lake Mead is riddled with earthquake faults. Lake
 19 Mead is a water source that serves millions of people
 20 in three states. Eventually groundwater contamination
 21 is a 100 percent probability as the half lives of the
 22 radioactive materials are measured in millions of
 23 years. So a high-level toxic material that will
 24 deliver a lethal dose of radiation in a ten-minute
 25 exposure will take 20 minutes to kill you in about 40

1 million years.
 2 There are tens of thousands of acres of
 3 barren, uninhabited land in Nevada. So why is the DOE
 4 storing high-level toxic material less than a hundred
 5 miles from the largest city in the state at the most
 6 important water resource in the region. If military
 7 security is the reason, then the high-level toxic
 8 storage facility should be in the exact center of the
 9 mainland.
 10 Also, I would like to propose that the
 11 highway leading to Yucca Mountain be renamed the
 12 George W. Bush toxic dump site highway.
 13 (Thereupon, the proceedings
 14 were adjourned.)
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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STATE OF NEVADA)

) ss

COUNTY OF CLARK)

I, Jane V. Michaels, Certified Shorthand

Reporter, do hereby certify that I took down in
Stenotype all of the proceedings had in the
before-entitled matter at the time and place indicated
and that thereafter said shorthand notes were
transcribed into typewriting at and under my direction
and supervision and that the foregoing transcript
constitutes a full, true and accurate record of the
proceedings had.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
hand and affixed my official seal of office in the
County of Clark, State of Nevada, this 18th day
of May, 2004.

Jane V. Michaels, RPR
NV CCR No. 601
CA CSR No. 10660