

B. John Garrick

June 12, 2009

Chairman  
NWTRB

Dear John:

I would like to send my public comments, observations, and suggestions regarding the NWTRB meeting yesterday June 11, 2009.

It was an excellent and informative meeting. The executive budget proposal for 2010 to fund the termination of the Yucca Mountain Project has created a shock wave that may be the prelude for legislative debate to change the law, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. This could kill the Yucca Mountain Project instantly and dump the baby with the bath water, killing a viable creation, a new kind of underground storage facility.

I have long considered the Yucca Mountain disposal facility as an ideal site for a staged repository which could start as a long-term, monitored, ventilated, retrievable storage facility for up to hundreds of years. When I repeatedly discussed this with DOE, Russ Dyer agreed and said: "I agree but the law has to be changed." It seems that the change is now on the horizon.

I believe the NWTRB has an obligation to save the baby now being bathed; getting cleaned during the LA, with 309 or so detergents, the contentions. I think that 22 years of gestation has produced a viable baby for a long-term, monitored, ventilated, retrievable storage facility. It can now grow and become a robust adult of an interim storage facility for hundreds of years or even evolve to a permanent repository. But if the new law eliminates the project it will kill the baby after birth. The NWTRB must do everything to prevent this from happening. Isn't this the midwife's duty?

I suggest organizing a board meeting well before the legislative debate to discuss the technical merits of using Yucca Mountain as a long-term, monitored, ventilated, retrievable storage vault. This will be a meeting to tell the lawmakers that there is a baby in the bath water. Please pick this baby up and show it to the world. At the meeting some social issues must also be discussed. It is a US baby born in Nevada. The state must be cajoled, and brought into fostering the baby at least until its adulthood - the time to make the final decision about the vault, hundreds of years from now. Will YM become a permanent storage facility or an empty vault or the words biggest gambling parlor 300 years from now? Hard to tell, but I am sure it will be the best and safest possible interim facility with a huge storage capacity for hundreds of years if well ventilated.

The State of Nevada should collect storage fees in the billions of dollars per year for fostering. Instead of paying legal fees to the power industry, which has already made profits, Nevada should be entitled to appropriations. The NWTRB can fulfill its duty to look for the Yucca Mountain Project by reporting that it isn't looking at a monster to be born, but watching a beautiful and healthy baby, waiting for the right law to be passed for the right upbringing, for a for a long, successful, safe and healthy life.

If the Board can organize a meeting on the changed, staged usage of the YM site and design, it will be very useful for informing the lawmakers who may not be aware of such a possibility. They may not know that several international studies have been conducted to develop a centralized, interim, retrievable, monitored, underground facility. They may not be aware that YM, situated in an unsaturated rock mass, would be a unique and natural choice for such a vault. They may not know that being deep underground is a safety feature at YM, costing nothing additional, due to its special morphology, a mountain with an adit.

A NWTRB hearing on the potential effects of the NWPA changes could have an enormous impact on the debate and on the upcoming changes as well. By telling about the potential applications of the YM site for an interim vault with the option of evolving to a staged storage facility could also assist in the future work of the Blue Ribbon Panel.

Sincerely,

George Danko  
Professor  
University of Nevada, Reno