

David C. Boyd, Chairman
Commissioner, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

Renze Hoeksema, Vice Chairman
Director of State Affairs, DTE Energy

Greg R. White, Membership
Commissioner, Michigan Public Service Commission

Robert W. Capstick, Jr., Finance
Director of Government Affairs, Yankee Atomic

Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr., Communications
Commissioner, Georgia Public Service Commission

David A. Wright, Ex-Officio
President, Wright Directions



For Immediate Release
January 29, 2015

For More Information:
Executive Director Katrina McMurrian: (615) 905-1375

Yucca Safety Evaluation Complete: Still No Good Reason for Federal Government Delay

January 29, 2015 – The Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition (NWSC) applauds the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's release of the final two volumes of its Safety Evaluation Report (SER) regarding the designated permanent repository for disposal of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLW) at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The issuance of these two volumes not only marks completion of the necessary SER (an independent, thorough safety review by NRC staff experts) but also completes a major milestone in the overall licensing process that is required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

The NRC staff's independent evaluation of repository safety before permanent closure, as documented in SER Volume 2, along with the license specifications in Volume 5, provide additional assurance that the proposed Yucca Mountain site remains a viable solution for addressing our nation's need for permanent disposal of commercial and defense SNF and HLW. As a complete package, the SER provides justification for statements that Yucca Mountain is indeed "workable" and for expeditious agency action to proceed with the next steps in the license review process. In addition to the substantial negative impacts on electric consumers and communities who were promised timely removal, additional delays will increase the federal government's liability and the concomitant burden on all US taxpayers.

"We are grateful for the NRC staff's diligent review and confirmation that the Yucca Mountain geologic repository can dispose of SNF and HLW for over 1 million years while protecting public health, safety, and the environment," said NWSC Chairman and Minnesota Public Utilities Commissioner David Boyd. "We also must thank those who successfully convinced the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit to require that this important work proceed – Aiken County, South Carolina; the State of South Carolina; the State of Washington; Robert L. Ferguson; William Lampson; Gary Petersen; the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC); and Nye County, Nevada. Without their resolve, we would not have the valuable information that we do today."

Michigan Public Service Commissioner Greg White added, "As the annual appropriations process begins, the NWSC urges the House and the Senate to work together to provide the funds necessary to solve the urgent nuclear waste storage problem confronting this country, including putting both NRC and DOE back on track for completing the repository licensing process in as timely a manner as possible. Completion of the licensing process that was established in federal law over two decades ago is a critical step in the federal government's ability to meet its longstanding obligation to dispose of SNF and HLW currently and indefinitely stranded at numerous sites across the country."

* * * * *

The Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition is an ad hoc organization representing the collective interests of member state utility regulators, consumer advocates, tribal governments, local governments, nuclear-generating utilities, utilities with shutdown reactors, and other public and private sector experts on nuclear waste policy matters. NWSC's primary focus is to protect ratepayer payments into the Nuclear Waste Fund and to support the removal and ultimate disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste currently stranded at sites across the country.